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Economic Development and Its Influence on Food Innovation and Consumption Trends

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Abstract

The relationship between consumption—viewed from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives—and the level of economic development appears self-evident. However, food perception and food choices are influenced not only by economic development but also by the innovative efforts of food producers. This paper aims to analyze the connection between current trends in food product innovations and the levels of national income in selected countries. The empirical analysis was conducted using data on 15 food product innovation trends from the World Innovation Panorama, alongside World Bank data on Gross National Income levels. The study examines how economic development influences the direction of food innovations and the associated quality of food consumption. The findings reveal that the level of economic development significantly determines the trajectory of food innovations. In countries with higher income levels, there is a notable shift from focusing on the quantity of food consumed to an emphasis on the quality and attributes of food products. This shift reflects a broader trend where, after surpassing a certain income threshold, consumer demand increasingly prioritizes food quality over quantity. This conclusion underscores the role of economic development in shaping consumer preferences and driving food innovation. As nations progress economically, food producers are prompted to innovate not just to increase production but to enhance the nutritional value, safety, sustainability, and overall quality of their offerings to meet the evolving demands of more affluent consumers. This paper highlights the critical interplay between economic development and food innovation, demonstrating that as countries achieve higher income levels, there is a discernible transition in consumer behavior from quantity-focused to quality-focused food consumption. This insight is valuable for food producers and policymakers aiming to align food innovations with the changing demands of consumers in various economic contexts.

Keywords: Food Innovation, Economic Development, Consumer Behavior, Gross National Income, Food Quality

JEL Codes: O33, Q18, D12

1. INTRODUCTION

Engel's law suggests that as income rises, the proportion of income spent on food decreases, even if actual expenditure on food increases. This relationship is particularly evident when examining consumption patterns across different types of goods. Engel's law emphasizes that the functional form of the relationship between consumption and economic development varies depending on the type of goods or services in question. For essential goods such as food and basic necessities, as income levels increase, the proportion of income allocated to these items tends to decrease. This reflects the fact that once basic needs are met, any additional income is more likely to be spent on non-essential goods, such as leisure, luxury items, and services, which are often considered superior or luxury goods. As economic development progresses, households tend to shift their consumption patterns from basic goods to more diverse and higher-quality products, reflecting both quantitative increases in consumption (greater quantity) and qualitative changes (better quality or higher-value items). In the case of non-essential goods, the relationship with income growth is different, as higher income levels often lead to an increase in the consumption of luxury goods and services. This can be seen in the demand for better healthcare, education, travel, and cultural activities. In such cases, the proportion of income spent on these items may increase, reflecting their status as income-elastic goods, where demand increases more than proportionally as income rises.

Therefore, the relationship between consumption and economic development is not linear but rather varies according to the nature of the goods being consumed. Engel's law provides an important framework for understanding these patterns, indicating that while quantitative consumption may increase with economic development, the qualitative composition of consumption changes significantly, reflecting shifts in lifestyle, preferences, and living standards. As economies grow and become wealthier, the quantity of basic foods consumed tends to reach a saturation point. In these regions, increases in income no longer lead to significant increases in the amount of food consumed because basic dietary needs are already met. However, this does not mean that the nature of food demand remains static; rather, it evolves with changing consumer preferences and lifestyles. When income levels rise, consumers often prioritize the quality of food over its quantity, opting for higher-quality ingredients, organic and locally-sourced products, and foods perceived as healthier or more nutritious. There is also a growing focus on food safety, sustainability, and ethical sourcing. Alongside economic development, diets tend to diversify as consumers incorporate a wider range of foods, including exotic or imported products, into their meals. This shift reflects increased access to a broader array of foods

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due to globalization and advancements in food processing and distribution (Imran et al., 2022).

In wealthier economies, higher disposable incomes contribute to a growing demand for processed, convenience, and ready-to-eat foods, driven by lifestyle changes such as busier work schedules that make time-saving food options more appealing. The demand for dining out also increases, boosting the expansion of the food service industry, including restaurants, cafes, and fast-food outlets, to cater to the need for convenience and variety. Additionally, the rising awareness of health and wellness influences food choices, leading to greater demand for foods that are seen as beneficial for health, such as functional foods, superfoods, and dietary supplements. There is also a noticeable shift toward consuming products that are low in calories, fat, or sugar. Moreover, as awareness of the environmental and ethical impacts of food production grows, consumers in affluent economies are increasingly inclined to choose sustainably produced, fair-trade, and cruelty-free products. Therefore, even though the overall quantity of basic food consumption may stagnate in wealthier economies, the complexity and sophistication of food demand continue to grow. The focus moves away from merely fulfilling caloric needs to accommodating diverse preferences that include quality, convenience, health, and ethical considerations. This transformation in food consumption patterns illustrates the evolving nature of demand as economies develop and consumer priorities shift.

Food perception and choices indeed evolve with factors beyond rising incomes, reflecting a spectrum that spans from basic survival needs to the pursuit of pleasure and health benefits. In the literature, food perception is often framed within a continuum where, on one end, food is viewed primarily as a means of survival, while on the other end, it is associated with enjoyment, cultural expression, and lifestyle preferences. In regions where economic resources are limited, the primary concern is obtaining enough food to meet basic nutritional needs. Here, food choices are centered on affordability and accessibility, with a focus on staple carbohydrate-rich foods like rice, wheat, or maize, which provide essential energy at a lower cost. As economies develop and consumer incomes increase, the role of food shifts from mere sustenance to an experience tied to taste, convenience, and quality. This change is accompanied by a diversification of diets and the inclusion of foods with higher nutritional value, more variety, and added flavors. The shift also extends to the adoption of processed and convenience foods, which cater to time-pressed lifestyles. Food choices begin to include more animal protein, dairy products, fruits, and vegetables, reflecting a broader range of dietary options. At this stage, food is not only a source of energy but also a symbol of social status and personal identity, with consumers seeking out culinary experiences that align with their cultural, social, and lifestyle aspirations.

In more advanced economies, where basic nutritional needs are easily met, the focus of food consumption further evolves toward health, well-being, and sustainability. The demand for diet-specific, functional, and organic foods increases as consumers prioritize health benefits, environmental impact, and ethical considerations. Functional foods, fortified with vitamins, minerals, or other health-enhancing ingredients, gain popularity among those looking to prevent health issues or enhance physical performance. Organic foods appeal to consumers concerned about the use of synthetic pesticides, genetically modified organisms, and other environmental and health-related aspects of conventional agriculture. There is also a growing interest in diets that emphasize plant-based or vegan options, reflecting concerns about animal welfare and climate change. Food perception and choices are shaped by a complex interplay of cultural, economic, and social factors. While income levels play a significant role in expanding food options, other influences such as health trends, environmental awareness, and cultural values significantly drive the evolving nature of food consumption across different societies.

Indeed, food perception and choices are influenced by a combination of economic development and the innovative actions of food producers, who often target specialized niche markets. As economies grow and consumers' preferences diversify, food producers must adapt to evolving demands by introducing new products and enhancing existing ones to capture market attention. This dynamic process is particularly evident in the competition for niche food markets, where differentiation and innovation are key drivers. In specialized markets, food producers frequently innovate by developing products that cater to specific consumer needs, such as health-conscious diets, ethical considerations, or unique cultural tastes. For instance, the rise in demand for gluten-free, lactose-free, and plant-based products illustrates how producers have responded to dietary preferences and health trends. Similarly, the growth of the organic food market is driven by increasing consumer interest in sustainable agriculture and concerns about food safety. Producers in these markets leverage innovative agricultural practices, certification standards, and eco-friendly packaging to appeal to environmentally aware consumers.

Technological advancements also play a crucial role in shaping food choices. Innovations in food processing, preservation, and fortification allow producers to offer enhanced nutritional content, longer shelf life, or added functional benefits. For example, functional foods fortified with probiotics, omega-3 fatty acids, or antioxidants target health-conscious consumers seeking to improve their well-being through diet. Furthermore, developments in alternative protein sources, such as lab-grown meat and insect-based products, represent responses to the growing demand for sustainable and ethical food options. Marketing strategies are equally important in influencing food perception and choices. Food producers often employ storytelling, branding, and targeted advertising to communicate the values associated with their products, such as authenticity, local sourcing, or artisanal production. By appealing to consumer emotions and values, producers can create a sense of connection and loyalty, especially in niche markets where buyers are willing to pay a premium for products that align with their personal beliefs and lifestyle.

Overall, while economic development creates a foundation for more diverse food options, the innovative actions of food producers significantly shape how food is perceived and consumed. Through constant adaptation and competition, producers drive trends, create new market opportunities, and respond to shifting consumer expectations, ultimately

influencing the evolving landscape of food consumption. According to Rabobank (2014), innovations in agro-food systems should prioritize improved technologies and practices, as well as new business models. These innovations can be broadly categorized into process and product innovations, each with distinct characteristics and applications. Process innovations are often place-specific, designed to address challenges unique to certain regions or agricultural conditions. For example, improving dairy production methods in India, developing aquaculture techniques in Latin America, or enhancing local storage solutions in Sub-Saharan Africa are innovations tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of these areas. Such innovations can lead to significant local improvements in productivity, sustainability, and food security. On the other hand, product innovations, especially those related to international food brands, tend to have a more global character. These innovations are aimed at creating new or enhanced food products that appeal to a broad market, often transcending geographical boundaries. However, while it may seem that international companies, due to their concentration of resources, would find it easier to introduce new products, this is no longer necessarily the case. The process of developing products that meet changing consumer desires, stand out from competitors, and offer superior value has become increasingly challenging. This is due to the high level of competition in the global market and the difficulty of differentiating products in a meaningful way.

Moreover, retailers are seeking exclusive products that can help them distinguish their offerings and attract consumers. This trend puts additional pressure on food producers to innovate continuously and deliver unique products that retailers are willing to stock. At the same time, the global economic situation, characterized by uncertainties and fluctuating demand, has increased risk aversion among companies. This economic climate makes it more difficult for businesses to commit to the significant investments required for product innovation, particularly in untested or emerging markets. As a result, while the opportunities for global product innovation remain substantial, companies must navigate a complex landscape where local adaptations, consumer expectations, and economic risks intersect. To succeed, firms need to adopt strategies that combine localized process innovations with globally appealing product innovations, effectively balancing the demands for uniqueness, quality, and market fit.

2. DISCUSSION

The analysis of food product innovation trends (FPITs) observed during the period 2013-2014 reveals a distinct hierarchy in consumer preferences and market focus. This qualitative approach to examining trends in innovative food products launched during this time highlights the prominence of certain attributes and product characteristics over others. The trend that stood out the most was the "variety of senses," which reflects a strong consumer interest in products that engage multiple senses and offer pleasurable experiences. This trend's dominance can be attributed to the global inclination toward seeking enjoyment in everyday life, although consumers remain budget-conscious and may not be willing to pay a premium for products that offer exotic or overly indulgent experiences. As such, food innovations that provide sensory pleasure without excessive cost are likely to appeal to a broad audience. The second most significant trend was "sophistication," indicating that consumers value refined and premium-quality food products, possibly due to the rising influence of global culinary culture and the growing importance of food as a lifestyle choice. However, even with the appeal of sophisticated products, cost remains a factor, limiting the extent to which this trend can dominate the market.

Within the "convenience" axis, the "easy to handle" trend ranked third, suggesting that convenience continues to be a major driver of food innovation. Consumers increasingly seek products that are easy to prepare, consume, or transport, fitting into busy lifestyles. The "nomadism" trend, which emphasizes products catering to mobile lifestyles, was the least important in this category, possibly because not all consumers require on-the-go food solutions to the same extent. Trends associated with natural and health-oriented products, such as "natural" and "medical" attributes, were relatively prominent, reflecting a growing awareness and demand for products that support health and wellness. However, "vegetal" (plant-based) products received comparatively less attention, indicating that while there is interest in plant-based diets, it may not yet be a dominant factor in food product innovation during the observed period. The trends aligned with "physical" and "ethics" axes—such as ecological considerations, cosmetic benefits, and solidarity with social causes—were the least represented. Products emphasizing "well-being" and "slimness" were more frequently observed than those focusing on cosmetic benefits, possibly reflecting consumer priorities on health and weight management over aesthetic concerns. Interestingly, despite the rising attention given to ecological issues in some societies, products explicitly linked to the "ecology" trend were not as prevalent as might be expected, suggesting a gap between consumer awareness of ecological issues and their impact on purchasing decisions.

The FPITs observed during this period show that sensory pleasure, sophistication, and convenience dominate the landscape of food product innovations, while trends related to ethics, plant-based diets, and ecological concerns remain less prominent. This hierarchy suggests that while there is some alignment with broader societal shifts toward health and sustainability, the strongest drivers of food innovation continue to be pleasure and convenience. The analysis of food product innovation trends across various countries shows a clear dominance of the "variety of senses" trend, which accounted for an average of 33.9% of all innovations. However, its significance varied from one country to another, despite being the most stable trend in terms of relative dispersion, with a coefficient of variation of 20.0%. This indicates that while the trend was prominent globally, the extent of its impact differed, reflecting variations in local consumer preferences. Conversely, the "cosmetic" and "solidarity" trends exhibited the highest variability. The "cosmetic" trend, in particular, was not present in six countries but reached 4.4% in Japan, followed by 1.1% in both Brazil and China. The "solidarity" trend, which emphasizes social and ethical considerations, was most notable in the United Kingdom

(1.3%), Switzerland (1.2%), and Spain (1.0%), but was absent in countries like Mexico and China. The high coefficients of variation for these trends (186% for cosmetic and 94.5% for solidarity) indicate significant inconsistencies in their adoption across different markets.

Several other trends, such as "fun," "exoticism," "energy," "well-being," "vegetal," and "ecology," also showed substantial deviations, with their shares varying more than 50% from the mean. This suggests that cultural, economic, and regulatory factors may influence the extent to which these trends are embraced in various regions. For instance, preferences for exotic flavors or energy-boosting products may be more pronounced in some markets than in others. Moderately dispersed trends, with coefficients of variation between 30% and 40%, included "easy to handle," "sophistication," "natural," "medical," "slimness," "nomadism," "natural," and "time-saving." These trends showed some level of consistency across countries, though differences still existed, potentially reflecting the varying levels of demand for convenience, health-related products, or premium offerings. This variation in the adoption of food product innovation trends indicates that while some preferences are shared globally, others are more localized, driven by specific market dynamics, cultural preferences, and consumer behaviors. The diversity in trend adoption highlights the importance of a nuanced approach to product innovation, catering to the unique demands of different markets.

The intensity of various food product innovation trends (FPITs) across different countries reveals unique preferences and market dynamics. Each country exhibits a dominant trend that reflects its cultural values, consumer behaviors, or economic priorities. In the U.S., the "ecology" and "vegetal" trends stood out, indicating a strong market orientation toward sustainable and plant-based products. Additionally, the "medical" and "natural" trends were also prevalent, suggesting a heightened consumer focus on health-conscious and environmentally-friendly options. Japan emerged as a leader in several trends, with "cosmetic," "energy," and "well-being" being the most prominent. This reflects a cultural emphasis on beauty, vitality, and health maintenance, which aligns with Japan's reputation for integrating wellness into everyday life. The United Kingdom saw the "solidarity" trend as most prevalent, which may indicate a greater concern for ethical consumption and social responsibility among British consumers. Meanwhile, in France, the "sophistication" trend dominated, resonating with the country's well-known appreciation for premium quality and refined tastes. Other countries displayed distinct preferences: Mexico led in the "slimness" trend, possibly linked to a growing awareness of health and fitness, while Brazil showed a preference for the "nomadism" trend, likely reflecting the need for convenient, on-the-go food options in a fast-paced lifestyle. In the Netherlands, "exoticism" and "time-saving" trends were most intense, suggesting an appetite for unique flavors and practical solutions in daily life.

Spain was a significant market for both the "fun" and "easy to handle" trends, perhaps due to a cultural affinity for enjoyable food experiences and convenience. These regional variations demonstrate that while some trends have a global appeal, the intensity of their adoption can differ greatly, driven by localized consumer expectations and market conditions. The insights suggest that food producers must tailor their innovations to resonate with specific country-specific preferences to succeed in these diverse markets. Using Gross National Income (GNI) per capita (purchasing power parity, current international \$) as a proxy for consumer incomes provides a quantifiable means to assess how economic factors may influence the occurrence and intensity of food product innovation trends (FPITs). Given that GNI per capita captures the economic wealth and purchasing power within a country, it offers insight into how income levels can shape consumer preferences and drive demand for specific types of food innovations. Higher-income countries are generally more likely to have consumers who can afford premium, specialized, or niche food products, which could explain the stronger presence of trends such as "sophistication," "natural," or "medical" in wealthier markets like the United States, Japan, and France. In these markets, consumers may prioritize quality, health benefits, and sustainability over cost, thereby encouraging food producers to introduce innovations that cater to these preferences.

Conversely, in lower-income countries, trends such as "easy to handle" or "time-saving" may be more prevalent, as consumers prioritize convenience and affordability due to limited purchasing power or time constraints. Trends like "slimness" in Mexico might indicate a rising middle class's interest in health-related food options, influenced by growing awareness of lifestyle diseases and dietary needs. Cultural factors also play a role in shaping FPITs. For example, the prominence of "cosmetic" and "energy" trends in Japan reflects cultural values that emphasize beauty and vitality. While cultural influences are more challenging to measure quantitatively, they interact with income levels to shape food markets' demand and supply dynamics. The alignment between the supply-driven trends and demand-driven consumer preferences suggests that international food corporations are responsive to varying consumer needs across markets. By using income levels as a proxy, it becomes possible to explore the correlation between economic development and the adoption of specific FPITs, providing a clearer understanding of how market characteristics influence food innovation trends.

The considerable variation in GNI per capita levels across the analyzed countries provides a useful basis for investigating the connection between income levels and the intensity of food product innovation trends (FPITs). Countries with higher GNI per capita, such as the U.S., Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Canada, exhibit different consumer behavior patterns compared to lower-income countries like Brazil, Mexico, and China. This economic disparity likely influences the types of food innovations that are most prevalent in each market. In wealthier countries, where GNI per capita exceeds \$40,000, there is often a greater emphasis on premium and specialized food products. These markets may show higher demand for trends such as "sophistication," "natural," or "medical," reflecting a preference for quality, health-consciousness, and environmental sustainability. For instance, consumers in these countries may be willing to pay a premium for products that offer unique sensory experiences, health benefits, or eco-friendly attributes. Meanwhile, countries with GNI per capita below \$30,000, such as Brazil, Mexico, and China, may have food innovation trends that

cater more to affordability, convenience, and basic nutritional needs. Here, trends such as "easy to handle" or "nomadism" might be more common, as consumers prioritize convenience and practicality due to economic constraints. Additionally, the emphasis on trends like "slimness" in Mexico suggests a growing awareness of health issues, possibly driven by increasing middle-class incomes and lifestyle changes.

The mid-range income countries, including Spain, France, Italy, the UK, and Japan, with GNI per capita between \$30,000 and \$40,000, may exhibit a mix of FPITs that cater to both premium and practical considerations. These markets could represent a transitional stage where consumers' preferences shift towards more sophisticated products as incomes rise. The wide dispersion in GNI per capita levels across these countries thus serves as an indicator of the diverse market conditions influencing the intensity and nature of FPITs. Higher-income markets are likely to drive demand for niche and premium food innovations, while lower-income markets may focus more on accessible and cost-effective options. This income-related variability helps explain why certain trends are more dominant in specific countries, providing insights into the economic and cultural factors shaping global food innovation. The analysis suggests a general trend where the intensity of certain food product innovation trends (FPITs) increases with higher national income, while others are less prevalent in wealthier countries. When examining the relationships between income levels and FPIT occurrences, the findings indicate that trends like "exoticism," "solidarity," "ecology," "easy to handle," "sophistication," "vegetal," "natural," "fun," and "time saving" tend to be more prominent in higher-income countries. This pattern suggests that wealthier consumers may prioritize diverse and sophisticated food experiences, eco-friendly practices, convenience, and health-related attributes more than consumers in lower-income countries.

Conversely, trends such as "nomadism," "medical," "slimness," "variety of senses," "energy and well-being," and "cosmetic" appear to be less correlated with higher income. This could imply that these trends are either more widespread in lower-income markets due to different consumer needs and preferences or that they do not show a strong income-related pattern. The analysis of correlation coefficients further supports these observations, with "exoticism," "nomadism," and "solidarity" showing the highest absolute values, indicating a stronger relationship with income levels. In particular, "exoticism" and "solidarity" are more common in higher-income countries, possibly reflecting a willingness to explore diverse culinary experiences and support social causes through consumption. On the other hand, "nomadism," which suggests a preference for portable and convenient food options, might be less emphasized in wealthier markets where convenience is already embedded in more sophisticated forms. However, it is important to acknowledge that only three FPITs—"exoticism," "nomadism," and "solidarity"—showed statistically significant relationships with income. This statistical significance underscores that the observed relationships for other FPITs may not be robust and could be influenced by other unmeasured factors. Thus, while there are some discernible patterns, caution must be exercised in interpreting these trends without considering statistical significance and potential confounding variables.

3. CONCLUSION

The analysis suggests that in countries with higher levels of economic development, consumer preferences tend to favor food products associated with trends like "exoticism" and "solidarity." This indicates a growing interest among wealthier consumers in exploring unique culinary experiences and supporting values or causes through their purchasing choices, such as sustainability, fair trade, or cultural diversity. These preferences reflect a shift toward more sophisticated and ethically conscious consumption patterns in developed markets. On the other hand, attributes typical of the "nomadism" trend, which emphasizes convenience and the ability to eat regardless of conditions, appear to be less prominent in higher-income countries. This could imply that as economies develop, consumers may prioritize other product qualities over basic convenience, such as taste variety, ethical considerations, or health benefits. The reduced emphasis on nomadic food products may also indicate that in wealthier markets, convenience is integrated into more advanced product features, making basic portability less of a distinguishing factor. Overall, these insights highlight prospective market opportunities in the food sector as economic development progresses. Companies can capitalize on evolving consumer preferences by introducing more sophisticated, diverse, and ethically-oriented food products in developed markets, while in emerging markets, focusing on convenience and practicality may still hold significant appeal. The trends also underscore the importance of aligning product innovations with the values and lifestyle choices of consumers in different economic contexts to meet their evolving expectations.

The observed shifts in the importance of various food product innovation trends (FPITs) across countries with differing levels of economic development offer some compelling insights. In higher-income countries, the growing emphasis on the ethics axis—evident through the increasing representation of "solidarity" and "ecology" trends—signals a shift toward more socially responsible and environmentally conscious consumer behavior. Consumers in these markets are increasingly prioritizing products that align with their values, such as sustainability, fair trade, and ethical sourcing. This growing concern for ethical considerations reflects the maturing of consumer preferences as economic prosperity allows people to focus not just on basic needs but also on social and environmental impacts. At the same time, the diminished presence of the "physical" axis trends, including slimness, cosmetic, and energy and well-being, suggests that these attributes become less of a priority as economic development progresses. In wealthier markets, consumers may feel less pressure to focus on physical appearance and quick energy boosts because other lifestyle factors, such as access to fitness, healthcare, and diverse diets, already support these goals. As a result, the physical attributes of food products may be seen as less critical compared to ethical considerations. Changes are also emerging within the "pleasure," "health," and "convenience" axes. For instance, while the trend of "nomadism" (convenient food products that can be consumed anywhere) diminishes, there is a stronger preference for products that save time or are easy to handle,

indicating a nuanced shift in convenience needs. In terms of health attributes, consumers are now less focused on products with specific health-boosting ingredients. Instead, they prefer foods that are naturally healthful, minimally processed, or plant-based, reflecting an evolved understanding of health as a holistic lifestyle choice rather than a reliance on functional additives. Furthermore, the trend of "variety of senses" is still prominent but shows signs of weakening in favor of more specialized product innovations that offer fun, sophistication, and exotic qualities. This suggests that in higher-income markets, consumers are willing to explore unique and premium experiences, even at higher prices. Exotic and sophisticated food products tap into consumers' desire for novelty and cultural diversity, while also reflecting status and lifestyle choices.

The broader question of why food product innovations in higher-income countries are increasingly associated with ethics rather than physical attributes can be attributed to several factors. As societies become wealthier, consumers shift from fulfilling basic needs to pursuing higher-order values. Ethical concerns like sustainability, fair trade, and animal welfare gain importance as disposable incomes rise, allowing people to afford products that align with their values. Higher levels of education and access to information in developed countries contribute to increased consumer awareness about social and environmental issues. This heightened awareness influences purchasing decisions, driving demand for ethically produced and environmentally friendly food products. In wealthier societies, health is viewed as a more comprehensive lifestyle that includes physical, mental, and environmental well-being. As a result, products that contribute to a sustainable lifestyle, such as plant-based or organic foods, are favored over those that solely offer immediate physical benefits like weight loss or cosmetic enhancements. In high-income markets, basic food product categories are often saturated, leading consumers to seek out premium, niche, or differentiated offerings. The ethics axis, with its focus on sustainability and social impact, provides a way for companies to innovate and add value in mature markets. Overall, these shifts indicate that as economic development progresses, consumer preferences in food markets evolve toward a more sophisticated, ethically conscious, and diverse set of values, leading to changes in the relative importance of different FPITs. It is essential to recognize that the consumer trends of the past several years have been significantly shaped by the 2007-2008 global financial crisis. This economic downturn brought about a shift in consumer behavior, where purchasing material goods was no longer at the forefront of daily life for many individuals. As financial instability and money shortages affected numerous households, consumption patterns had to adapt, often involving a reduction in spending. This shift in behavior led to an increased prominence of discount retailers and the expansion of private labels, as consumers sought more affordable options without sacrificing quality. The demand for certain services, such as repair shops or distance learning platforms, also grew, reflecting a more cost-conscious approach to lifestyle and education. Simultaneously, new retail strategies emerged, including short-term sales spaces, known as pop-up stores, which provided more flexible and budget-friendly shopping experiences. Additionally, new roles in the market, such as advisors on consumption reduction and budget management, became more common, helping consumers navigate this new financial landscape.

The economic crisis also prompted changes in product packaging, with an emphasis on simplicity and environmental friendliness, responding to both cost pressures and a growing awareness of sustainability. Furthermore, the hierarchy of consumer products began to shift. For example, the popularity of relaxing beverages increased, replacing the previously dominant demand for energy drinks as consumers sought stress relief rather than stimulation. The slow food movement, which emphasizes local, traditional, and sustainable food production, gained traction, prompting both local and larger-scale producers to address these evolving consumer needs. Overall, these trends suggest that the financial crisis catalyzed a broader cultural shift toward more mindful and responsible consumption, reshaping not just what people buy, but also how and why they buy it. The analysis of the intensity of food product innovation trends (FPITs) in various countries suggests a link between these trends and the levels of GNI per capita, especially regarding nomadism, exoticism, and solidarity. In higher-income countries, consumers appear more open to exploring new and diverse culinary experiences, such as unique tastes and recipes from other cultures. Their purchasing decisions often reflect ethical considerations, such as supporting disadvantaged communities or avoiding products associated with human rights abuses. Conversely, convenience-oriented trends like nomadism, which emphasize ease of eating regardless of conditions, are less prominent in these affluent markets. This indicates that as economic development progresses, the focus shifts from the quantity of food consumed to the quality and ethical attributes of food products. This trend aligns with Engel's law, which posits that as household income increases, the proportion of income spent on food decreases, leading consumers to prioritize quality over quantity. When a certain income threshold is reached, the demand for basic food staples tends to level off, giving way to preferences for premium, ethically-produced, or health-focused products. This shift illustrates how economic development influences not just the amount of food consumed but also the characteristics and values associated with consumption. To further understand the variations in FPITs across different countries, it would be beneficial to consider cultural dimensions such as power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence. These cultural factors can help explain why certain food innovation trends resonate more in some countries than others. For example, in societies with high individualism, there may be a stronger demand for niche or personalized food experiences, while in cultures with higher uncertainty avoidance, food products with clear health benefits may be more appealing. Integrating cultural dimensions into the analysis could provide a more comprehensive view of how economic and cultural factors jointly shape food product innovations worldwide.

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