Marketing’s Influence on the Food Culture of a Nation: As told through the Edmonds’ Cookery Book

Ann-Marie Kennedy
Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand

Abstract

Purpose – This article explores how marketing has influenced the food culture of a nation. Specifically, the influences of aspects of marketing such as distribution, price, promotion and availability on the creation of food culture in New Zealand between 1880 and 1955 are considered.

Design/methodology/approach – An historical analysis is undertaken which looks at the influences of aspects of marketing such as distribution, price, promotion and availability on the creation of food culture in New Zealand between 1880 and 1955. As a cultural artifact used to produce and record cultural production, The Edmonds’ Cookery Book guides this historical piece. The Edmonds’ Cookery Book is the longest lasting cookbook in New Zealand and has been published since 1907 until the present day. A market penetration and promotional strategy the cookbook is a commentary on the diffusion of aspects of food culture in the country.

Findings – Distribution and price have been two major influences on New Zealand’s food culture along with trends from the UK. Overall, what has been found in this study is interaction between marketing and food culture in New Zealand, with the Edmonds’ Cookery Book tending to be a follower rather than an instigator.

Research limitations/implications – Given the influence that marketing can have on the consumption practices of developing nations and obesity levels, a study of the interaction between marketing and food culture development adds to the historical marketing literature and has implications for macromarketers. Influential marketing promotions such as free cookbooks may place the responsibility for developing nations’ health in marketer’s hands. In these cases, healthy and sustainable foods should be emphasized in any such communications.

Author Biography

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However, in the marketing world the influence of culture on consumer behavior takes 3 different aspects into consideration. 1) Culture as a whole –. Think of this as the statement “I love India” or “I love USA”. A nation’s culture can be understood at the macro level, but many countries are divided in sub cultures as well. Sub cultures are generally formed on the basis of religion and geography. Take any democratic country and you will find many different regions subdivided, with each region having its inherent characteristics. So, in India for example, the north is filled up of Sikh’s and Punjabi’s whereas the south is filled up of South Indian people. The dressing style, language, music of both these regions are completely different. Why study national gastronomy? “Foods and food preparation grow out of and reflect the living conditions of peoples. Preference determined by conditions become tenacious, a part of differing cultures. Meeting the basic need of food through the ages has been a process in which nearly every major attribute and urge of man appears--courage, skill, inventiveness, and even the most significant of the inner drives of the race. Development of the arts of cookery represents the inborn urge toward betterment as truly as any other development. Foreign influence on American cooking The study of German American (Italian American, Greek American, etc.) cooking starts with the study of traditional homeland cuisine and immigration patterns. McGee on Food and Cooking: An Encyclopedia of Kitchen Science, History and Culture by Harold McGee (Hodder & Stoughton, 2004, £30). Click to buy. Alex Renton says this book lifts the lid on "what really goes into the food on your plate - brave, fascinating, diet-altering investigations from a great journalist." Culinary Pleasures by Nicola Humble (Faber & Faber, 2006, £9.99). Click to buy. Will Skidelsky puts it thus: "A history of Britain's culinary development as told through its cookbooks, this scholarly volume offers a feast of diverting information." And, pointed out Tim Hayward, it's "an immensely readable history of the cookery book which puts our obsession with the outpourings of Jamie, Gord