# “Healthy” definition

The popularity and importance of consuming healthy foods is relatively new, as for most of human’s history the main concern was just to be able to get enough food to survive. It was around the 18th century, with the French Revolution, that the idea of restoring health using food came to the United States, but it was until the 20th century the first “vegetarian” restaurants opened with the goal of improving the healthy diets of people. (Whitaker, 2008)

Today the healthy food movement has move on from restaurants to grocery stores, dollar stores or even drugstores as people have become more conscious consumption, and us as Whole Foods our purpose is “to nourish people and the planet”. But even though this new lifestyle is at its peak, the main complain many customers make is why prices of healthy food must be so high, and statements such as “a hamburger is cheaper than a salad” is often heard everywhere. But is that really the case, or does healthy food cost less?

To be able to reply to that question the first thing to answer is: what is considered as “healthy food” and “cost”?

According to the World Health Organization, health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. And, as the Breast Cancer Organization defines, healthy eating means eating a variety of foods that give you the nutrients you need to maintain your health, feel good, and have energy. These nutrients include protein, carbohydrates, fat, water, vitamins, and minerals.

An exact categorization of healthy food is given by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which describes 6 groups of healthy food: vegetables, fruits, grains, protein foods and oils. Being grains separated in whole and refined grains, and protein foods in meats, poultry, eggs; seafood; and nuts, seeds, soy products. And the items are categorized as unhealthy if the food have more than 10% of added sugars, 10% of saturated fat and have more than 2,300 mg of sodium or is alcohol, as alcohol is not considered a component of the dietary patterns. (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2020)

And on the other hand, cost is defined by The Britannica Dictionary as the amount of money you pay for something. And from a customer’s point of view the word “price” can be used as a synonym. (The Britannica Dictionary, n.d.)

# Findings

Using those definitions, the data was delimited and the price per serving was taken as the variable to compare so we could answer the question: does healthy food cost less? It was found that there’s a difference between the average price per serving of healthy versus unhealthy food, being the healthy food price smaller by $0.02. Using that now the issue was if that difference was important to be taken into consideration. By further investigation it was found that even though there’s a slight difference between the prices, when comparing the dataset of average price per serving of both healthy and unhealthy foods that difference is not significatively important. (See Appendix A) (see Appendix B)

With those previous statements, it can be concluded that healthy and unhealthy food have statistically similar average prices per serving. Meaning at the same time that healthy food doesn’t cost less than any other type of food (unhealthy).

While the question of the study was not proven true, the data provide insights that if used well can be transformed into actions and advantages for Whole Foods:

1. Prove the economical accessibility of healthy foods and open new store locations:

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention nearly 173 billion dollars Americans have spent on healthcare for obesity related to poor nutrition. Many of them stating they don’t eat better because healthy foods are more expensive than other type of food, or they don’t have easy access to it. As proven by this study, healthy foods are not more expensive so that claim might be proven denied with marketing and publicity to create more demand. And, also it can open the probability of opening more stores so people can easily have access to more healthy options. (Prevention, 2022)

1. Increase the sugar conscious inventory:

People with chronic diseases tend to search for food according to the diet they must follow, for example low fat for people with high cholesterol, gluten free for people with celiac disease, etc. From all those diseases the most common one in the country and the world is diabetes, and according to the CDC people that suffer from it is increasing at an alarming rate. As this alarm continues to grow it also grows the opportunity to offer a more variety of products “sugar conscious” not only for diabetics but also for people who want to avoid that disease. But Whole Foods actual sugar conscious inventory is just about 35% and if with it we include people who are looking for low-fat or low sodium too for example, that percentage decreases considerably. The supermarket might be able to start taking advantage of that growing demand opportunity and increase the sugar conscious inventory from all the food categories. (Foundation, 2020)

1. Including more products per each diet type:

Nowadays the popularity of following not so restrictive diets is increasing, with diets such as paleo, keto, engine 2, etc. Up to today the most popular diet is the Mediterranean Diet, and it has also been claimed by nutritionists and doctors for its health benefits. For now, Whole Foods has a total of 5 different types of diets within their products: kosher, paleo, keto, whole-foods, and engine 2, but doesn’t have Mediterranean diet in their products or at least it has not labeled the food apt for consumption for that diet. As each diet have a unique variety of food that can be eaten people tend to go mostly to the place they know they’ll find most of the food that accommodates their lifestyle, and not including a key diet is leaving an important part of demand unattended. So, the key for Whole Foods not only is to increase the quantity of type of diets they have but also to include a considerable number of products per each so people might think first of Whole Foods when buying for food.

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# Appendix A

One-tailed t-test to test if the mean price per serving of healthy food is smaller than the average price per serving of unhealthy food.

Graphical user interface, text, application, email

Description automatically generated

# Appendix B

Two tailed t-test to see if there’s no statistically important difference between the average price per serving of healthy and unhealthy food.

Table

Description automatically generated