

The slow food trend can be described as a worldwide trend that encourages people to re-consider fast food in favour of preparing and eating full, locally produced meals. The core emphasis is not only on nutrition, but also on preserving food culture and heritage thereby having potential implications for food trade and processing as well.

By the definition itself, it's an antithesis to fast foods wherein the latter's biggest value proposition of convenience and rapid access recipes is challenged by providing benefits of creating sustainable and time taking cooking methods and offerings. In addition, the Slow Food trend opposes factory farming but does not reject the consumption of meat altogether. Instead, the trend recommendations include that people limit their consumption of meat and buy meat from smaller farms that meet high animal welfare standards. When it comes to organic food consumption and recommendations, the Slow Food followers take a mixed stance and state that growers can meet the standards of Slow Food with and without organic certification.

Geographically, this trend is localized in the United States but the emissaries of slow food lifestyles are catching up globally as well. Europe, Japan and Australia have recently shown traction with Slow Food Claims and are linking it to Organic 2.0 and sustainable food value chains. This trend is almost singularly fuelled by organizations dedicated to the cause and as of now, finds lesser traction with global food manufacturers. Governments are cautious and do not side with organizations but provide support to the trend by linking it to sustainability and biodiversity agendas.

Slow food is a classic example of a trend born out of need but seeking a benefit. Factory farming and unsustainable sourcing in the foods value chain has come under the scanner for both right and wrong reasons. Consumers and corporations alike are being sensitized to the impact of food sourcing practices, by the governments and regulatory agencies as part of a global initiative on environment consciousness. At the core of any trend impacting meaningful change, its crucial to understand the drivers and restraints before adopting a posture on Slow Foods:

### **Drivers**

Sustainability is the biggest driver of slow food trend as globally consumers and corporates are aligning themselves to planet positive practices. This includes responsible sourcing, zero waste processing and ethical consumption. The food footprint is significantly lower when the ecosystem is localized and further processing is minimal thereby having less carbon impact on the value chain.

Mindfulness is also quoted as one of the biggest supporting trends of slow food as consumers are becoming more mindful and aware of the product they consume and its impact on their own lives and on the ecosystem. As fast food fatigue becomes apparent due to oversupply, consumers are likely to find the indulgence of the slow food method to be enriching and admit to it being a more satisfying eating experience.

Gastronomic Superiority has been quoted as the biggest tangible benefit of slow food preparation as the ingredients are given ample time to cook and are not forced to lose textural or flavour integrity. Traditional cooking methods including Indian, Arabic and African cuisine are time intensive by nature and hence are ripe cuisines for Slow Food adoption.

## Restraints

Being time intensive is the core feature of slow food by design and as an anti-thesis to fast foods, it loses on the key value proposition of time utility. While certain consumers may indulge in slow food on certain occasions, provided they have enough time at hand, majority of consumers consider cooking a chore and are looking for ways to outsource/accelerate the same. This time utility is solved readily by fast food and other convenience driven food options.

Lack of coherence is often quoted as a disadvantage for slow foods as the value chain benefits of slow food are yet to be streamlined. It's crucial for slow food trend to adopt the strategically compartmentalized approach of Organic foods which enabled mass adoption and global acceptance.

Lack of Scientific benefits can also be considered as a drawback as compared to other niche trends such as health and wellness and organic foods. Further scientific research needs to be undertaken by proponents of slow food to link slow food adoption to better health impact compared to fast food which often is under fire for their HFSS (High Fat, Salt & Sugar) content and are slowly realizing the changing consumer preferences.

In conclusion, in spite and despite of challenges, the innovation potential in slow foods remains untapped. As a singular trend it has the potential of touching multiple consumer pain points and emerge as a one shot solution covering the spectrum of Ethical Consumption, Health & Wellness, Sustainable sourcing and more. Unification of core value proposition, alignment with like-minded product sectors and brands are key areas of innovation where the digital interventions such as traceability, hyperconnectivity and transparency need to be utilized. Given the right direction, the slow food trend has potential to gain rapid pace and come at par with the fastest adopted trends globally.



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