

Food Consumption and Economic Development in Contemporary China

Tian Guang*

Shantou University, China

Camilla Hong **Wang****

Shantou Univesity, China

Kathy **Tian*****

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA

Liu Yu****

Shantou University, China

Abstract

Food consumption is closely related to, and contributes to, economic production. It undertakes social functions, participates in economic activities and forms industries. Additionally, food culture reflects nature, history, politics, philosophy, religion, as well as the status of social life. Food consumption is mutable, encompassing both material and spiritual elements of any given society. All-round development of food consumption will, in turn, accelerate economic growth. It is found that food consumption has extensive social attributes, in addition to the

natural attributes of economic development. Fashion-oriented, original simplicity-oriented and health-oriented food supplies are required in the global catering market. Standardization, diversification and internationalization are necessary in the field of food consumption servicing for economic development.

Keywords: *food culture, dietary behavior, service industry, economic development*

1. Introduction

Food, as the primary material resource for humanity's survival and development, functions as one of the fundamental social lifestyles of people. Chinese food culture has a long-standing history, and through its historical changes, a better comprehension of China's economic and social development can be unveiled (Chen and Wang, 2017). As such, it is suggested that Chinese food culture can strongly reflect China's nature, history, politics, philosophy, and religion, as well as the colorful social life of Chinese people (Tian *et al.*, 2018). In addition to its natural attributes, food has extensive social attributes. Food is endowed with and reflects human consciousness, thinking and psychological status, integrates with the spiritual wealth from history, geography, literature, art, and education (Zhang, 2017).

Food functions to not only satiate people's hunger; it has also become an integral aspect of life enjoyment, which represents an essential component of food anthropology (Li and Tian, 2014). Food anthropologists stress that changes in people's eating habits not only depend on the local food culture, which may be specific to a given region, but also varies with economic development in different regions. In general, as people gradually become wealthier in emerging market

economies, their requirements for sustenance become increasingly higher after overcoming poverty. Today, these consumers not only pay attention to the quality and nutrition of food but also require that food should be appealing in color, aroma and taste. Therefore, rapid development of a country's economy and society spurs significant changes in food culture (Liu, 2016).

Meanwhile, all-round development of food will in turn promote the growth of economies. The food industry, as a labor-intensive industry, except for providing food commodities and services, encompasses a high degree of industry relevance in the economies. Hence, the development of the food industry can further drive the economic development of relevant industries, thus creating numerous employment opportunities. The food industry in China, following the rapid and steady growth of the national economy, as well as consistent rising of urban and rural residents' income level, has demonstrated a strong momentum of robust development. As such the number of enterprises and the food industry revenues have been consistently increasing. The food industry has become a vital aspect of China's national economic development; thus, it is evident that the food industry is one of the important forces driving China's economic development (Baker and Friel, 2016).

2. Economic, Social Development and Changes of Food Culture

Currently, the extant academic scholarship has yet to cultivate a unified definition of food culture. Some scholars suggest that food culture refers to food, cooking, food processing techniques, diet nutrition and health care as well as food-based culture and art and that it is the summary of ideology and philosophy. Per historical geography, economic structures, food resources, religious consciousness, cultural traditions, customs and other factors, they divide the world's food culture into three

self-contained class groups based on flavors, namely oriental food culture class group, Western food culture class group and Islamic food culture class group (Hua, Wu and Yu, 1998). However, other scholars advocate that food culture refers to the development and utilization of food resources, the technologies and arts in food-making and food-consumption processes, as well as the customs, tradition, ideology and philosophy based on food and that it is the summary of all food matters formed in people's production and lifestyles, processes, functions etc. (Zhao and Xie, 2006).

Food culture covers all material culture and spiritual culture related to food. As a social category, food culture has objectively existed since human society appeared, while as a subject concept, it appeared not long before. Considering mankind's food activities as a form of culture originates from sociology and anthropology (Ji, 2010a), transitioning from devouring raw meat and drinking blood in ancient times to food civilization in modern times reflects the results of mankind's constant acquisition and evolution in the process of transforming nature. In addition, eating habits are determined by geographical factors, climatic conditions, and productivity development levels, amongst other factors. Climatic conditions mainly determine the flavors of food. For instance, in cold regions, people tend to consume greasy foods to meet their need for storing fat to keep insulated from the cold; in warmer regions, people lean toward plain foods because their digestive functions relatively decline due to more body water loss in hot weather and plain food is more easily digested. Therefore, food civilization has produced different food cultures in the development process because of the changes addressed above.

Productivity development level determines the degree of improvement and evolution in such aspects as food material growing, feeding and processing technology, cooking methods and food

consumption methods. Geographical factors, climatic conditions and productivity developments do not exist in isolation but affect certain regional scope, which is termed “cultural circle” by some scholars. As such a cultural circle is influenced by the unbalanced geography, climate, productivity and other factors, cultures of different circles present distinctive styles (Ji, 2010b). In a certain extended period, geographical conditions and climatic conditions will not have substantial changes in a certain region, while productivity development level, i.e. economic and social development, may have momentous changes. Hence, changes of food culture are closely related to the economic and social development level of different regions.

Taking Wanzhou City in China as an example. It is under the jurisdiction of Chongqing Municipality and located in the east of Sichuan Basin, Southwestern China. Adjacent to the Three Gorges, it is in the vital part of Three Gorges Reservoir Region. Before the Three Gorges tourist industry flourished, that is, before the economy flourished, the food culture in Wanzhou was facing some negative issues, such as small production and operation scale, few high-quality well-known products, narrow market, and failure to develop and make use of the cultural connotation of various local snacks and delicacies (Jiang, 2014).

However, after the Three Gorges tourist industry became prosperous, Wanzhou’s economy had experienced a highly qualitative leap forward. Subsequently, Wanzhou’s tea culture, poetry and liquor culture along with the food culture have developed in a positive direction with the characteristics of branding and internationalization. Presently, China is one of the countries with successful development of culture and civilization in the history of human civilization development, and “food” has been regarded a priority for the Chinese to take care of, whether in terms of livelihood or in national policies. Compared with

other nations, the historical culture of the Chinese nation presents more distinctive and typical “features of food”.

Catering products are the material carrier of food culture. China’s long history of food and booming modern culture provide unlimited room for the continuous development of, and innovations in, food culture. It can be seen from the perspective of cooking, cuisine culture or people’s concepts of food that current catering products should, on the premise of fully satisfying people’s needs of pursuing hygiene and safety, pursue anesthetization of food with their flavor, quality, aroma, color, shape, utensil and other basic attributes as the material presentation (Yang, 2012). In reviewing the development history of anthropology, it is not difficult to discover that cultural anthropology has a tradition of analyzing food culture.

Lewis Henry Morgan, one of the inaugurators of anthropology, had divided human society into seven stages in his book *Ancient society* (1877, London: MacMillan & Company). Morgan regards production, technology and invention of means of production as the symbols for dividing social stages. Per Morgan, intermediate unenlightened society started when people acquired fish as food and knowledge of how to control fire; advanced unenlightened society began with the invention of bows and arrows; and low-level unenlightened society started from the invention of ceramics (Tan, 2004). Therefore, food culture and social phenomena are closely interrelated, with economic and social development of various levels corresponding to developments in food culture.

In an economically low-level society, adequate food and clothing should be stressed, while in a higher-level society, relatively comfortable lifestyle should be highlighted. One of the main advancements of evolving from a society where people have enough to eat and wear to a moderately prosperous society is the change from physiological need of

satisfying hunger to the spiritual need of pursuing exquisite food (Li and Tian, 2014).

3. Food Consumption Facilitates Economic Development

Economic behaviors refer to the economic activities which the economic subject conducts to achieve a certain fiscal goal and fulfill its rights and obligations in the process of participating in economic and legal relations, including economic management behaviors, service-rendering behaviors and task-accomplishing behaviors. Economic anthropology is a young subject established and developed in 1940s-1950s. Starting from a generalized perspective, it explores the foundation and motivation of human society's economic behaviors. As the global economy has always related to various public activities and social systems, such as religion, rituals, customs and legends, only when human society can be observed and going into the deep structure of various societies and cultures can the nature of economic activities accurately representing the relationship between human, society and economy be uncovered. Food is the primary need of mankind for livelihood and development as well as one of the fundamental forms of social life. Dietary behaviors are one of the main contents of human economic activities, which become the major research subjects for food and economic anthropologists (Tian and Luo, 2013).

3.1. Dietary Behaviors Have a Close Relationship with Human Life

The famous American psychologist Abraham Harold Maslow proposed the well-known "Maslow's hierarchy of needs" (Maslow, 1943). He divided human needs into physiological needs, safety needs, esteem needs, needs for love and belonging, and needs for self-actualization, among which physiological needs are essential for human being's

external conditions to maintain and develop life. Food, however, is the most basic need in physiological needs (Sun, 2015).

People pay more attention to their health issues when economic development trends move toward prosperity. There are many factors affecting human health, including living environment, inadequate exercise, eating habits, psychological temper etc. Among these factors, eating habits, as the foundation of health, are closely related to human health. Previous studies show that eating habits have an important influence on elderly people's health and lifetime. Healthy eating habits help promote health, maintain normal operation of body functions, strengthen disease resistance, reduce the chances of suffering from obesity and diabetes, and even aid in curing diseases (Jahan, 2010).

Elliott *et al.* (2008) examined the correlation between reasonable exercise and healthy dietary behaviors and epilepsy based on the data from a survey on Californian health conducted in 2005. The study results indicate that people who exercise less and smoke more are more likely to suffer from epilepsy. These people tend to enjoy the consumption of alcohol while failing to consume enough vitamins, which can be found in fruit and vegetable salads. Further, their results also suggest that unbalanced diets undermine physical balance and trigger diseases (Nyarugwe *et al.*, 2016).

Dr. Sun Yat-sen mentioned in his *People's livelihood doctrine, Strategy of nation-building* (民生主義, 建國方略 (1917-1920)) that in the evolution of modern civilization, China lags behind other countries in every aspect except for diets. The food which China has discovered is certainly superior to that of Europe and America. China's exquisite cooking methods are unparalleled (Hu, 2002). Knowing how to use fire symbolizes human beings' development from animals towards human civilization. In the Stone Age, Chinese people were already using fire to barbecue food. After years of human civilization development,

Chinese in the Xia (夏), Shang (商) and Zhou (周) dynasties had already had the consciousness and concept of cooking.

Going through prosperity and development of Qin (秦), Han (漢), Tang (唐) and Song (宋) dynasties, Chinese people's cooking consciousness and concept passed down from generation to generation and became more mature. They utilized unique and advanced cooking utensils, food containers, food material selection and cooking techniques. A diversified food culture system was developed centering on eight major cuisines, supplemented by local cuisines. Concerning Western food development, due to relatively frequent occurrence of historical and regional conflicts as well as division and migration of economic civilization, various kinds of unbalanced development patterns had existed for extensive periods, and the Western food pattern, Italian cuisine-oriented, appeared only by the 16th century (Yang, 2014).

It can be observed from the above that Chinese cooking methods and its profound culture have a high position and are highly praised worldwide, such that European and American countries may have to struggle to catch up. Chinese dietary behaviors have a rich connotation, which can be divided into three levels: (a) material level, including dietary structure and food utensils; (b) behavior level, containing cooking techniques, utensil-making technology, food storage, transportation methods etc.; (c) spiritual level, covering cultural connotations such as the concept of diet, diet customs, humanity and psychology, national characteristics etc.

Regional dietary behaviors are an integral part of culture. There is an old saying that “food is the paramount necessity of people”, and every country in the world possesses its own culture and boasts rich and diverse food culture as well. In China, for instance, as depicted in an ancient book of *Qimin yaoshu* (齊民要術, i.e. *Essential techniques for the welfare of the people*, completed between AD 533 and 544),

there are more than 10 methods for making sauce and 21 for making vinegar, involving nearly 10 kinds of raw materials. Records in the book *Compendium of materia medica (Bencao gangmu / 本草綱目, AD 1578)* are more somniferous, covering 48 kinds of congee, such as camellia project congee, tea congee, ilium brownie congee etc. (Liu, 2012).

Regional differences and type of region influence people's selection of food materials and their tastes and habits through natural produce (Maguire, 2016). For example, seaside areas are predominately famous for seafood dishes, riverside areas are primarily known for freshwater food dishes; in gorge-torrent areas, as fish and shrimps have to fight with the torrents to survive, they taste bouncy and delicious and have a special mouth feel; mountainous areas are known for game and mountain products; beef and lamb in arid areas lack rich flavors and the quality of fruits and vegetables are the best; and rice produced in the north is better than that produced in the south (Chen, 1994).

Different climates and cultural customs lead to various catering systems. Considering China as an example, China has gradually formed a catering system centering on "eight major cuisines", including Guangdong cuisine, Sichuan cuisine, Shandong cuisine, Huaiyang cuisine, Zhejiang cuisine, Fujian cuisine, Hunan cuisine and Anhui cuisine based on the specific climate and cultural customs. Chinese food is well-known worldwide. For instance, Sichuan cuisine is renowned for its features of "pungent" and "spicy", and it has formed its unique food culture characteristics and become an emerging tourism product (Xu *et al.*, 2002). Internationally speaking, a great number of regions in different countries have formed their own unique food culture and style going along with the booming food industry. In addition, restaurants across the country are influenced by the eight major cuisines, so it can be observed that food industry has broken through the regional limits and

that the food customs of different regions have been integrated and are jointly influencing people's daily life (Xie and He, 2006).

3.2. Needs of Dietary Behaviors to Economic Production

Undoubtedly, food is the primary need of human beings for survival and development and one of the basic forms of social life. Through years of development, each country has formed its own food system, covering aspects such as dietary structure, food making, food utensil, nutrition and health care, food aesthetics etc. With the development of social production and the rising of people's living standards, people's needs for food do not stagnate at the stage of having enough to eat (Park, 2017). Instead, people start to pursue a higher-level enjoyment of food. People not only pay attention to the edibility of food but also start to care about whether food can bring them spiritual satisfaction and sensorial enjoyment. Higher demands for food and the expansion of the food industry have facilitated the flourishing of the food industry.

Along with the economic development and the change of enterprise models, the food industry also undertakes social functions. As modern enterprises seldom have an independent canteen, employees must have breakfast, lunch and dinner at nearby restaurants. With the work rhythm speeding up and office environment getting increasingly intensive, socialization of work meals brings a new business opportunity to the development of food industry. Moreover, with the continuous improvements in gender equality, more and more women have become employed, so they spend less time on traditional household duties, such as cooking. Continuous improvement of living standards makes modern professional men and women tend to order take-out or eat out to satiate their families.

Per international trends, when per capita GDP reaches about 1,000 US dollars, people's consumption structure will rapidly upgrade and the

frequency of eating-out and level of consumption will rise. In 2005, the per capita food and drink consumption of the United States reached 1,600 US dollars and that of France reached 1,050 US dollars, while that of China's urban residents was less than 100 US dollars (Xiong, 2005). It indicates that there is a huge gap between the per capita food and drink consumption of China's urban residents and that of advanced countries, and this also indicates that China's food industry has a large development space and enormous potential.

Chinese food industry system, with continuous high-speed development, is getting increasingly sound, the operation is getting more distinctive and brand awareness is getting even stronger. So far, China's food industry has formed three levels of consumption, respectively high-, medium- and low-grade consumption, with Chinese food and Western food coexisting and traditional national flavor and modern food matching appropriately. With continuous growth of China's GDP and acceleration of China's industrialization, urbanization and modernization processes, steady development of society and continuous improvement of people's life provide wider space for the development of China's food industry, thus bringing it great market demands. Relevant data indicates that China's catering income reached 2,786 billion yuan (renminbi) in 2014, a year-on-year growth of 9.7%, with the mass catering accounting for 80%. Food industry has entered a new stage of mass transformation, structure optimization and power conversion. By analyzing the current situation of China's food industry, it is clearly shown that the proportion of food industry in the total retail sales of consumer goods has exceeded 10% and thus has become an important pillar in the tertiary industry and made great contributions to boosting consumption, expanding domestic demands, ensuring employment and benefiting people's livelihood (Lu, 2015).

The 9th China Food Industry Development Conference 2015, sponsored by China Cuisine Association, was grandly held at the Shanghai Exhibition Center. It was noted at the conference that the national catering income was 745.8 billion yuan in the first quarter of 2015, a year-on-year growth of 11.3%, and China's food industry has entered a period of important strategic opportunities. The *Analysis report on China's top 100 catering enterprises and top 500 shops 2014* released at the conference shows that the operation revenue of China's top 100 enterprises in 2014 was 191.62 billion yuan, a year-on-year growth of 9% and 3.3% faster than 2013. Among them, group meal's development was most notable, with the fastest year-on-year growth of the operation revenue up to 33.2% (Mo, 2015), and large-scale catering enterprises were getting more and more; the operation revenue of the top 100 groups had exceeded 100 billion yuan, accounting for 3.6% of China's total food industry, which was mainly in three major direct-controlled municipalities – Shanghai, Beijing and Chongqing.

Per the data shown above, it can be estimated that China's food industry has been maintaining a strong momentum of growth, more and more catering tycoons have formed, and the economic benefits brought by this cannot be underestimated. In recent years, as China's food industry has been rapidly developing and prospering, more and more catering enterprises have participated in the market competition. Per the report of China's Ministry of Commerce, in the Spring Festival golden week in 2015 (from the Chinese New Year's Eve to the sixth day of the first month of lunar year), the sales of China's key retail and catering enterprises reached 678 billion yuan, a growth of 11% compared with the same period in 2014, and "New Year's Eve dinner" was a main event in the Spring Festival catering market. During the golden week, sales of the commercial and trade enterprises mainly supervised in Gansu, Hunan, Liaoning and Hubei increased by 14.2%, 14%, 13.2% and 12.9%

respectively, and sales of the enterprises mainly supervised in Qinghai, Shanghai, Guangxi and Chongqing increased by 12.8%, 12.6%, 12.4% and 12.4% respectively (Li and Leng, 2016). China's food industry carried out splitting boom in such a brief time; the reasons should mainly be attributed to the following three aspects.

First, the policy of macro-control provided great support to develop food industry. Relevant national policies mentioned many times that food consumption should be promoted, proportional relation between investment and consumption should be adjusted, the policy of expanding domestic demands should be adhered to and consumer demands should be expanded by priority.

Second, steady economic growth created a good macro-economic environment for the sustainable development of food industry. With the reform and opening-up as well as rapid development of China's economy, employment channels become diverse, labor reward increases, people are devoted to working at great tension, and thus the labor value and time value are enhanced. Pushed for time, fewer and fewer people are willing to spend time cooking but choose to eat out at a restaurant, and eating-out has become an important way for modern people to make friends, discuss business and entertain themselves, thus increasing the needs for catering services.

Third, the structural adjustment of catering enterprises and the improvement of the overall service level provided sufficient internal motivation for the sustainable development of food industry. In the case of China, after China received full membership from the World Trade Organization (WTO), numerous overseas-funded and foreign enterprises entered China's market, and China's national economy started to take off. Meanwhile, increase in number of foreigners with different eating habits and culture in China has opened new development space for China's food industry. The entering of famous foreign catering

enterprises has brought China new operation philosophy and advanced operation modes and increased competition in the domestic catering market, thus urging domestic catering enterprises to keep learning advanced knowledge, updating products and enhancing management efficiency (Zhang and Zhang, 2009).

3.3. Ways of Food Industry's Participation in Economy

Food industry can create considerable job opportunities and thus is good for the stability of the country and the society. The Chinese leadership proposed that the government should attribute great importance to the most direct and realistic benefit issue people are concerned with – employment, which is the capital of people's livelihood, and continuously increase remuneration of labor, especially the frontline labor; the Party and the State should implement active employment policies, create more job opportunities, improve employment environment and strengthen employment quality (*General Secretary Xi Jinping's series of important speeches*, 2014).

As testified above, the issue of employment is still the priority among priorities of the future government work. The fundamental measure to solve the employment issue is to create job opportunities, which are closely related to the degree of economic prosperity. Although food industry's technical content is relatively low, it is a labor-intensive industry. Compared with other industries, as it has relatively low requirements on professional skills and on the employed, it can absorb numerous low-level social laborers and thus make great contributions to the solving of employment conflict that is getting increasingly prominent.

The third national economic census data showed that there were a total of 200,000 accommodation and catering enterprise legal entities with 10,694,000 employed persons across the country, showing an

increase of 37.9% and 82.7% respectively compared with that in 2008 (National Bureau of Statistics of the People's Republic of China, 2014a). In addition, many rural surplus laborers are pouring into big cities at present to seek job opportunities, and food industry is an important choice. Therefore, the development of food industry plays a certain role in solving the "three agriculture-related issues in China". Food industry plays an active role in driving China's economic and social development in three-fold reasons.

First, food industry makes positive contributions to economic growth. Food industry, as a traditional service industry in China's tertiary industry, has been maintaining robust growth momentum, making rapid progress and presenting flourishing new situations since the founding of new China, especially after the reform and opening-up. Food industry has apparently become a noticeable consumption hotspot. It has successfully realized leaps of the total sales of 10 billion, 100 billion and 1 trillion in a brief period of 60 years, creating amazing miracles in the history, and it has become important force driving China's economic growth (Yang, 2013).

Second, the food industry facilitates the development of China's tourism industry. With the rise in people's economic levels, holiday travels have become one of the main ways for people to spend their leisure time. As the tourism industry is vibrantly developing, traditional sightseeing-based travel cannot meet people's needs, and experience-based tourism with leisure as the main purpose is becoming increasingly favorable to consumers. In the development of leisure tourism and experience-based tourism, food tourism has gradually become new fashion pursued by people (Niu, 2012).

Third, food industry promotes the development of relevant industries. Food industry has close relevance with planting industry, breeding industry, handicraft industry and many other industries, its

development can thus promote the development of relevant industries, increase local peasants' income and facilitate local economic development.

3.4. Food Industry Is an Important Modern Industry

Food industry can provide product service and consumption service, it is highly relevant to agriculture, animal husbandry and aquaculture industry. Meanwhile, changes of food culture have also facilitated the development of culture industry and leisure entertainment industry. Food industry requires low investment cost and less technical content, so its entry threshold is relatively low; its market potential is considerable and thus it can absorb numerous employed persons. In recent years, global economy has maintained a rapid growth, but lots of countries, especially underdeveloped and developing countries, are still facing problem of high unemployment pressure and employment difficulties.

Therefore, food industry's development is closely tied to social and economic stability, and it has certain comprehensive social effect. Following the development of economy further reinforcement of opening-up and improvement of people's living standard and consumption ability, people's demands for catering products and services have further increased, which provides a significant opportunity for the optimization and development of global food industry.

Considering China's food industry, data show that during January-May 2015, the total consumption in food industry was 1,238 billion yuan, a year-on-year growth of 11.7%, accounting for 10.55% of the total consumption of social consumer goods (Hua, 2015). So, it is well-founded to say that food industry plays a decisive role in the total retail sales of consumer goods. Healthy and rapid development of food industry is an important booster facilitating China's social and economic development (Liang, 2012). The developing tendency of food industry in

China in the past decade had the features of diversified competition, adjustment of catering structure, and chain-oriented catering operation.

First, diversified competition: It has developed from pure price competition and product quality competition to product and enterprise brand competition and cultural taste competition, and from single-shop and single-business type competition to multi-business type, chain-oriented, collectivized and large-scale competition.

Second, adjustment of catering structure: Continuous upgrade of competition has resulted in changes in catering structure. With changes of food culture and consumers' eating habits, food industry has to adjust its strategies to attract consumers. For example, as consumers pay more attention to food safety and health problems at present, it is necessary for food industry to launch healthy green food to meet consumers' needs. In addition, the fast pace of modern life certainly requires people to reduce cooking time, and fast food's popularization and development are the specific responses of catering enterprises to satisfy consumers' needs.

Third, chain-oriented catering operation: The chain-oriented business model has scale advantages, which would reduce operation cost. In China, the contemporary food industry represented by chain operation, brand cultivation and technical innovation has been fully replacing traditional food industry's business model that features go-as-you-please manual operation, single workshop-type operation and experience-based management, moving towards the industrialized, chain-oriented, collectivized and professional business management model (Wang, 2007).

Rapid development of China's economy and upgrading of people's consumption level have boosted the development of food industry. In recent years, China's economic growth rate has been maintaining at above 7%. The recent Statistic Bureau's data show that the urban per capita disposable income was 28,844 yuan, an actual growth of 6.8%

regardless of price factor; the rural per capita disposable income was 10,489 yuan, an actual growth of 9.2% regardless of price factor. Additionally, the classification of income sources suggests that the people's income from wage and salary, net income from operations, net income from property and net income from transfer nationwide were 11,421 yuan, 3,732 yuan, 1,588 yuan and 3,427 yuan respectively, an increase of 9.7%, 8.7%, 11.6% and 12.6% respectively over the previous year. The growth rates of net income from property and net income from transfer were higher than those of income from wage and salary and net income from operations, indicating that diversification of people's sources of income has further improved (National Bureau of Statistics of the People's Republic of China, 2014b).

The improvement of consumer's consumption ability has paved the way for the rapid development of various industries. Economic development has also strengthened social and economic activities, and the increase of enterprises' business exhibitions, international academic conferences and exchange activities has undoubtedly accelerated the development of local food industry. With the gradual progress of global integration process, economic development has enabled China to see a higher international position and reputation, and its international social communication activities have increased greatly. Therefore, consumers of China's food industry are not limited to domestic residents, and foreigners from all over the world are the potential customers of China's food industry. Chinese-Western cultural exchange has also facilitated integration of food cultures, and some Chinese-Western dishes launched in some areas have received high praise. Moreover, with people's consumption concepts changing gradually, the urban resident's consumption expenditure on eating-out has been rising accordingly (Liang, 2007).

4. Conclusion

Food has extensive social attributes in addition to its natural attributes. As a cultural behavior, food consumption is endowed with, and reflects, human consciousness, thinking and psychological states in the process wherein raw food evolved to cooked food when human beings learned how to cook food, i.e. the process in which naturalness transformed to culture, and it has integrated various kinds of spiritual wealth of human beings (Montanari, 2017). In addition, social and economic development has facilitated changes in food culture. With continuous social development, global catering market circumstances are developing towards standardization, diversification and internationalization, and more and more international catering brands are springing up. Meanwhile, all-round development of the food industry has in return promoted economic growth. The food industry, as a labor-intensive industry, has high industry relevance in addition to the food commodities and services it provides. Development of the food industry can boost the development of relevant industries and thus create numerous job opportunities. Under the influence of foreign food culture, food industries in each country should adhere to the following three developing directions:

- (a) Fashion-oriented. It entails the uniqueness and freedom of food. As modern social environment is over general, modern people tend to appreciate food aesthetics. Consequently, distinctive foods will become more popular with consumers. In addition, food freedom is the expression of modern people's pursuing personality and freedom of life, and the flourishing of buffets reflects modern people's desire for food freedom.
- (b) Original simplicity-oriented. As the pace of modern urban life is fast-paced, people are longing for a tranquil idyllic life, and such kind of

returning to the nature will naturally result in increased needs for countryside diets. Hence, original simplicity of food materials, food-making technology and dining atmosphere form one part of the major trends of catering product innovation.

- (c) Health-oriented. Food safety problems have been occurring frequently, and this has drawn significant consumer concern for healthy diets. Thus, consumers' concern will certainly transfer to safe and healthy nutritional diet, and this new tendency undoubtedly provides new ideas for the future development of food industry.

The leadership in China has stressed that realizing the Chinese nation's great rejuvenation is the greatest dream of the Chinese nation in contemporary times, and the construction of integrating politics, economy, culture, society and ecological civilization are the specific strategic measures to realize China's dream. This strategy, feasibly, also fits for international development. Food is an important aspect of social culture and has a close relationship with economic development. In other words, food and economic development supplement each other. Therefore, vigorously developing food industry to enrich the food culture that belongs to people is one of the specific measures to expedite economy development.

Acknowledgements: This article is the outcome of a joint research project by Shantou University (汕頭大學) and Huicong Academy (慧聰書院) of Tianjin, China. Ms. Li Wei, a doctoral student at Jamia Millia Islamia, a Central University in India, and Ms. Wang Jiao, a graduate student at Shantou University, have made their contributions to this paper.

Notes

- * Dr Tian Guang (田廣) is a specially appointed Professor of Business at Shantou University, a doctoral supervisor at Hebei University, and the Dean of Advanced College for Applied Anthropology at Jishou University, People's Republic of China. He had formerly served as Chair of Business Department and the Director of International Education Programs at Coker College, Hartsville, South Carolina, United States of America. Professor Tian's main research interests are national economics, regional development, cross-cultural management, and economic anthropology. <Email: gtian@stu.edu.cn>
- ** Camilla Hong Wang (王紅) has accumulated over 20 years of teaching experience across the United States, Canada, and China. She earned her Bachelor's degree in international commerce from Beijing Foreign Trade Institute in Beijing, China, and received her Master's degree in education from the University of Toronto in Canada. Formerly, Camilla taught language courses at Medaille College in the United States; currently, she lectures on English language at Shantou University in China. Her research interests lie at the intersections of cross-culture, education, and language acquisition. She has co-authored several papers on these topics spanning multiple journals and has presented her research at conferences across Asia and North America. <Email: kk_wh@yahoo.com>
- *** Kathy Tian (田凱旋) (corresponding author) received a Bachelor degree in journalism from Beijing Foreign Studies University in 2014, and later received her M.S. in communications with a focus on marketing from the London School of Economics. She is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in marketing and advertising at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Kathy's research interests center around cross-cultural marketing and advertising from a consumer behaviour perspective. Her recent research examines how the values of individualism and collectivism influence consumption choices across culture; she is particularly interested

in Scandinavian, Chinese, and American consumer cultures. <Email: kathyt2@illinois.edu>

**** Dr Liu Yu (劉瑜) (co-corresponding author) is an Associate Professor at the School of Business, Shantou University, Guangdong Province, People's Republic of China. His research interests are international trade and investment and the underground economy. <Email: yliu@stu.edu.cn>

References

- Baker, Phillip and Sharon Friel (2016). Food systems transformations, ultra-processed food markets and the nutrition transition in Asia. *Globalization and Health*, Vol. 12, Issue 1, pp. 27-30.
- Chen C. (1994). Regional differentiation and development trend of China's food culture. *Acta Geographica Sinica*, 1994 (3), pp. 226-235 (陈传康. 中国饮食文化的区域分化和发展趋势 [J]. 地理学报, 1994, 49 (3): 226-235).
- Chen G. and Wang J. (2017). Cultural change of food in anthropological perspective. *National Journal*, 2017 (02), pp. 34-41 (陈刚, 王煜. 人类学视角下的饮食文化变迁 [J]. 民族学刊, 2017 (02): 34-41).
- Elliott, John O., Bo Lu, J. Layne Moore, James W. McAuley and Lucretia Long (2008). Exercise, diet, health behaviors, and risk factors among persons with epilepsy based on the California Health Interview Survey, 2005. *Epilepsy & Behavior*, Vol. 1, Issue 2, pp. 307-315.
- General Secretary Xi Jinping's series of important speeches* (習近平總書記系列重要講話讀本). (2014) Beijing: People's Publishing House (人民出版社).
- Hu P. (2002). Exquisiteness, beauty, emotions and etiquette – Basic connotation of China's food culture. *World Cuisine*, 2002 (5), pp. 1-3 (胡平. 精美情礼——中华饮食文化的基本内涵 [J]. 餐饮世界, 2002, 5: 1-3).

- Hua Y., Wu Y. and Yu H. (1998). *World of Chinese dishes*. Harbin: Harbin Publishing House (华英杰、吴英敏、余和祥. 中华膳海 [M], 哈尔滨出版社, 1998 年).
- Hua Z. (2015). The total retail sales of consumer goods saw an increase of 10.1% in May 2015. <http://www.xinhuanet.com/>, June 2005, accessed in June 2017 (华政. 2015 年 5 月份社会消费品零售总额增长 10.1% [EB/LO]. 新华网, 2015 年 6 月).
- Jahan, S. (2010). Progress of research on the living environment and eating habits of the ligneous. *Journal of Xinjiang Medical University*, 33(9), pp. 1024-1027 (贾汉·沙比提. 长寿老人生活环境及饮食习惯与健康关系的研究进展 [J]. 新疆医科大学学报. 2010, 33(9): 1024-1027).
- Ji H. (2010a). Historical review and reflection on China's food culture over the 60 years since the founding of New China (I). *Cuisine Journal of Yangzhou University*, 2010 (1), pp. 5-12 (季鸿崑. 建国 60 年来我国饮食文化的历史回顾和反思 (上) [J]. 扬州大学烹饪学报, 2010(1): 5-12).
- Ji H. (2010b). Historical review and reflection on china's food culture over the 60 years since the founding of New China (II). *Cuisine Journal of Yangzhou University*, 2010 (3), pp. 20-26 (季鸿崑. 建国 60 年来我国饮食文化的历史回顾和反思 (下) [J]. 扬州大学烹饪学报, 2010(3): 20-26).
- Jiang F. (2014). Food culture and regional economic development in the Three Gorges area – with Wanzhou as the example. *Business: Business Forum - Industrial Economy*. 2014 (11), pp. 258-259 (江菲. 三峡地区的饮食文化和地区经济发展——以万州为例 [J]. 商界论坛 产业经济, 2014 (11): 258-259).
- Liang D. (2012). The role of catering industry in driving the economic growth should be paid attention. *Shanghai Securities News*, 2012-7-12, p. F12 (梁达. 应重视餐饮业对经济增长的拉动作用 [EB/LO]. 上海证券报. 2012).

- Li D. and Tian G. (2014). *Food anthropology*. Yinchuan: Ningxia People's Publishing House (李德宽、田广 (主编). 饮食人类学 [M], 宁夏人民出版社, 2014 年).
- Li G. and Leng J. (2016). Research on the new mode of economic development in the public service industry and the life service industry. *New Economy*, 2016 (03), pp. 10-11 (李冠艺、冷佳璇. 新型经济发展方式下的公共服务业与生活服务业研究 [J]. 新经济, 2016(3): 10-11).
- Liang D. (2007). Spring Festival economy stirs catering industry: Boosting economic growth. *Shanghai Securities News*, 2007-2-26, p. B05 (梁达. 春节经济搅动餐饮业: 助推经济增长 [EB/L0]. 上海证券报. 2007).
- Liu J. (2012). Brief analysis on the cultural roots of the differences between Chinese and Western food cultures. *Consumption Guide*, 2012 (6), pp. 96-97 (刘建秋. 浅析中西方饮食文化差异的文化根源 [J], 消费导刊, 2012, 6: 96-97).
- Liu X. (2016). The combination of food culture and tourism resources development. *Journal of the University of Liaoning (Social Science Edition)*. 2016 (04), pp. 12-14 (刘溪晨. 谈饮食文化与旅游资源开发的结合 [J], 辽宁师专学报, 2016 (04): 12-14).
- Lu C. (2015). China's catering industry is to step into the era of 3 trillion yuan. <http://www.xinhuanet.com/>, accessed in June, 2017 (芦超. 中国餐饮业即将迈入 3 万亿时代 [EB/L0]. 新华网. 2015).
- Maguire, Jennifer Smith (2016). Introduction: Looking at food practices and taste across the class divide. *Food, Culture & Society*, Vol. 19, Issue 1 (Special Issue: *Food practices and society inequality*), pp. 11-18.
- Maslow, Abraham H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, Vol. 50, Issue 4, pp. 370-396.
- Mo, F. (2015). Hold the new trend of industrial development and lead the new normal state of catering development – The 9th China Catering Industry Development Conference 2015 was grandly held in Shanghai. *China Food*, June 2015 (11), pp. 64-67 (墨菲. 把脉行业发展新趋向引领餐饮发展新

- 常态——2015（第九届）中国餐饮产业发展大会在沪隆重举行 [J]. 中国食品, 2015 年 6 月).
- Montanari, Andrea (2017). The Stinky King: Western attitudes toward the durian in colonial Southeast Asia. *Food, Culture & Society*, Vol. 20, Issue 3, pp. 395-414.
- National Bureau of Statistics of People's Republic of China (2014a). Employed people and their salaries. <<http://www.stats.gov.cn>>
- National Bureau of Statistics of People's Republic of China (2014b). Statistical Communiqué on National Economic and Social Development. <<http://www.stats.gov.cn>>
- Niu H. (2012). *Study on food tourism based on tourist's perception perspective*. Fuzhou: Fujian Normal University (牛洪霞. 基于游客感知视角的美食旅游研究 [D]. 福建师范大学, 2012).
- Nyarugwe, Shingai P., Anita Linnemann, Gert J. Hofstede, Vincenzo Fogliano and Pieternel A. Luning (2016). Determinants for conducting food safety culture research. *Trends in Food Science & Technology*, Vol. 56, pp. 77-87.
- Park, Kendall (2017). Ethnic foodscapes: Foreign cuisines in the United States. *Food, Culture & Society*, Vol. 20, Issue 3, pp. 365-393.
- Sun Y. (2015). Connotation and extension of food culture. *Journal of Nanning Polytechnic*, 2015 (01), pp. 20-23 (孙耀军. 饮食文化的内涵与外延 [J]. 南宁技术职业学院学报, 2015 年第 20 卷第一期).
- Tan Z. (2004). Study on China's food culture from the perspective of cultural anthropology. *Journal of Hubei University of Economics*, 2004 (2), pp. 124-127 (谭志国. 从文化人类学的角度看中国饮食文化研究 [J]. 湖北经济学院学报, 2004 (2): 124-127).
- Tian G. and Luo K. (2013). *Economic anthropology*. Yinchuan: Ningxia People's Publishing House (田广、罗康隆. 经济人类学 [M]. 宁夏人民出版社, 2013 年).

- Tian, Robert Guang, Kathy Tian, Zhao Dandan and Camilla H. Wang (2018). Food culture in China: from social political perspectives. *Trames: A Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. 22, Issue 4, pp. 345–364.
- Wang C. (2007). Analysis on the developing situations and trends of China's catering industry. *Jiangsu Commercial Forum*, 2007 (06), pp. 35-36 (王成福. 中国餐饮业的发展现状及趋势分析 [J]. 江苏商论, 2007(06): 35-36).
- Xie M. and He X. (2006). *Restaurant services and management*. Beijing: Tsinghua University Press (谢民、何喜刚. 餐厅服务与管理 [M]. 北京: 清华大学出版社, 2006).
- Xiong J. (2005). Chinese "eat" 800 billion yuan a year. <http://www.xinhuanet.com/>, accessed in June 2017 (熊金超. 我国餐饮消费一年“吃”掉8000亿 [EB/L0]. 新华网. 2005).
- Xu J., Ge Q., Xi J. and Yin Z. (2002). Storage conditions and classification of west tourism resources. *Geography and Territorial Research*, 18(4), pp. 59-63 (徐继填等. 西部旅游资源的赋存环境及分类 [J]. 地理学与国土研究. 2002, 18(4): 59-63).
- Yang J. (2014). Study on the differences between Chinese and Western food cultures and the reasons. *Science & Technology Vision*, 2014 (29), pp. 218-309 (杨军虎. 中西饮食文化差异及原因探究 [J]. 科技世界, 2014年第29期).
- Yang M. (2012). Reflection on the inheritance and development of China's food culture. *Commercial Times*, 2012 (9), pp. 143-145 (杨铭铎. 关于我国饮食文化传承与发展的思考 [J]. 商业时代, 2012, 9: 143-145).
- Yang M. (2013). Study on the development trend of China's catering industry targeting modernization. *Commercial Times*, 2013 (03), pp. 4-5 (杨铭铎. 面向现代化的中国餐饮业发展趋势研究 [J]. 商业时代, 2013(03): 4-5).

- Zhang L. and Zhang X. (2009). Development situations and trends of China's catering industry. *Marketing Research*, 2009 (07), pp. 27-29 (张蕾、张新建. 我国餐饮业发展现状及趋势 [J]. 市场研究, 2009 (07): 27-29).
- Zhang Q. (2017). Vegetarian view on modern food culture. *Food Safety Guide*, 2017 (06), pp. 57-59 (张晴晴. 现代饮食文化之素食观 [J]. 食品安全导刊, 2017 (06): 57-59).
- Zhao R. and Xie D. (2006). *Introduction to food culture*. Beijing: China Light Industry Press (赵荣光、谢定源. 饮食文化概论 [M], 中国轻工业出版社, 2006年).