

## **The Relationship between Healthy Eating Products on Offer in Restaurants and Customer Needs**

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### **Abstract –**

Previous studies focused on food labels as well as sugar, salt, fat and calorie levels in food as main concerns for customers whenever they dined out. It is not however clear, whether the products on offer reflected the healthy eating customer needs. The purpose of this study was to establish the relationship between healthy eating products on offer and customer needs. The study is based on the Elaborate Likelihood Product Evaluation Model of the Expectancy Value theory by Richard, Petty and John Cassiopoulos. This theory is used to explain how customers select products by identifying and evaluating characteristics of products on offer in an outlet in relation to their individualized needs. Research administered questionnaires were used to collect data from 296 heads of department and 401 customers sampled from 74 healthy eating restaurants in Nairobi City County Kenya. This yielded a total of 697 respondents. Observation checklists were also used to establish healthy eating products listed on menus in comparison with customer needs. Results of the study show that products on offer in restaurants perceived by restaurant customers as healthy were: traditional foods, medicinal, products cooked using healthy cooking methods (59%); vegetarian food products (19.2%); gluten free products (12.2%) and sea food (9.6%). Healthy eating product customer needs on the other hand entailed traditional, medicinal and healthy cooked foods (53.6%); none genetically modified products (20.7%); low fat food products (7.8%) and organic food products (6.5%). Findings on the relationship between healthy eating products on offer and market needs for healthy eating products yielded the following: a Pearson correlation  $r$  value of -0.093, a regression  $p$  value of 0.001,  $t$  test value of 0.000 and a chi-square value of 0.443. Based on  $p$  values attained from regression (0.001) and  $t$  test (0.000) analysis, the study concludes that there is a significant relationship between healthy eating products on offer in restaurants in Nairobi city county and customer needs. Key words: Healthy eating, Healthy eating products, customer needs for healthy eating products

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