
Menu 2 - Paper 3

Menu, Journal of Food and Hospitality Research
Volume 2, 2013, Pages 30-38

Potentials for health promotion at worksite: an intra inter cultural comparison of bus drivers' ethnical foodscapes

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26048/na90-yk18>

Abstract: Eating has an immense impact on our health, and the contribution of research literature that tries to understand and explain our food habits has grown considerably over the past decades. These studies have showed that in our eating behaviour, we interact not only with the physical environment but also with the social and mental environment. Food and eating has increasingly become an object of public governance, especially when we are eating out of home as part of our work or educational life. Interventions aiming at improve our eating patterns have become mainstream in many of our everyday life settings.

This paper explores differences and similarities in the foodscapes of bus drivers in a multi-ethnic worksite. Our objective is to identify possibilities for creating healthier food environments and provide opportunities for healthy living. We will analyse how different ethnicities perceive their worksite foodscapes and we will identify barriers that should be taken into account in the planning of food based innovations at worksites.

This study shows that the shaping of eating patterns evolves in a complex matrix of cultural, social, mental and ethnic influences and that worksites can play an important role. It reveals that a 'one size fits all' approach to food focused interventions, aiming at developing consistent mental, social and physical foodscapes for bus drivers, will almost certainly fail.

Workplace based health promotion activities in multiethnic environments need to take different health perceptions into account. This paper suggests that active involvement of the workforce, respect for diversity in health perceptions and in relation to norms regarding how health and food are valued, are key elements in the creation of new and healthier 'ethnodishes' in future health promotion interventions.

Keywords: foodscapes, ethnicity, workplace eating, food habits, inequality in health.

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