

Secondary Research Paper

“Restaurant Food Choices by Moms: An Exploratory Study” 2018

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to better understand restaurant consumer decisions- specifically mothers with a child 10 years or younger, and what externalities affect those decisions. Mothers are the focus of this study because they have the most direct influence on others. The externalities that were examined in this study are defined as factors which occur outside of the restaurant environment. Overall trends published about this topic demonstrate how the restaurant industry is growing and how women hold the most purchase control. Other trends include the responsibility of women for the eating habits of others (commonly their children) and overall health. Ultimately, research and literature published about these topics can and will help the restaurant industry understand and tailor to the needs of their biggest consumer: mothers.

## Body

A number of different studies and literatures regarding women, mothers, and restaurants, provided insights and sparked new questions for Cathleen Jones in this exploratory study. Phillips (2016) found that spending at restaurants has surpassed spending on food at grocery stores for the first time in history in the US. Holland (n.d.-b) discovered that the buying power of moms in 2013 was \$2.1 trillion, women control 93% of annual US food purchases, and that women are estimated to make more than 80% of all consumer purchasing decisions. In addition, The National Restaurant Association (2014) states that the presence of young children in a family can reduce the amount of money spent in restaurants. Research from Phillips and Holland introduced the extraordinary purchasing power of women in the US as well their extraordinary

spending habits at restaurants. This research helped build an initial foundation for secondary research in “Restaurant Food Choices by Moms: An Exploratory Study”.

In addition to research from Philips and Holland, other literature provided insights for this exploratory study. According to New Strategist (2015) the restaurant industry experienced a decline in total spending from 2006-2013, and strategies to better reach restaurant customers will enable restaurants to compete more effectively. Furthermore, New Strategist (2015) found that married couples with children spend more than twice as much of their household spending on fast food restaurants and New Strategist (2015) suggests that better understanding the food choices of mothers will help restaurants to reach these important customer groups. Mom’s are in fact such an important customer group to the restaurant industry that according to Patton (2016) Papa John’s International Inc. spends over \$100 million a year (6% of its annual revenue) to get rid of unwanted ingredients to appeal to moms and millennials.

Other research showed how responsible mother’s feel for their children’s eating habits and overall health. A study by Petersen (2014) reported that mothers feel responsible for their children’s eating decisions and experience anxiety because of it. This study also reported that mothers seemed to exhibit a “high degree of vigilance in monitoring their children’s weight and diet”. According to Petersen (2014) in a study of Australian mothers, the mother indicated that the dietary choices of their children reflected directly upon their parenting, and defensiveness occurred when the mothers felt they had failed to monitor their children’s weight and diet. In a study by Rigney (2012) it was found that the sense of responsibility a mother has for their

children's food choices decreases as children age. This is why in "Restaurant Food Choices by Moms: An Exploratory Study" the researcher chose to study mothers who have younger children (10 years or younger).

## Reference

All of these research studies, literature reviews, and data show how important women are to the restaurant industry and how powerful their purchase power and influence on others is. This ties directly into the goal of my study which is to better understand, specifically, what externalities affect the consumer decisions of mothers (with a child ages 10 years or younger) outside of the restaurant environment.

Research from Phillips and Holland specifically introduced the extraordinary purchasing power of women in the US as well their extraordinary spending habits at restaurants. Research from New Strategist (2015) helped to target a specific audience (mothers) and strategies to reach that audience. Additionally, research from Patton (2016) stressed the significance of targeting mothers and how much money restaurants are in fact spending to target said audience. Finally, research from Peterson and Rigney demonstrated how responsible mother's feel for their children's eating habits and at what age that sense of responsibility is most powerful.

All of data set a solid foundation for "Restaurant Food Choices by Moms: An Exploratory Study". The data helped to formulate research questions and uncover who exactly the target audience of this exploratory study would be. All of the contributions prior to this

exploratory study provided great insights for secondary research about restaurant food choices by moms.