

How Is the New Product Development Process Performed in a Fast-Casual Restaurant?¹

Fast-Casual Bir Restoranda Yeni Ürün Geliştirme Süreci Nasıl Yapılmaktadır?

Oğuz NEBİOĞLU, Alanya Alaaddin Keykubat University Turkey, oguz.nebioglu@alanya.edu.tr

Orcid No: 0000-0002-3436-7754

Samet AK, Alanya Alaaddin Keykubat University, Turkey, samet.ak@alanya.edu.tr

Orcid No: 0000-0003-0996-0844

Abstract: The research aims to examine the process of developing new products in a fast-casual restaurant. Best of our knowledge this is the first research that reviewed the process of new product development in a fast-casual restaurant with empirical findings. In this context, a restaurant operating in Antalya has been identified as a research area, and the research has been conducted with the qualitative case study method. The data were collected in two different ways as participant observation and document review and were analyzed with content analysis. The new product development process takes place in seven stages as idea development, pre-screening, trial and error, prototype development, scale-up, scanning, finalization and application. The aspects of the process that are similar or different with different types of restaurants (fine dining, quick service restaurants) are discussed with prior research findings and suggestions are presented for future research.

Keywords: Product Development, Restaurant, Case Study, Antalya

JEL Classification: E23, L11, L66, L83, C93

Öz: Bu araştırmanın amacı, fast-casual bir restoranda yeni ürün geliştirme sürecini incelemektir. Bu araştırma ulaştığı ampirik bulgularıyla yeni ürün geliştirme sürecini bu restoran türünde inceleyen ilk araştırmadır. Bu bağlamda Antalya'da faaliyet gösteren bir fast-casual restoran araştırma alanı olarak seçilmiş ve çalışma nitel araştırma yaklaşımıyla örnek olay çalışması olarak yürütülmüştür. Araştırmada veriler katılımcı gözlem ve doküman incelemesi yoluyla toplanmış ve elde edilen veriler içerik analiziyle analiz edilmiştir. Araştırmanın bulgularına göre yeni ürün geliştirme sürecinin: fikir geliştirme, ön tarama, deneme ve yanılma, prototip/ön ürün üretme, geliştirme, tarama ile nihai ürünün ortaya çıktığı sonlandırma ve uygulama adımları olmak üzere yedi aşamada gerçekleştiği görülmektedir. Elde edilen bulgular alanyazında daha önce yapılmış çalışmalar ile karşılaştırılmış, tartışılmış ve ilerideki araştırmalar için öneriler sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ürün Geliştirme, Restoran, Örnek Olay Çalışması, Antalya

JEL Sınıflandırması: E23, L11, L66, L83, C93

1. Introduction

Social developments such as industrialization, urbanization and globalization have led to the growth and development of the food and beverage services industry as in all areas (Breadsworth, and Keil 2011). The increase in the number of enterprises led to an intensely competitive environment. While restaurants meet the eating and drinking needs of people; They had to achieve targets such as providing a competitive advantage, gaining more shares from the market, and maintaining their sustainability (Kandampully, and Suhartanto, 2000;

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Cao, and Kim 2015). These issues have attracted the interest of the academy as well as everyday life.

In the literature, academic studies on food and beverage businesses can be examined in two categories: business and consumer perspective. While the studies conducted from the business perspective are mostly managerial (administrative) studies focusing on menu performance (Kivela 2003; Glanz et al. 2007; Bernstein, Ottenfeld, and Witte 2008; Seyitoglu 2017; Filimonau, and Krivcova, 2017); studies from the consumer perspective focus on perceptual, attitudinal and behavioural issues such as consumer satisfaction, complaint, intention to visit again (Gupta, McLaughlin, and Gomez 2007; Han, and Ryu 2009; Hyun 2010; Ryu, Lee, and Kim 2012) in the context of restaurant features. In these researches, the effects of restaurant features (physical elements, social elements etc.) on consumer satisfaction, especially the food and beverage offered in the restaurants, are frequently emphasized. These studies from the perspective of business and consumers generally deal with the effective use of the products offered in the restaurants and the measurement of the possible reactions of the consumers to the products offered.

In both perspectives, the main product is the food and beverage served in restaurants. In this context, in order for the restaurants to have a competitive advantage, they need to offer different products than other businesses. Barney (1991) describes these products as rare, inimitable, unsubstituted, valuable products. The studies to have these kinds of products are also called as new product development efforts. These efforts should be seen as a leading phenomenon that should be at the top of the managerial work of restaurants. However, there are very few studies which are about new product development studies compared to menu performance and consumer studies. In this context, this study focused primarily on the process of developing new products in the literature; with a case study, it aimed to explain how the new product development process took place in a fast-casual restaurant (FCR).

2. Literature

2.1. New Product Development in Food and Beverage Businesses

New product development studies are observed in all areas of the food and beverage services industry, especially food production factories. These studies, which are an essential part of marketing activities, are very risky for many businesses because of their failure rate is high (Rudolph 1995). Therefore, to understand the new product development process and reduce these risk efforts is made.

In this context, Rudolph's (1995) study has addressed industrial food production and explained the new product development process in food factories in three stages. These stages are defined as the identification, development and placing on the market of the product. Another research that also deals with industrial food production aims to conceptualize the new product development process. Findings show that issues such as expertise(know-how), successful supply chain and avoidance of counterfeit products are prominent in developing new products (Stewart-Knox, Mitchell, Bunting, and Parr 2003).

These study findings have been criticized over time that restaurants do not fully meet their new product development needs (Harrington 2004). Even though industrial food production and restaurants offer similar products, opinions regarding innovation practices may be different in their nature. In the literature, studies on the new product development process in restaurants have emerged.

2.2. New Product Development in Restaurants

Although there are few studies on the subject of developing new products for restaurants, we can examine these studies in two categories as conceptual studies and field research. The first of the theoretical studies state that the process of developing new products in restaurants consists of four sections called formulating innovation, implementation, evaluation - control and presentation (Harrington 2004). Another study synthesized the findings of various studies that addressed the new product development process. It emphasizes the need for a balanced work between promoting creativity and effective management of the innovation process in new product development (Harrington, and Ottenbacher 2013).

We can classify field studies focusing on the new product development process as model adapting, measuring relationship-effect and following the process. The first of the studies dealt within the scope of field research in adaptation studies. Adaptation studies mean that models used in different fields should be handled in developing new products in restaurants. Man, Lui, and Lai (2010) were conducted by testing a model called Evidence-Based Management (EBM), which is generally applied in education and medicine, on a food and beverage business. Findings showed that the model in question could be used in developing new products. There are also studies in the literature measuring the effect of various variables on new product development. Cho, Bonn, Giunipero, and Jaggi (2017) examine the impact of social capital on the new product development process in restaurant and supplier relations. Findings show that social capital is an active factor in the process of developing new products. The studies that follow the process, which is the last of the field researches, have

been carried out with the assumption that the innovation activities will differ according to the restaurant types even if the restaurants offer similar products. The first of these studies (Ottenbacher, and Harrington 2007) was carried out on Michelin star restaurant chefs and emphasized that the new product development models are different from the traditional product development models previously presented in the literature. According to the findings of the research, the process of developing new products consists of 7 stages. The other study covered fast-food restaurants. In the study, which focuses on new product development similar to the first study, the product development process consists of 13 stages, and screening is carried out after each critical step (Ottenbacher, and Harrington 2009).

The findings of these studies emphasize that the new product development process is an issue to be highlighted. While these studies provide explanations regarding the process, they state that the process may differ according to the types of restaurants. As a matter of fact, although the study presented by Harrington (2004) claims that it has developed a model for all kinds of restaurants, subsequent studies (Ottenbacher, and Harrington 2007; 2009) suggest that different new product development processes are carried out according to the types of restaurants. This research examines the process in fast-casual restaurants, unlike fine dining and quick-service restaurants (QSR), where the new product development process is discussed.

2.3. Research Area: Fast-Casual Pizza Restaurant

According to one of the most common classifications in the literature, restaurants are classified as fine dining, casual dining, fast-casual and fast-food restaurants by taking into account the products they offer and the way they are presented (Wilkinson 2010). The concept of fast-casual is a combination of fast food and casual dining. It refers to restaurants that combine the quick service offered by fast-food restaurants with fresh and healthy products, an appetizing presentation, a good story and a fun experience (Ryu, Han, and Jang 2010). Such restaurants emerged as an alternative to fast-food restaurants in the USA in the 1990s; they have had a significant share in the market (Tillotson 2003; DiPietro, and Bufquin 2017- 3).

The studies dealing with the new product development process above are working on fine dining restaurants (Ottenbacher, and Harrington 2007) and fast-food restaurants (Ottenbacher, and Harrington 2009). This research has determined the fast-casual restaurant type as a research area. The fact that such a process has not been studied in such restaurants previously was decisive in the selection of the research area. The restaurant subject to the research is a pizza restaurant opened in Antalya in 2017. This business defines itself as a fast-

casual pizza restaurant that aims to serve delicious and healthy pizzas with quality ingredients, unlike fast food pizzerias. The restaurant offers catering services in four categories: tray pizza, classic pizza, dessert and beverage. This research focused only on the new product development process (tray pizza) in one category.

3. Method

The study was carried out with a qualitative case study pattern to find answers to the research question. Case studies allow to explore a particular phenomenon, situation, department, group or community with a holistic understanding (Kumar 2011- 127), and to seek answers to why and how (Yin 2018). Accordingly, it will offer an opportunity to examine how the new product development process in a fast-casual restaurant type takes place (Güler et al. 2015- 301). It is seen that case study is a useful type of research in the studies carried out within the context of the case study in restaurants (Lashley 2000; Chen 2014) and also in studies focusing on menu development and analysis (Jones, and Miffl 2001) in restaurants.

Within the scope of the research, data were collected with participant observation and document review. In this context, observation notes (25 pages), menu card samples/essays (3) and photographs (80) taken between December 2016 and August 2017 were used. In this process, one of the researchers has been joined in all the development and improvement processes and take an active role in the production and implementation processes. Thereby researchers take an opportunity to collect data by closely monitoring and experiencing the product development process which is stated in the literature as that might be in a complex and different structure (DeWalt, and DeWalt 2010; Jorgensen 2015).

In qualitative researches, analysis can be done in two different ways: induction and deduction (Elo, and Kyngas 2008). Because of this, research follows the findings of the models previously presented in the literature and data analyzed with using the deductive method and also simultaneously by pairwise comparison (Güler et al. 2015; Yin 2018). The different product development processes in the literature and existing process in the QCR were compared.

As in any research conducted with a qualitative approach, should be paid attention to the trustworthiness of the research in case studies (Creswell 2016). The data are enriched with participant observations and documents; Throughout the product development process, a researcher took part in every stage of this process, which lasted nine months in order to monitor all stages of the process. The data were individually coded by two researchers qualified in qualitative research, and then the researchers discussed and analyzed the process for a long time to reach a consensus on the findings.

4. Results

As seen in Figure 1, the process of developing new products in a fast-casual restaurant is carried out in seven stages. The stages in the process were named as idea development, pre-screening, trial and error, prototype development, scale-up, screening and finalization and implementation. The preliminary researches that followed the process had an impact on the naming of the stages (Harrington 2004; Ottenbacher, and Harrington 2007; Ottenbacher, and Harrington 2009; Harrington, and Ottenbacher 2013). The findings address all steps in detail.

4.1. Idea Development

There are three factors that are effective in developing ideas that form the basis of the product development process. The first of these is the professional knowledge and knowledge of the chef. Based on his previous experience, the chef sees pizza al taglio as a profitable and non-equivalent product. This pizza variety, which is different from the pizzas in the current market, thinks that it will gain the appreciation of consumers.

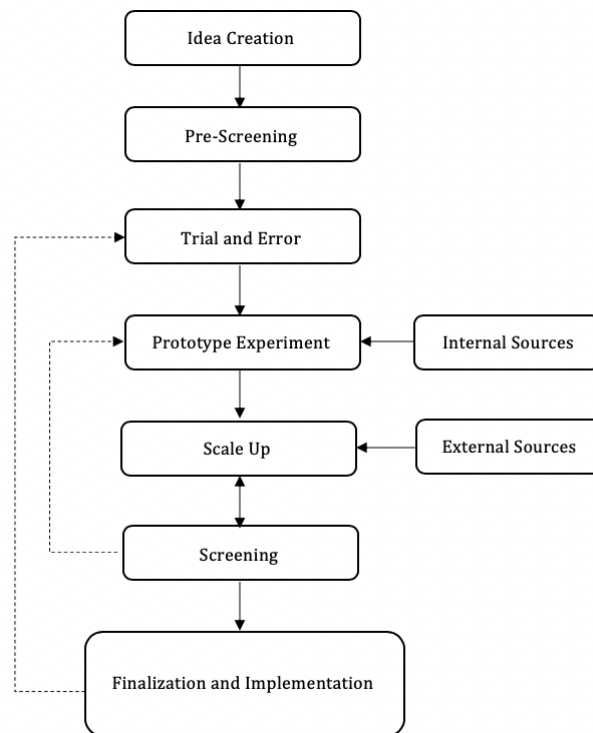


Figure 1. New Product Development Process in the Fast-Casual Restaurant

The basis of this idea is that the consumer observes that he/she prefers this product very much in Italy, the place of origin. During his training there, he learned all the technical and marketing tricks of the product by experiencing in the restaurant where only pizza al taglio was served. He was thought that this product would also be successful in Turkey. The idea

development process has continued in order to decide how and in what way to present this product in Antalya, where the company operates. At this stage, although the product is not seen as a completely new product, it is entirely new in the market. In addition, the chef has aimed to create new types of tray pizza that have not been presented before by using local ingredients other than traditional Italian pizzas.

4.2. Pre-Screening

After the idea creation, the next step involving the two-dimensional screening process. They search first the equipment and then raw materials to produce pizza al taglio in Turkey. The features of the equipment such as the oven, tray, dough machine, have been taken into consideration in order to make the product in the same way as the original. Due to the supply difficulties of many pieces of equipment, specially produced ovens and trays for this pizza were brought from Italy. After that, to create pizza with local sources, raw material screening processes began. At this point, both the flour to be used for the dough and the toppings of the pizza have been determined. For example, over ten flour brands were examined for pizza dough and prepared at least a demo for each one. To deciding to which topping ingredients will use in pizza, the most preferred pizzas were researched. In order to do this, besides online researches on consumer preferences, information from suppliers and some of the most sold pizza variations of some competitors have been viewed.

4.3. Trial and Error

At this stage, trial and error studies were carried out in three phases as determination of dough, topping ingredients and cooking. Unlike industrial pizzas, the main criterion of pizza dough is that it is a dough prepared by natural fermentation without additives. This was difficult but more delicious. In this part, using different flours and different dough-making techniques, it is aimed to develop the ideal dough recipe. After that, the process of trials related to the determination and presentation of the topping ingredients started. Especially, pizza topping mixes consisting of three, four and more ingredients have been tried. It has been attempted to avoid the use of canned and ready-made products. At this point, it is envisioned that some toppings can be produced and used within the restaurant. Lamb roasting, a traditional taste of Turkish cuisine, has been tried. Ingredients such as smoked lamb ribs, fresh spicy potatoes and spinach that are not used on pizzas generally are examined. During this process, the toppings which decided to be used on the pizza were noted. This stage can be expressed as a stage of cooking pizza dough in the desired way and determining the ingredients that are thought to be compatible with each other.

4.4. Prototype Experiment

At this stage, the prototype development process of the pizza has been started with the dough and the topping ingredients that decided to be used. In this context, four different pizzas have been identified. The first of these is pizza consisting of tomato sauce, lamb roasting and mozzarella cheese. The second is roasted eggplant and pepper pizza. The third is a pizza made of roasted chicken and potatoes, fresh garlic and rosemary. The fourth and last pizza is sandwich pizza with seasonal greens, and smoked turkey. Considering the product supply, the required time for making products ready for service (mise en place) and a service speed of pizzas were tested, and service rehearsals were performed by employees. And for each of them, these processes developed and standardized. At the same time, pizzas were tasted and determined which of them will be included in the menu at the end of these processes. A final trial with the finished products and employee feedbacks was evaluated, and the stage where the final improvements were made was started. Spinach pizza and dried tomato, which was decided to be produced during the trial and error phase, were removed in the prototype phase. In the prototype development, products that were easily prepared in the restaurant, delicious components and easy to supply ingredients were preferred. Ideal cooking times for these four pizzas have been determined and standardized.

4.5. Scale-Up

This stage includes the production of finished products on a commercial scale. All four pizza types were produced in planned quantities before being presented at the restaurant, and guests were accepted for taste pizzas. These guests have different professional characteristics such as restaurant management, manager, supplier and chef. Dough, pizza tops, baking status etc. Everyone has evaluated the products from their own point of view. Different professions and perspectives offered diversity and made available to get various assessments. For instance, suppliers mentioned issues such as flavour, availability, and profitability. They provided alternative raw materials (i.e., mozzarella cheese, sausage) that may be considered to be of better quality or fit the product. Chefs made suggestions on cooking the product, the balance of taste or different combinations. On the other hand, managers and the other guests evaluated the product as a real consumer and give suggestions on portion size and price.

4.6. Screening

This section is where feedback from employees and guests is reviewed during the screening, prototype development and scale-up process. Suggestions that are thought to be appropriate and practicable for the restaurant by the chef and workers have been implemented. Some

products have been improved, and recipes have been finalized. For example, a pizza made with roasted chicken legs was changed with smoked turkey. Spices and fresh herbs were used more in pizzas. For example, fresh thyme was added to the roasted beef pizza.

4.7. Finalization and Implementation

Finalization and implementation state that products take their final forms and they are getting ready to offer for sale at the restaurant. At this stage, all questions related to the portion size, mix of toppings, prices and supply of the products are answered.

The new product development process described in detail above takes place in seven different stages in fast-casual restaurants. In the first stage of the idea development process, the competencies of the chef/owner, the quality of the product and the market situation are determiner. The pre-screening stage answers raw materials and equipment related questions. In the third stage, trial and error studies regarding the preparation and cooking of the product are carried out. In the fourth stage, the prototype was developed. The prototype in question must be different from other products on the market, difficult to imitate, delicious and quickly produced for business purposes. The fifth stage is the stage where the product is produced in real quantities. The sixth stage refers to review feedbacks from employees and guests. The last step defines that the new product takes its final shape and is ready for sale. Although the model in question offers new product development in stages that are independent of each other, there are parts where each step overlaps with the next step. For example, prototype development intersects with trial and error studies. It also shows that the process can be repeated by returning to trial and error through feedback. At this point, the new product development process has changed over to the menu diversification phase. So much so that at the end of August 2017, nearly 60 tray pizza recipes were created under four categories, which were diversified by factors such as customer satisfaction, ease of supply, raw material cost and labour.

5. Conclusion And Discussion

As stated in the literature, it is seen that the product development process can be conducted with different stages depending on the type of restaurant. In this research, the product development process in a fast-casual restaurant is discussed. As noticed in figure 1, the process has some stages that overlapped with studies on new product development in the literature. An idea creation as a first step of the product development process in which the further stages follow has matched up with the beginning of the product development process in Michelin star restaurants (Ottenbacher, and Harrington 2007). However, there are some

premises for developing ideas. As Rudolph (1995) expressed, using the opportunity in the market has an essential place in the formation and development of ideas. Chef's expertise about the product and his imagination based on his experiences are also critical (Stewart-Knox et al. 2003). Additionally, the formulation of innovation which is a first step of the product development process and also reflects the standardization process of the products (Harrington 2004) is more detailed in FCR but not as detailed as a QSR. On the other hand, as mentioned by Ottenbacher and Harrington (2009) in the context of fast-food restaurants, screening isn't repeated every stage during the product development process. It is possible to explain this difference with the number and size of units in both restaurants. QSR has a multi-unit structure and offers large-scale services. Therefore, the costs of the decisions are also high in parallel with it. However, this is not the case in examined FCR. Changing the taken decisions seems relatively less costly and can progress more quickly. In other words, it is readily apparent that the size of the operation affects the product development process.

The trial and error path is followed to choose and standardize the alternatives of the products. This process refers to the selection of alternatives that will improve the quality of the product rather than the evaluation of the product financially and the creation of the prototype. From this aspect, it is clear that the stage overlaps again with Michelin star restaurants (Ottenbacher, and Harrington 2007). However, this stage was not enough in FCR, and another development process was followed with the internal and external sources' evaluations. At this point, guests with different professions were asked to try and evaluate the product, and a screening process was started again according to these evaluations. Thus, some faulty products have been removed, and some others have improved. All of these stages, besides both ease and sustainability of production, it was sought to protect the balance between consumer demands and production. Hence, instead of a separate assessment for consumer and target market as such in QSR (Ottenbacher, and Harrington 2009), both are progressed together. Moreover, as recommended in the literature, serving products in a limited market before setting it to the sale (Rudolph 1995) and pilot test application (Ottenbacher, and Harrington 2009) was also carried out.

It can be thought that the product development process is completed with the release of the product, but considering the suggestions and requests from the consumers, this process isn't static and does not consist of precise steps. Within this situation, new product development can start from different stages such as prototype and trial and error over time.

As mentioned earlier, the product development process discussed in the literature in the context of restaurant types and from different perspectives. The findings also match up with

the position of FCR in the restaurant classifications. New product development process varies according to different restaurant types. Accordingly, the product development process is not handled in clear and short steps as with table service restaurants. The processes in more detailed in order to ensure the standardization and sustainability of the products. In spite of that, it is understood that the process took place without going through very detailed and critical stages, like in quick-service restaurants. It is possible to state that factors such as the market structure, business size, and qualifications of employees are among the factors that affect the product development process.

Lastly, this study has some limitations. It should be taken into consideration that research was carried out in a single case and within the scope of a product that can be considered as a special. Therefore, an explanation of the product development process is also limited, but the findings may create opportunities for future research. For example, the process of developing new products are differed according to the type of restaurant, and this process also may be different in the same category restaurants. Therefore, in future studies, the process of product development with different restaurants (especially multi-unit FCR) in the same category can be compared.

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