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THE MEDIA DISCUSSION AROUND THE EVOLUTION OF MEANINGS, DRIVERS AND
CONSEQUENCES OF THE INDULGENT CONSUMPTION IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY: THE
RISE OF THE HEALTHY INDULGENCE

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INTRODUCTION

"Indulgence is one of the most vital parts of our existence, it tempers the soul and widens the eyes" -Hartford Courant.

Today consumers look for small rewards for their hectic and stressful daily life. These treats can be identified in the consumption of "indulgences". This type of consumption is represented by rewards that delight the senses, affordable luxuries (and not) and pleasures that link products and brands to a unique consumer experience. The industries traditionally associated with indulgent consumption are: luxury, leisure industry as travel and hospitality and the hedonistic food. Typically, indulging behaviors are associated to the consumption of food indulgences. Classic indulgence has been the top type of indulgence for several years running. It refers to a decadent and sinful behavior. What is characteristic form classic indulgence is the ambiguity of sentiments that stem from its consumptions. In the short term, the consumption of indulgences is fully seen with a positive valence: it is recognized as a moment of personal pleasure and a self-treatment, as well as a reward after having faced stressful conditions and dialed with big efforts. In the long term, it assumes negative valence developing in the individual the feelings of guiltiness, anxiety and unhappiness. After indulging in decadent food, the individual develops the feeling of guiltiness for having break his waistline as well as the feeling of concern for the negative effects that the frequent consumption of indulgences can have on his health. So, when it comes to indulgent consumption, the individual needs to find the balance between the healthy choice and the satisfaction of a desire, conducting the typical game of pushing and attraction. Lately the meaning of indulgent consumption in food category has evolved: indulgent foods are shaping their decadent aspects into a healthy twist responding to the growing need of healthiness among consumers. The result is a new type of indulgence: the healthy indulgence. The healthy indulgence finally provides to consumers the possibility to have their moment of pleasure while feeling good and not feeling guilty for what they are eating. It materializes itself in products which taste good and look good but which are characterized by beneficial benefits such as low sugar and low calories or adding functional benefits that nurture people's wellness such as proteins and probiotics. The main drivers of healthy indulgence have been the increasing of healthy-consciousness among consumers as well as the change of consumers' habits and needs related to food and the explosion of different lifestyles such as vegan lifestyle, vegetarian lifestyles and flexitarian, which require specific diets. The rise of new lifestyles and the high demand on the market for healthier products, has forced food companies to invest into new product development in order to extend their portfolio and offer a wider range of products which can satisfy the new demand and give them the opportunity to conquer a new segment of consumers: the health-conscious and lifestyle-conscious consumers.

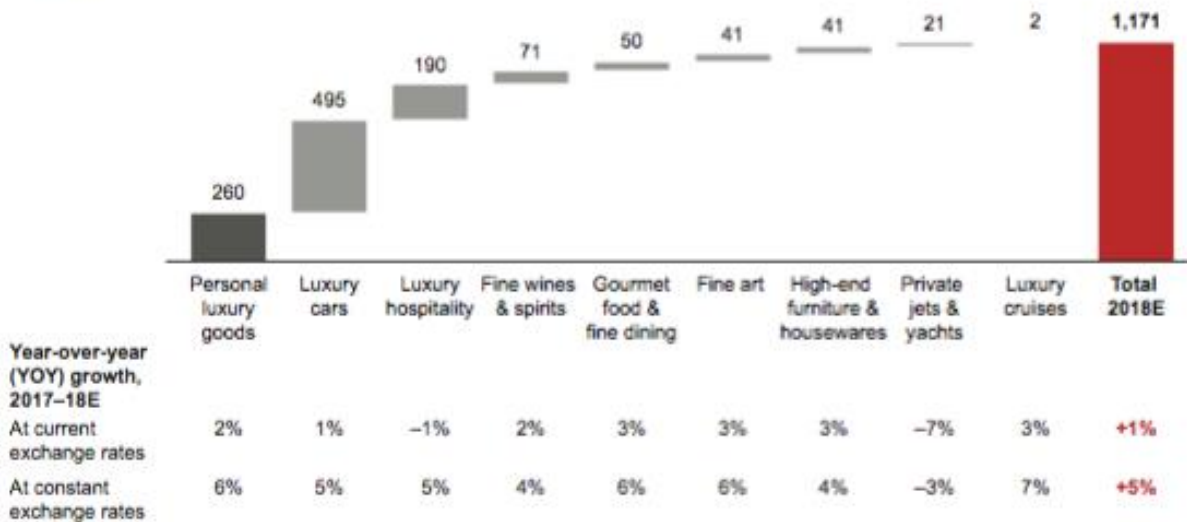
The objective of the research is to study through a qualitative textual analysis, the media discussion around the construct of indulgence consumption in the food industry. The aim is to understand how the meanings, drivers and consequences to the construct of indulgence have changed over time it and have been discussed by media.

CHAPTER 1- THE INDULGENT CONSUMPTION

1.1 The luxury industry: numbers and trends

The luxury industry includes both luxury goods and experiences: luxury cars, personal luxury goods, luxury hospitality, fine wines and spirits, gourmet food and fine dining, fine art, furniture and housewares, private jets and yachts, and luxury cruises. “Overall, the luxury market is increasing, gaining 5% in 2018, rising to an estimated €1.2 trillion, with most segments growing.” (Luxury worldwide market study, Bain & Company-2018). “Personal luxury goods, outperformed the overall market in 2018, climbing 6% to reach a record high of €260 billion worldwide. Overall, shoes and jewelry were the top luxury growth categories, gaining 7% each, followed by hand-bags and beauty. Luxury cars, luxury hospitality and personal luxury goods together accounted for more than 80% of the total market. Sales of luxury cars continued to dominate the market, growing 5% to €495 billion (a slight decline in the growth rate vs. 2017). Within the luxury car market, the aspirational segment outperformed. Luxury hospitality experienced positive growth in real terms, gaining 5%. Sales of luxury cruises increased 7%—the highest growth rate of all luxury segments. The “expedition” category in particular boomed in 2018. Sales of high-end food grew 6% from last year. Of particular importance was the “ethical nutrition” trend, reflected by consumers’ desire for authenticity, quality, freshness and transparency regarding a product’s origins. Fine wines and spirits grew 4% on average, with polarized performance across wines (low single-digit growth) and spirits, which gained momentum due to increased demand from exclusive clubs and growing interest in craft spirits. Yacht sales posted lackluster performance, despite rising interest from Chinese buyers. The private jet market continued to contract, suffering from cannibalization from the secondhand market. Luxury brands can no longer deny the influence of younger consumers. Generations Y and Z accounted for 47% of luxury consumers in 2018 and for 33% of luxury purchases. However, they contributed virtually all of the market’s growth, compared with 85% in 2017. To capitalize, luxury brands are adapting to the preferences of younger consumers in terms of product offerings, communication and engagement strategies, and distribution channels. New generations in fact will be the primary engine of growth for the luxury market in the coming years. Generations Y and Z will represent approximately 55% of the 2025 market and will contribute 130% of market growth between now and then, offsetting the decline in sales among older generations.” (Luxury worldwide market study, Bain & Company-2018)

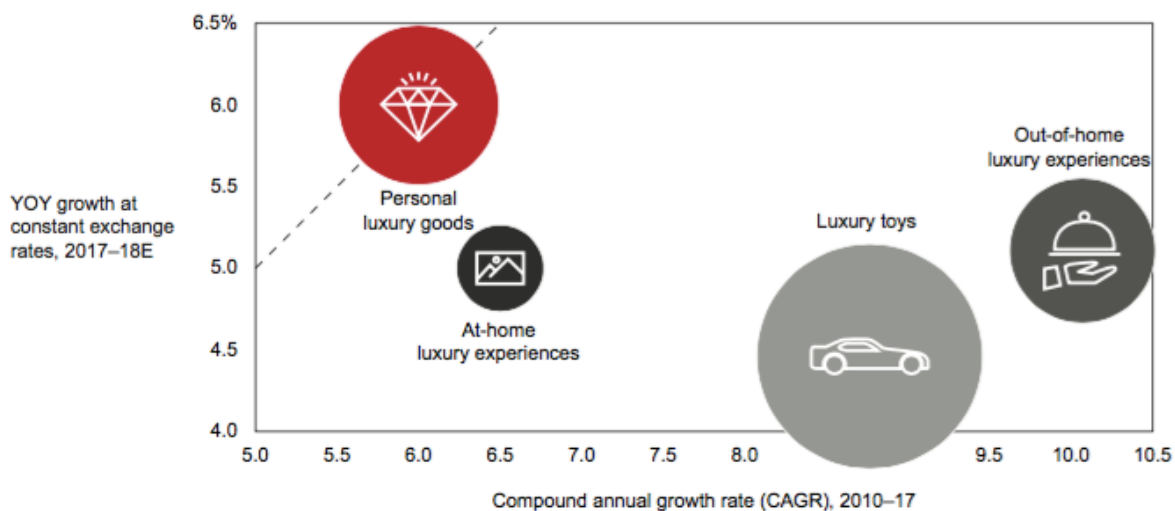
Worldwide luxury market, 2018E
(€ billions)



Note: Figures for 2018 are estimated, based on data from January to September
Source: Bain & Company

Picture 1. The global luxury market grew to nearly €1.2 trillion in 2018, up 5% from 2017- Bain & Company, Luxury worldwide market study 2017

Growth of global luxury goods segments
(€ billions)



Notes: At-home luxury includes fine art, high-end furniture and housewares, fine wines and spirits, and gourmet food; out-of-home luxury includes luxury hospitality, luxury cruises and fine dining; luxury toys includes luxury cars, private jets and yachts
Source: Bain & Company

Picture 2. The personal luxury goods segment outperformed other luxury segments in 2018-Bain& Company, Luxury market study 2017

1.2 The leisure industry: numbers and trends

1.2.1 The travel industry: numbers and trends

Millennials are more willing to spend for experiences rather than goods. According to historical personal consumption expenditure (PCE) data, the spending on durable goods— including cars, sofas, refrigerators, household appliances, and other typical mainstays of consumer life, has been dropping for a little over a decade. Even clothing and apparel spend is decreasing. Instead experiential spending on recreation, travel and eating out is trending up. “Travel especially is outpacing the demand for goods: the travel industry reached \$1.6 trillion in 2017, making it one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world. “(Deloitte, travel and hospitality outlook-2018). Millennials are the most profitable segment for companies in the travel market. These people are influential buyers and is predicted that they will reach their maximum profit and they will have superior purchasing power in the next decade. Their earning potential is likely to be a strong driver for the travel industry. According to the 2017 Millennial Travel Survey; “86% of millennial travelers preferred to pay more for the flight program opportunity, regardless of the cost of the flight. Additionally, in 2017, 80% of millennial travelers preferred to explore international locations rather than national destinations, according to the on-site survey by Skyscanner.” Millennials want more from their travel experiences: a significant trend among millennial travelers are the activity-based travels such as cultural / educational, culinary, voluntourism and adventure tourism as well as the opportunity to connect with other people and build new relationships while travelling. Another popular trend among millennials are the Bleisure trips: leisure trips that come from the extension of business trips. According to Expedia, “in 2018, approximately 60% of business travel has been extended to leisure travel both in the United States and globally, an increase of 40% since 2017.

1.2.2 The hospitality industry: numbers and trends

Rather than other generations, Millennials are more likely to book peer to peer accommodation and look for home rental services. Nowadays travelers are luckier: a wide range of accommodation types to choose among exists which greatly differ from the standard hotels. They are not only simple accommodations, they are experiences: “Airbnb allows guests to mingle with other travelers and members of the local community as they often stay in shared homes or second properties. Treehouses, boats and yurts are just a few of the accommodation types available on the Airbnb platform and these appeal greatly to millennials, thanks in part to their “Instagrammability” ”. (Global Data trend, Trends in global millennial travel-2019). Despite the new trend of accommodation, hospitality seems still growing as a segment part of the broader leisure industry. “The hotel sector sustained strong 5–6 percent growth throughout 2018, setting up the industry to hit a record-breaking \$170 billion in gross bookings. Healthy business and leisure demand is helping the industry to achieve strong fundamentals, including peaking average daily rates (ADR) (+2.4 percent 2017 YTD October) and revenue per available room (RevPAR) (+3.0 percent 2017 YTD October). Hovering around 66 percent, occupancy seems to have hit a peak” (Deloitte, Travel and hospitality outlook-2018).According to Deloitte

Travel and hospitality outlook 2018, the latest trend in the hospitality sector is health and wellness. Wellness represents an enormous opportunity for hospitality companies to elevate the travel experience for the rising segment of health-conscious consumers. Valued as the next trillion-dollar industry, health and wellness touches everything from fitness and healthy eating, to spas, workplace wellness, alternative medicine, beauty and anti-aging. Many hotels are taking notice and adding related services to their standard accommodation offer, so in this way they can tap into the health and wellness space. The result is bringing the wellness resorts into a new and higher level. While these resorts have been delivering healthy hospitality to guests for decades, their offerings are rapidly maturing: these resorts are staffing experts from across the medical field—including medical doctors, nurses, nutritionists, physical therapists, and behavioral health experts. Their expertise enables them to go above and beyond the typical wellness offering of morning yoga classes and healthy food options, and integrate the medical evaluations needed to take personalized healthy-living programming to the next level. Since health and wellness resorts like those described above are often incredibly expensive, larger hotel chains may need to find creative ways to package offerings for a more mainstream consumer.” Equally challenging, consumers share diverse attitudes and preferences around healthy living, meaning big chains with large customer bases should look to facilitate choice across the brand portfolio. While some consumers may welcome, or even actively seek healthy options while traveling, others might be turned off by them. To face the competition, many hotel chains are gaining space among the health and wellness offer. Some are making key acquisitions of resorts and spas and launching new fitness-inspired brands of their own. These strategies give hotels the opportunity to tap into the health and wellness space without impacting the perception of their other brands. Others are introducing targeted experiences, such as branded room upgrades that feature air purification, in-room fitness equipment, and vitamin-infused showerheads across the brand portfolio. Over years, health and wellness programming may be more pervasive in the hospitality space, but will also expand into more facets of the travel ecosystem and will continue to mature into a key element of the travel experience.” (Deloitte, Travel and hospitality outlook-2018)

1.3 The food industry: numbers and trends

Millennials are spending a growing share of their budget on having lunches and dinners out. The love and pleasure for good food has been growing among Millennials. The result is the demographic change among visitors of gourmet restaurants from baby Boomers to Millennials and Generation Z: it's clear that the younger generations want creative and inspiring food options to indulge their refined palate. (Deloitte, travel and hospitality report-2018). "Millennials seems to be willing to spend more premium price when it comes to food: premium indulgence for them means pushing the boundaries for superior quality and a more exquisite and personalized experience. The expense of premium food has grown of 8% versus 3% worldwide in the year ended in April 2016". (Nielsen, Global premiumization report-2016). When it comes to food, the indulgent motto for many appears to be, "If you're going to do it, do it well". Classic indulgence has been the top type of indulgence for several years running. Classic indulgence refers to decadent and sinful behavior. This type of indulgent behavior, in the short term, is considered as a moment of personal pleasure and a real treatment for oneself, whose roots are rooted mainly in nostalgia and family tastes as well as a reward for a great effort made or a moment of stress faced, and it reduces the guilt consequently felt. With so many delicious temptations out there and new products hitting store shelves daily, there's no question why people should not indulge: whether consumers feel they earned it or just simply deserve it, treating themselves is one way to make themselves feel good and boost their mood. Within this type of indulgence calories play no role, but according to 60% of the consumers surveyed in Fona Indulging report, 2018, "portion control and the frequency of the indulgences is one way consumers limit going overboard". Indeed, due to its effects in the long term on the individual's health as well as and its negative impacts on consumers' feelings such as sentiments of guiltiness or unhappiness after having indulge, indulging continues to position itself as a main concern for consumers. So, finding the balance between a healthy choice and the satisfaction of a desire is the game of pushing and attraction conducted by the consumer nowadays. "Among the indulging products, chocolate is considered to be the first indulgent product for 25% of consumers, followed by desserts (16%) and biscuits (15%)". (Fona Indulgence trend insights report 2018). Lately among the indulgences, snacking is increasing: based on the IRI 2018 State of the Industry report: "the true indulgence" and "treats" are showing positive sales growth with 1.9% and 1.8% respectively. The largest growth within the snack category with 2.5% growth are defined as "permissible" snacks as consumers are ultimately giving themselves permission to indulge as it become a regular part of their everyday lives". However, the trend of indulgent consumption in the food industry is evolving: indulging is shaping its decadent aspect into a healthy twist, meeting the increasing consumers' desire for healthiness, resulting into the growing Healthy indulgence (Fona Indulgence trend insights report 2018). The explanation is the changing of consumer's lifestyle and habits when it comes to food as well as higher health-consciousness among consumers.

1.3.1 The healthiness in the food industry: numbers and trends

According to the Health & Wellness report 2017, “globally sales of healthy and indulgent product categories have grown over the past two years, but healthy product categories outperformed indulgent product categories (+5% and +2%, respectively), while sales of semi-healthy products fell by -1% over the same period.” According to the report, “healthy categories include products such as milk shakes, fruit, sports drinks, tea, vegetables, water and yoghurt. Indulgent categories include carbonated soft drinks, chips, chocolate and biscuits. Semi-healthy categories include bread, cheese, cereals, granola bars, juices, popcorn and pretzel”.

“Worldwide, healthy categories have recorded the strongest sales growth in developing regions. Sales grew 20% in Africa/Middle East, 16% in Latin America and 15% in Asia-Pacific. Indulgent categories also grew in developing regions, but at a slower pace than healthy categories (+11% in Africa/Middle East, +7% in Latin America, +5% in Asia-Pacific). In North America, sales in healthy categories grew 7% over the last two years, but at the same time sales in both the semi-healthy and forgiving categories declined (-3% and -2%, respectively). In Europe, only the lenient category grew by about 1%, while both the semi-healthy and healthy category fell (-2% and -1%, respectively). (Health & Wellness report 2017) .The data speak for themselves: consumers around the world are trying to take charge of their health by making healthier food choices, and it's not just about losing weight, as consumer believe that “they are what they eat”. “In addition, nearly 80% use food to prevent health problems and medical conditions such as obesity, diabetes, high cholesterol and hypertension. In response to these new needs, manufacturers are reformulating products to eliminate or reduce the content of sugars, cholesterol, trans and saturated fats and sodium in food, but there is room for further improvement. Innovative producers are beginning to explore new product formats that incorporate fruits and vegetables, proteins, as well as the use of emerging nutrients such as probiotics.” (Health and Wellness report 2017).

The Nielsen Health & Wellness report 2017 conducted a detailed research regarding the needs of consumers when it comes to healthiness. Respondents were asked to assess health attributes from “very important” to “non-important” in their purchasing decisions: “the main desirable attributes are fresh, natural and minimally processed foods. 43% of global respondents consider food with all natural ingredients and food without genetically modified organisms (GMOs) to be very important, this is the highest percentage of the 27 attributes included in the study. In addition, about four out of ten global respondents say that the absence of artificial colors (42 %) and vegetable/fruit-based foods (40 %) are very important. In addition, consumers are looking for functional foods that offer benefits that can reduce the risk of disease and/or promote good health. 36% of the world's respondents consider foods with high protein content (32%), whole grain (30%) or fortified with calcium (30%), vitamins (30%) or minerals (29%) to meet their nutritional needs to be very important. About one third of global respondents say that foods with low cholesterol (38%), salt (33%), sugar (32%) and fat (30%) are very important to them. In addition, about a quarter consider the absence of high-fructose corn syrup (26%) and caffeine (23%) and a fifth of gluten-free foods (21%) very important. Environmental and socio-economic concerns also influence purchasing decisions. A third think that ingredients from sustainable (35%)

and organic (33%) sources are very important in their purchasing decisions, and more than a quarter (26%) say that local herbs/ingredients are very desirable.” (Health & Wellness report, 2017)

An interesting fact is that Millennials and Generation Z are more willing to pay a premium price for healthy products than Generation X and Baby Boomers. For the Millennials, personal health and well-being is a constant commitment. The type of consumption related to healthiness is varied , it ranges from fitness to food ingredients, including corporate wellness, beauty, sleep, personalized care, sportswear, personalized nutrition, travel and mental well-being. As a result, the companies from multiple industries are changing and reinventing their portfolio and their brands to meet the Millennials’ new healthy demand.

1.4 From classic indulgence to healthy indulgence

Healthy indulgence refers to the growing trend of scrumptious foods with healthy twist that drain away any residual of guiltiness. Consumers nowadays have a desire for health & wellness products and are willing to pay more for healthy foods. According to 2008 report in *Food Technology*; “57% of shoppers make a sincere effort to eat healthier. As people have become more aware of the connections between health and diet, their desire for healthier products has risen. Thus, more foods promoting their healthy appeal are appearing on supermarket shelves and restaurant menus. According to a 2008 Business Insights report, “the global healthy food market is growing in value and volume each year, pushed by rising levels of diet-related illnesses, consumer interest in nutrition, and technological advances in the food industry”. At the same time, people are not ready to give up to their moments of pleasure. Consumers are looking for the “happy medium”: products which taste great and do not make them worried about the waistline. “Consumers are looking for indulgent products that provide a health benefit. They want their ‘indulgent cake and eat it, too.’ They want to indulge in these products without feeling the associated guiltiness and possible negative effects on their health. Consumers are looking for ways to incorporate these types of products into their diet so they feel satisfied without compromising taste, convenience, and health,” says Joy Dubost, PhD, RD, food science communicator for the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT). Companies are now enhancing consumers’ desire for healthiness, offering products with great taste that do not force them to break the calorie bank or that can offer them even additional benefits: the so called “Better for you” products. Multiples are the food companies which are investing in new product development to position themselves within the healthy indulgent segment : Unilever, the giant food multinational company, position itself in the ice-cream category with a range of “better for you” Indulgent ice-creams which include multiple brands such as Breyers for its functional ice -cream (higher in protein, lower in sugar, lower in calories), Swedish Glaze for its plant-based ice-cream as well as Magnum health & wellness range for the its indulging Magnum Vegan. The development of healthy indulgent foods is influencing several food categories: according to SymphonyIRI report, “snacking is seen as one of the fastest growing opportunities in the coming years: consumers see snacks as small indulgent moments to deal with their daily stressful life. Indulgent snacking has not been immune to the influence of the macro trend in the health and wellness.” According to Fona Indulgent report, “in the last few years, healthy snacks have

begun to outpace traditional snacks by a 3-to-1 ratio. Consumers are looking for healthy indulgent snacks that are lower in calories and total fat, including trans and saturated fat, yet also provide a positive addition to the diet, such as whole grains. Or being enriched with proteins and/or probiotics resulting in “super” indulgent snacks”. The dessert category has also shifted to healthy: traditional desserts are being relaunched with healthy ingredients and benefits that improve performance. In this way, individuals are offered indulgent taste experiences that reduce the "guilt" factor without compromising pleasure. Companies are also able to demand a premium price that consumers will pay happily if they are allowed to indulge in a way designed to avoid suffering subsequent guilt. Cookies and other sweet treats are also shifting to healthy: “Healthier biscuits are expected to see the strongest growth until 2020, thanks to the young Millennials families who want healthier biscuits for their children than standard biscuits. (Fona Indulgent report-2018).

Products with "no sugar" or "no added sugar" labels are increasing, particularly in the beverage industries, many are the brands which are reducing the level of sugar contained in their soft drinks, such as Coke which created an ad-hoc product -line lower in sugar : the Coke Zero.

Indulgent products that are linked to premium foods are in high demand, such as those labeled all natural or organic. According to Fona indulgent report 2018, “Consumers perceive organic food as healthier and are turning to organic confectionery for a more legitimate indulgence: launches have more than doubled in recent years, and 6% of global confectionery launches currently carry the organic claim”.

Last but not least, the new approach of eating less to avoid guiltiness is spreading out. Companies are enhancing portion control by launching mini or single portions. “Mini or single portions in sweet products have increased by 12% from 2015 to 2018” (Fona indulgent report 2018).



Picture 3. Breyers ice-cream pints is part of the “Better for you” range of ice-creams owned by the giant FMCG multinational company Unilever-Unilever.com, 2018

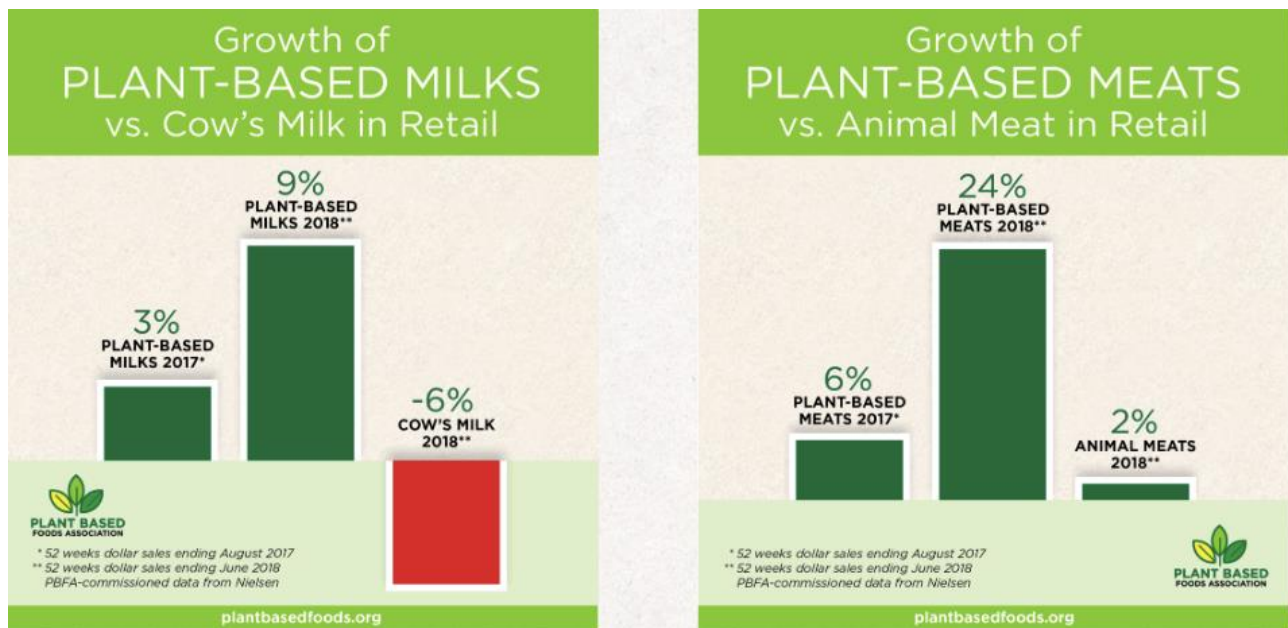
1.4.1 The rise of plant-based food

Consumers' habits and needs are changing in food industry. Consumers' demand is becoming more and more specific with the rise of emerging lifestyles. Vegetarians and vegans consumers as well as flexitarians are growing. People who follow these lifestyles are committed to avoid meat and dairy products, as well as reducing the levels of consumption (in case of flexitarians) to respond to a combination of ethical, environmental and health concerns. Vegans, flexitarians and vegetarians, consume alternative food which take the form of specific substitutes of meat and dairy choices and as a consequence, the plant-based food has been growing considerably in the past two years



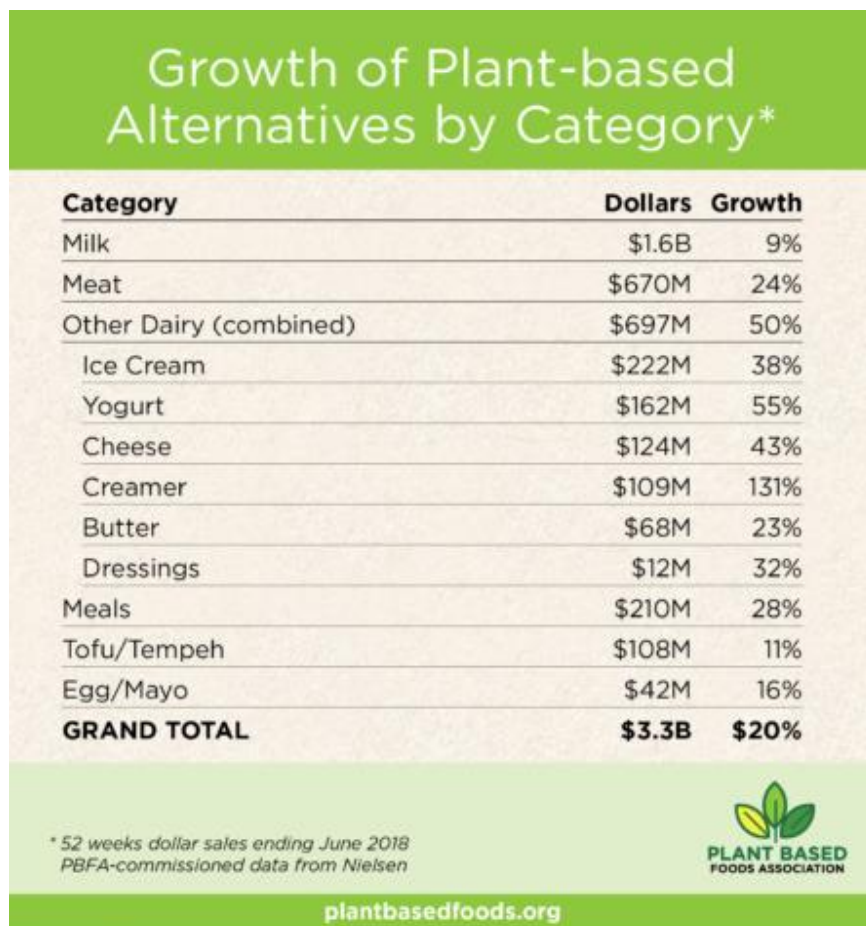
Picture 4. *Total growth of all plant-based food in retail. US is one of the biggest market for plant based. The plant-based foods industry is seeing tremendous growth in the US, with sales up 20% in dollar sales last year-Plantbasedfoods.org 2018*

Gone are the days when plant-based alternative products were for the niche consumer and warranted limited shelf space. The global meat and dairy sector is in fact, currently going through an unprecedented level of competition and disruption, driven by the growth of viable plant-based alternatives across many categories. "The Vegan Society estimated that the number of vegans in the UK increased by a factor of 2.6 times in the ten years to 2016. However, the significant growth in the plant-based market is driven by the flexitarian consumer". (Deloitte, plant-based alternatives report 2018).



Picture 5. Growth of plant-based milks vs cow milks in retail, growth of plant-based meats vs animal meat in retail-Plantbasedfoods.org 2018

Increasing awareness year on year of “Veganuary” and the fact that major multiple retailers have rapidly expanded their shelf space and own label new product development for plant-based products, underline the growth in the sector. Many restaurants, casual dining venues, and fast food chains now have dedicated “meat free” sections to their menu, as the popularity of a vegan or indeed flexitarian diet continues to increase. Companies across the spectrum are now investing heavily in acquiring and creating new products and brands which appeal to the high consumer demand for plant-based products. “Various are the factors driving the switch towards plant-based products, including: significant media coverage of the impact of meat and dairy product production on global warming and resource consumption in relation to greenhouse gases , animal welfare rights groups have gained significant traction and the ways in which animals are treated in the production of products has caused a switch in consumer preferences , numerous reports on the potential links between high consumption of processed or red meat and cancer “.(Deloitte, plant based alternatives report). There are various types of plant-based alternative products on the market , which means significant levels of new product development from food companies. Key plant-based protein sources include products such as: soy, pea, pulses, seitan, and tempeh. While this trend has been developing for some time, media coverage has picked up significantly in 2019 in line with the increase in new product development and demand for the products across different food categories.



Picture 6. Growth of plant-based food by category-Plantbasedfoods.org 2018

Existing food and beverage companies are moving to protect and enhance their positions in the market, both through internally driven product development and innovation and inorganic growth through the acquisition of the new brands and products. The challenge for the companies is to investing in further product innovations, providing plant-based alternatives which have similarity in taste and texture to traditional animal based products. The category of healthy indulgent food is then opening also t Giant FMCG multinational company Unilever has worked on both sides above. On one hand in the past two years, has launched new products development focused on plant-based across its brands' portfolio within the FNR category: its famous Hellmann's mayonnaise brand, known worldwide for being the "real mayonnaise", launched the vegan mayo already in 2016 in US. In 2018 the product was rolled out across EU countries. The product is plant-based and suitable for vegans and the message that the brand wants to stress out the concept that, although the mayo is free from eggs and other animal products, , the product keeps the great taste



SAME GREAT TASTE AND PLANT-BASED

Picture 7. Hellmann's mayo launched in 2018 plant-based mayo suitable for vegans. Unilever.com, 2018

On the other hand, Unilever acquired in 2018 in its portfolio, The Vegetarian Butcher, brand of plant-based meat alternatives. The acquisition fits with Unilever's strategy to expand its portfolio into plant-based foods that are healthier and have a lower environmental impact. With this acquisition, Unilever is responding to the growing trend among consumers to increasingly option for vegetarian and vegan meal



Picture 8. Unilever acquisition of The Vegetarian Butcher, plant-based meat alternative brand, expanding its portfolio into plant-based food-Unilver.com 2018

The fact that people are following specific lifestyle doesn't mean that they want to miss their moment of pleasure; this is the statement of Magnum the most indulgent ice-cream worldwide brand, which launched in 2018 a new range of dairy-free Magnum, suitable for Vegans : "Introducing Magnum Vegan, our first dairy-free dessert bar that indulges in goodness — without compromising taste." The brand has always promoted that, life's little indulgences are good for one's personal sense of wellbeing. So, with no surprise, Magnum brings indulgence to health and wellness-minded consumers seeking a dairy-free ice cream experience that is both premium and delicious.

Magnum Vegan, for its delicious as well as same taste as the classic Magnum, won the prize in 2019 for the best Vegan product ever, underlining that the pleasure of eating, taste and texture matter also if following a plant-based lifestyle.



Picture 9. Magnum taps into the Health & Wellness trend launching Magnum Vegan in 2018. Magnumicecream.com 2018

1.5 The impact of healthy indulgence on consumers' behavior

The transition from classic indulgence to healthy indulgence has also brought a change in the set of feelings and emotions that emerge in the consumer after assuming indulging behaviors. The classic indulgent behavior is perceived on one hand as a reward for oneself after a stressful condition, but on the other hand the same act of indulging in decadent pleasure, causes stress and a strong feeling of guilt. Differently, indulging in a healthy way, as part of a broader and growing trend of health and wellness, has the ultimate goal the individual's real and lasting happiness. The growing trend of health and wellness is no longer conceiving that taking care of themselves is only taking care of the physical appearance, but above all is taking care of mind and spirit. According to a study conducted by Business insider, Millennials (aged 18 to 35) and Gen Xers (36 to 49) are significantly more stressed than the "average" stress level, while older generations struggle less with stress. Millennials are living in a time where drivers to stress are multiple: higher competitiveness on the job market and less economic stability, unstable political climate, environmental concerns and unstable future of the planet, technology and media overload as well as social pressure online and online bullying are some of the reasons why levels of stress are much higher nowadays. Since Millennials are a generation of people who are due to face high levels of daily stress, it is not a surprise that the general interest into happiness has increased in the last decade: indulging has assumed a positive connotation where happiness, serenity, love and self-respect are considered as goals achieved through the performance of acts of "good" indulgence. The positive effects of healthy indulgence demarcates indeed, the thin difference between self-indulging and taking care of themselves. Allowing themselves to self-indulgence's behaviors brings temporarily happiness: through indulging consumption, consumer is looking for a quick solution to change temporarily his state of mind or conscience in order to escape the boredom, the fatigue or the pain of his existence. The consumer will experience happiness in short time until mixed feelings of guiltiness together with pain and boredom will come out and will sweep the positive feelings of comfort and happiness away. With healthy indulgence, the consumer no longer "gives himself" something that temporarily makes himself feeling fulfilled but eventually is bad for himself, with healthy indulgence the consumer faces the innate need for self-satisfaction, but in an adult and responsible way: the consumer decides to take a moment of pleasure while at the same time acting lovingly, respectfully and prudently towards himself gaining the peace of his mind and of his soul. Only when individuals finally understand how to take care of themselves in the best possible way, they can take the right attitude toward indulging consumption and skillfully combine the delicious with the healthy.

CHAPTER 2- THE SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE ON THE INDULGENT CONSUMPTION

2.1 Drivers and meanings of the indulgent consumption

The Contemporary consumerist culture, in which consumer objects and experiences play a key role in the construction of the personal meaning of the individual and the community (Arnould & Price 2000) has been marked by a dialectic between asceticism (i.e. self-discipline as moral responsibility) and the hedonistic search for gratification and pleasure (Thompson & Hirschman 1995). The behaviours that offer short-term benefits (e.g. the pleasure of eating chocolate), but long-term damages (e.g. bad health) are known as "vices". (Wertenbroch, 1998). Conversely, behaviours that provide little pleasure in the short term (e.g. staying late in the office) but a long-term advantages (e.g. career progression) are called "virtues". Virtues versus vices, needs versus desires (Bazerman, Tenbrunsel, & Wade-Benzoni, 1998) and needs versus luxury (Kivetz & Simonson, 2002a, 2002b) describe the paradigms commonly adopted by the scientific literature in relation to the direct comparison between indulgent and utilitarian consumption: the literature describes the indulgent products as relatively more fun, enjoyable, and pleasant, and utilitarian products as relatively more functional, necessary, and effective—and there appears that consumption can be distinguished along instrumental/cognitive versus emotional/affective lines (Millar & Tesser, 1986a).

The literature states that consumers make indulgent consumption decisions based on what they expect will be enjoyable, especially what is thought to be the "most enjoyable" of the options considered and for a desirable period of time in particular, the "longest". Consistently to the former, some experiences are inherently pleasurable and are more pleasurable than others: Sweet, fatty, or salty foods tend to be more enjoyable than bitter, bland, or sour ones; consonant music is more enjoyable than dissonant music; experiences that are funny or exciting are more pleasing than those that are serious.. The literature distinguishes the sources and determinants of pleasure into two general categories: the product or event (and its inherent qualities), and the consumer's personal experience with the product or event. Starting from this, numerous approaches exist to pleasure, it can derive from different elements:

1) Aesthetics: “consumer research has recently provided compelling evidence for the importance of aesthetics in consumer decision making by demonstrating that consumers attend to aesthetics both beyond the margin of their decision process and within product categories that are not purely aesthetic” (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008a; Reimann, Zaichkowsky, Neuhaus, Bender, & Weber, 2010; Townsend & Shu, 2010). In addition, hedonic reactions to aesthetic features can overwhelm utilitarian calculations even among products not typically considered to be hedonic products. “When consumers face a choice between a hedonically superior option (i.e., one with superior aesthetic and design features) that fails to meet functional criteria and a functionally superior option that is less appealing hedonically, the latter is unsurprisingly favored; however, when both options exceed basic functional and hedonic requirements, the hedonically superior option is favored “(Chitturi, Raghunathan, & Mahajan, 2007).” Similarly, when consumers are confident about a product's functional utility, they may prefer aesthetically more interesting designs” (Noseworthy & Trudel, 2011).

Consistent outcomes are observed in consumer's affective response to consumption.” When the product meets or exceeds utilitarian criteria consumers experience satisfaction; when a product meets or exceeds hedonic criteria, consumers experience excitement and delight, become more loyal, and are more inclined to engage in positive word of mouth” (Chitturi, Raghunathan, & Mahajan, 2008).

2) Experiences: “recent work on the regrets prompted by material and experiential purchases suggests that material purchases are related to regrets of action, which are more likely to be experienced in the short-term, whereas experiential purchases prompt regrets of inaction, which are more likely to be experienced in the long-term” (e.g., Rosenzweig & Gilovich, 2012). More over the consumption of experiences is considered, among the indulgences, a driver of happiness and well-being for consumers.

3) Essence of things: “the pleasure we get from many things and activities “is based in part on what we see as their essences, it underlies our passions, our appetites, and our desires.” Thus, food and wine taste better when identified with a prestigious name that implies a higher level of essential quality; we derive greater pleasure from an original work of art by a master than from an indistinguishable reproduction; we enjoy a piece of music more when we know that the performer is a famous virtuoso than not; we are hesitant to eat food that has been genetically modified; and we prize artifacts that have been touched by famous people “(e.g., Bloom, 2010; Newman, Diesendruck, & Bloom, 2011).

Indulgent consumption is defined as the choice of the consumer to "allow himself to choose an option considered as a pleasure, a treatment for himself, compared to an option or alternative options". (Cavanaugh, 2014, p. 220). Two typical domains of indulgent consumption, frequently examined in scientific research, are luxury and hedonistic food. The literature explains how the consumption of indulgences can develop short-term negative emotions in the individuals, such as guilt, regret, shame and embarrassment, since they are considered less legitimate and not optimal by nature (Hoch & Loewenstein, 1991). The consumption of indulgent products has often been the subject of discussion in studies related to the exercise of self-control by the individual and especially in the dilemmas that arise about the ability to resist temptation, since, when it comes to hedonistic consumption, consumers must face choices between vices and virtues (Werthenbroch, 1998) and experience an internal struggle between desire and will (Dedeoglu, A.O & Kazançoglu, 2005). Justification plays an important role among people in indulgent consumption. Having a reason behind indulgent consumption refers to a type of rational or justified indulgence such that the consumption of such a product is earned or deserved (Xu & Schwarz, 2009); developing in the consumers more positive (and less negative) feelings (Xu & Schwarz, 2009). Previous research indicates several ways in which people justify hedonism itself. Consumers seem to perceive that they are allowed to consume indulgent products after they have progressed towards achieving a goal of their own, for the effort invested in a task or action, for excelling in a performance, as a result of negative emotional experiences, as a result of moral or pro-social behavior. There is little literature examining how indulgent consumption, carried out on the basis

of a justification, influences feelings arising from the consumption of the products themselves. In a qualitative study, Mick and DeMoss (1990) found that consumers who rewarded themselves with an indulgent product when they thought they "deserved it" (for example, after a promotion) described feelings of happiness, pride, joy, calm and satisfaction. Mick & Faure (1998) subsequently corroborated these findings in an experimental context, demonstrating that the feeling of reward and the positive emotions generated by indulgent consumption affect the likelihood of making such indulgent purchases. However, a recent work by Xu & Schwarz (2009) shows that although consumers believe they would enjoy more if there is a justification for indulgent purchasing, they actually enjoy indulgent products when they do not. That is, they discover that consumers enjoy the consumption of hedonic products, in the same way as whether or not they have a reason to consume them. Overall the majority of the research examining emotional responses to indulgence, has shown that having a reason to indulge reduces the negative emotions (e.g., guilt and regret) associated with the indulgent consumption (Kivetz & Simonson, 2002; Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998) that's why adding small utilitarian additions to a luxury product serve as justification and reduce guilt. (Keinan et al.2008).Since the indulgent consumption is often expensive for one's health and well-being (and sometimes for one's bank account), consumers often have to compensate their desire for pleasure with its potential consequences (Alba, J.W & Williams, E.F, 2013). In this way, the individual becomes a judge and self-master, pursuing gratification and pleasure in life while exercising self-control. Based on this conclusion, the study by F. Petersen et all. (2017), extends previous research, showing how consumers with a high and low level of self-control can react differently to make indulgent purchases due or not to real motivation. They predict that consumers with a high level of self-control perceive the possibility of making indulgent purchases as an opportunity when there is an underlying motivation. The latter view is entirely consistent with their rational personality. They also show how consumers with a higher level of self-control are also happier when they have an underlying justification for indulgent consumption than when they do not. On the other hand, consumers with a lower level of self-control, consistent with their spontaneous personality, behave indulgently without necessarily having a justification. As a result, they will be happier when they have no real reason to consume indulgent products. If consumers experience negative emotions such as guilt and regret after indulgent consumption, why do they continue to indulge in such vicious acts? Some researchers have recognized the positive results of indulgent behavior. Indulgent consumption offers people fun and satisfies psychological and physiological needs that the acquisition of basic necessities may not satisfy (Xu & Schwarz, 2009). Consumption of indulgences makes consumers feel good or happy (Ramanathan & Williams, 2007) and serves as a strategy to mitigate negative emotions such as sadness (Atalay & Meloy, 2011). The possibility of experiencing happiness through short-term consumption of indulgences has the potential to contribute to consumers' general well-being (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1985; Fredrickson, 2001), responding to the growing consumers' interest and need to individual well-being and happiness. Consistently with this theory, previous studies argue that the consumption of indulgent products as a mood-repairer could be used by people to manage their emotions, especially negative ones, and to perceive less stress and a better psychological

regulation between personal well-being and emotions (Suzuki, S et al., 2017). The theory of emotion regulation argues that psychological well-being derives from the effective regulation of emotions (Barlow, 1991; Gross, 1998). In the research of Suzuki et al., (2017), it was shown that if indulgent consumption is linked to a strategy of emotion re-evaluation, then hedonistic consumption could also have positive implications for the individual's well-being in a similar way to emotion re-evaluation. Their findings have shown that indulgence is associated with well-being only when it is predicted by an emotional re-evaluation. Therefore, only when indulgence is used as therapy to relieve negative emotions, it is related to well-being. Hedonic food together with the consumption of experiences and various activities over long periods of time and spending time in ways that improve self-esteem and social connection (Aaker, Rudd, & Mogilner, 2011), are considered indulgences that help to increase the feeling of happiness.

2.2 The indulgent consumption as eating pleasure

Indulgent consumption related to food industry is mostly associated to hedonic food. Past research has found that the consumption of hedonic food is associated with an individual's emotional state (Amow, Kenardy, & Agras, 1995; Macht, 2008): many people eat in order to distract themselves from, compensate for, or cope with negative sentiments such as stress, anxiety, frustration, fear, daily hassles, sadness, boredom, depression, and fatigue (Chua, Touyz, & Hill, 2004; O'Connor, Jones, Conner, McMillan, & Ferguson, 2008; Polivy & Herman, 1999; Schachter, Goldman, & Gordon, 1968; Wallis & Hetherington, 2004, 2009; Willner et al., 1998). The foods eaten under these circumstances are sometimes referred to as comfort foods, and most of these foods are indulgent, sweet, carbohydrate- and fat-rich foods because such foods can provide immediate satisfaction and even psycho-physical benefits. "Different streams of research on food and eating have adopted contrasting conceptualizations of eating pleasure. Research aiming to understand overeating and self-regulation failures has taken a negative view of eating pleasure, equating it with the satisfaction of visceral impulses triggered by the environment or by negative emotions, naming this perspective "visceral eating pleasure" (e.g. Loewenstein, 1996; van Strien, Frijters, Bergers, & Defares, 1986), "simultaneously, research on the social and cultural dimensions of eating has taken a more positive view of eating pleasure by focusing on the "Epicurean" aesthetic facets of eating, naming it "Epicurean eating pleasure" (e.g. Johnston & Baumann, 2007; Rozin, Fischler, Imada, Sarubin, & Wrzesniewski, 1999). It is defined "Visceral eating pleasure" as the short-lived hedonic relief created by the satisfaction of eating impulses. Visceral eating pleasure is the by-product of relieving a visceral urge, often beyond eaters' volitional control, and it can be summarized by its valence (pleasant or unpleasant) regardless of the rich aesthetic experience of eating (e.g. Dube & Le Bel, 2003; Loewenstein, 1996). Part of the literature describes the "pleasure of eating" as a peculiar sensation directed to the satisfaction of hunger, a bodily necessity, not to be confused with the "pleasures of the table". Cabanac (1971) used the same conceptualization of eating pleasure: in his model, the pleasantness (or anticipated pleasantness) of food increases when one is hungry and decreases when one is sated. Cornil & Chandon describe how differently, in today's society of

plentiful and cheap food, eating behaviors are no longer determined by hunger and satiety. More specifically in the domain of food, Van Strien et al. (1986), proposes two broad categories factors that can trigger eating for pleasure: external food sensory cues (leading to “external eating”) and internal emotions (leading to “emotional eating”). “ External eating is triggered by the rewarding sensory properties of the ever more palatable foods marketed today” (Stroebe, Van Koningsbruggen, Papies, & Aarts, 2013). Food companies have developed expertise in finding the best combination of sugar, salt and fat to make food most palatable and rewarding, regardless of its satiating properties .”Many studies have demonstrated that the mere sight, smell or taste of a pleasant food can trigger visceral urges to eat (and the pleasure that accompanies the satisfaction of such urges) even in the absence of hunger “(Fedoroff, Polivy, & Herman, 1997; Rogers & Hill, 1989).” Neuro-imagery studies have even shown that the mere exposure to pleasant food stimuli can activate the pleasure and reward centers of the brain, leading to experienced or anticipated pleasure” (Berridge, 2009; Plassmann, O'Doherty, & Rangel, 2010). Like external factors, emotions can also trigger visceral eating urges, leading to the anticipation of pleasure and the reward that goes with satisfying such urges. Bruch (1964) argues “that people eat in response to negative emotions because of a confusion between internal arousal states and hunger”. “Other theories suggest that people, especially restrained eaters, actively seek pleasurable foods as a way of regulating negative emotions” (Macht, 2008). In fact the current research has explored whether individuals’ positive and negative moods influence their preference between indulgent and healthy food. The findings are consistent with the hypothesis that individuals in a negative mood prefer indulgent foods to healthy foods because a negative mood invokes proximal, concrete construal which puts more weight on immediate concerns such as mood repair and the affective benefits of foods such as taste and sensory experiences. In contrast, individuals in a positive mood prefer healthy foods to indulgent foods because a positive mood invokes distal, abstract construal which puts more weight on long-term, higher-level benefits of foods such as health and well-being. For example, people eat more popcorn and M&M's when watching a sad movie, and more healthy raisins when watching a happy movie (Garg, Wansink, & Inman, 2007). Other studies have shown that threatening people's identity and ego increases consumption of indulgent foods (Baumeister, Heatherton, & Tice, 1993; Lambird & Mann, 2006). For example, people eat more treats after being socially rejected (Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, & Twenge, 2005) or negatively stereotyped (Inzlicht & Kang, 2010). Whether eating pleasure stems from the satisfaction of hunger or of urges triggered by food cues or emotions, a common aspect of visceral eating pleasure is that it can be reduced to its valence, that is, to a summary evaluation of how good it feels to eat. Research focusing on visceral eating pleasure adopts, to use Dube and Le Bel (2003)'s terminology: “ a “unitary” perspective whereby pleasure is not qualified or differentiated by the subjective quality of the food (e.g., its taste, its preparation, its origin) or by the whole eating experience (e.g., companionship, food rituals)”. To summarize, visceral eating pleasure can be defined as the short-lived hedonic relief created by the satisfaction of eating impulses. Although hunger, external cues, and internal emotions, can all create visceral eating pleasure, given the relatively lower importance of hunger in today's rich societies, visceral eating tendencies are mostly driven by external food cues (external eating) or negative

internal emotions (emotional eating). The “visceral eating pleasure” is linked with the concept of consumers’ self-licensing. The literature describes different and several reasons of licensing behavior. Previous studies have demonstrated that merely recalling an accomplishment, by letting participants describe a moment of success in detail and letting them reflect on their feelings, can function as a license to choose French fries over a salad (Wilcox et al., 2011) or M&M’s over a granola bar (Salerno et al., 2014). It has been suggested that the feelings of pride and achievement that are associated with this memory can instigate a sense of goal progress, as pride is generally experienced when people have achieved or made progress towards a goal (Wilcox et al., 2011). Perceived goal progress can in turn function as a license for goal inconsistent behavior, like indulging in unhealthy foods while having the goal to lose weight. Importantly, it has been demonstrated that individuals can even ‘consume past progress’ by recalling past virtuous behaviors that signal goal progress (Fishbach & Dhar, 2006). Interestingly, the source of pride that signals goal progress (e.g. receiving a good grade) can be unrelated to the inconsistent behavior that it justifies (e.g. indulging in unhealthy snacks; Wilcox et al., 2011). The researches provide support for the proposition that the perception of goal progress inferred from feelings of pride can function as a license for indulgence. Hard work is identified as one of the main reasons used to justify indulgence (Kivetz & Zheng, 2006). After working hard, people find it easier to treat themselves as they feel like they deserved it. When it comes to eating behavior, it often happens that people have contrast behaviors. For example, people who have the goal to lose weight often simultaneously have the opposing goal of eating enjoyment (Stroebe, Van Koningsbruggen, Papies, & Aarts, 2013). There is evidence that when people come closer to a focal goal, such as losing weight, they feel ‘liberated’ to pursue inconsistent goals, such as eating enjoyment (Fishbach & Dhar, 2006). Although these studies were not conducted to demonstrate self-licensing effects, the findings from De Witt Huberts et al (2014), support the notion that prior restraint can be used as a reason for subsequent indulgence. That is, a small (perceived) distance to one’s goal can function as a license to choose immediate gratification (chocolate bar) over goal-consistent behavior, because giving priority to eating enjoyment may feel more acceptable once the attainment of one’s weight loss goal is achieved. In their research, participants who were led to believe they were closer to their goal weight chose snacks of higher caloric value than participants for whom their goal weight seemed further away. In contrast to the “visceral eating pleasure”, the “Epicurean eating pleasure” is the enduring pleasure derived from the aesthetic appreciation of the sensory and symbolic value of the food.” This kind of pleasure is unrelated to impulses and within people's volition, it can be pursued as an end in itself (i.e. it is not the by-product of relieving an urge), and it cannot be summarized by its valence because it is intrinsically linked to differentiated aesthetic, sensory and symbolic eating experiences” (e.g. Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982; Rozin, 1999). Further, whereas the “visceral” view assumes that eating pleasure is the enemy of healthy eating and must be controlled or suppressed to avoid overeating even at the expense of wellbeing, contrary the Epicurean view holds that eating pleasure goes hand in hand with moderation and wellbeing. When applied to food, Epicurean pertains to both the evaluation of the sensory aspect of eating (e.g. the sensory experience of “gourmet” cuisine) and to the evaluation of its meaning (e.g. the cultural and symbolic associations with the

food, where and how it was made). In contrast to visceral pleasure, Epicurean pleasure cannot be captured simply by its valence in the sense that it cannot be separated from the differentiated facets of food experiences (Dube & Le Bel, 2003; Duncker, 1941; Rozin, 1999)

2.3 The raise in the scientific literature of a new trend within food indulgence: the healthy indulgence

When it comes to eating behaviors, consumers frequently face dilemmas or conflicting goals (Trope and Fishbach, 2000), a good example of which, would be the choice of what dressing to have with a salad. Many studies have already explored the dilemmas of making choices about food. For example, Wilcox *et al.* (2009) explored how consumers' food choices differ when healthy items are included in a choice set compared with when they are not available, while Cherries and Gal (2010) examined how consumers evaluate combinations of items representing conflicting goals, several other researchers have examined the effects of external cues on food consumption, such as advertisement claims or nutrition information disclosure (e.g. Bates *et al.*, 2009). Choices may be classed as indulgent when compared with others that are probably healthier. Nowadays health is becoming an increasingly important personal and societal value and it is not surprising that consumers have started to pay more attention to the health benefits of food (Goetzke & Spiller, 2014; Marette, Roosen, Blanchemanche, & Feinblatt-Meleze, 2010; Vecchio, Van Loo, & Annunziata, 2016). Marketplace is enhancing consumers' everyday health decision-making, by making health-relevant information easier for consumers to access, use, and understand. For example, mandatory calorie and nutrition labeling on grocery and restaurant menu items helps consumers find healthy food and beverage options and avoid or moderate their consumption of less healthy items." Health consciousness is the degree to which a person plays an active role in maintaining his or her health" (Gould, 1988), it is demonstrated by previous researches that it stimulates preventive health care (Jayanti & Burns, 1998), positive attitude towards organic food (Hughner, McDonagh, Prothero, Shultz, & Stanton, 2007), purchase intentions (Magnusson, Arvola, Hursti, Åberg, & Sjöden, 2003), and increases focus on the health-related properties of food products (Mai & Hoffmann, 2012). Health-conscious consumers are aware of and concerned about their health, they are motivated to improve or sustain their state of well-being by pursuing healthy behaviors, such as consuming healthy food and they are fully aware of healthy food's benefits (Kraft & Goodell, 1993; Mai & Hoffmann, 2012). Nowadays consumers are progressively changing lifestyle and the number of Health-conscious consumers is growing. To respond to this growing demand for healthiness, the marketplace is offering more and more healthier options, not only food brands but also restaurants, retailers and other distributors have added healthier options to supplement their typically indulgent product offerings (Chen, 2013). Many consumers assume that food cannot be tasty and nutritious at the same time (Raghunathan *et al.*, 2006) and thus tend to employ a heuristic that classifies virtuous foods as "healthy but not tasty" and vice food as "unhealthy but tasty" (Chernev and Gal, 2010, Rozin *et al.*, 1996, Wertenbroch, 1998). This trend can be observed even in the most health-conscious consumers, which shows that they consider such characteristics during real food purchases (Istudor and Pelau, 2011). As such, consumers envision dietary choices as a tradeoff; consume virtuous foods to attain health goals or

consume vice foods to indulge. However, food and beverage companies have begun to nullify this perceived dichotomy by bundling vice and virtue ingredients (for example, Oreo cookies in Yocrunch Yogurt), which addresses the consumer's desire to gain health benefits, but without the cost of adopting extreme measures to do so (Kristensen et al., 2013). In fact more and more consumers are demanding food that combines "the best of both worlds": scrumptious food with a healthful twist that takes away the guilt, the so-called healthful indulgences, products that play in the consumer "pleasure spot" and allow them to find the happy balance between great taste and not breaking the calorie bank. Sales of healthful indulgence now outpace traditional indulgences by a ratio of 3:1 (Palmer 2008), offering great opportunities for the food and beverage industry: an example fruit and dark chocolate ice cream bars, organic vegetable chips and chocolate granola bars are only some of many examples that are part of the healthy indulgences from the above categories. Recent trends in the food industry show that also functional foods have become increasingly popular around the world and are becoming a part of our daily diet (Kaur & Singh, 2017). Functional foods are defined as "foods that have beneficial effects on bodily functions and help to improve a state of health and well-being and/or reduce the risk of disease" (Diplock et al., 1999). Food companies are producing new products enriched with 'functional' compounds such as probiotics or vitamins with promising health benefits while keeping the pleasure of the taste like vanilla muffin enriched with vitamins (Vita-Muffins), creamy omega-3 peanut butter (Jif), low-sodium buttered popcorn (Jolly Time), reduced-sugar preserves (Smucker's), low-fat potato chips (Lay's), and low-fat cookies (Chips Ahoy). While many indicators suggest that consumers are driving demand toward generally healthier food and beverage items, their purchase decisions suggest that they do not always welcome what the marketplace offers (Irmak et al., 2011; Talukdar & Lindsey, 2013). These trends reflect a frequent tension in health decision making, where good intentions and actual behaviors are often poorly correlated (Schwartz, 2015). While fast-food companies and restaurant chains invest in developing the healthier options that consumers say they want, the sales of these items persistently lag (Jargon, 2013). This reality prompts consumer researchers to explore why adding healthy menu items and allowing healthy substitutions in meal bundles does not close the gap between healthy eating intentions and real consumption choices. Some results are surprising and show that including healthy options ironically causes less healthy choices. For example, some studies have shown that participants estimated a hamburger with lettuce and tomato to contain fewer calories than did participants who rated a plain hamburger (Chernev, 2011; Jiang & Lei, 2014). Such findings tell us once again that even in today's nutritionally transparent marketplace, consumers are not particularly good at estimating the number of calories in individual meal components. Adding a few healthy ingredients or items provides an additional cue, albeit one that distorts the perceived healthfulness of an item. Research has also shown that adding healthy options to fast-food menus creates psychological complexity with respect to how consumers manage competing goals. Some evidence suggests that adding a healthy option to a mostly unhealthy menu increases the sales of unhealthy options because it forces people to make a discrete choice between being healthy or unhealthy. As the healthy option is less likely to be hedonically appealing and perhaps more expensive than the unhealthy alternatives, consumers are more likely to choose to be unhealthy.

And once patrons explicitly choose tasty burgers over salads, they feel licensed to include fries and sugary beverages as part of their unhealthy choice (Wilcox, Vallen, Block, & Fitzsimons, 2009). Additional research has shown that when fast-food customers encounter salads and other healthy menu items, they can experience negative affect from being reminded to make a healthy, but less satisfying, choice. This leads patrons to order and consume more hedonically appealing options, as the pleasure of eating indulgent foods can quickly counteract the negative feelings associated with goal failure (Gardner, Wansink, Kim, & Park, 2014). Overweight customers may be particularly prone to regulating their mood with indulgent meal choices when exposed to menus that mix healthy and unhealthy items. The contrast not only reminds them of health goals, but can also activate negative stereotypes that further worsen mood and increase the likelihood of compensatory eating (Campbell & Mohr, 2011). Recent research also shows that dining options that include healthy items can produce negative affect because consumers are skeptical that these foods will be satisfying—another important goal in their daily lives. In some cases, these perceptions are real and may reflect the reality that manufacturers often make foods healthier by reducing tasty ingredients such as fat, sugar, and salt, or by replacing them with less appealing and artificial substitutes. Research shows that over the years, these practices have alienated consumers by creating negative dining experiences and fostering low expectations of foods that are described or labeled as “healthy.” Indeed, today’s consumers often perceive food items as less tasty (Raghunathan, Naylor, & Hoyer, 2006), more expensive (Haws, Reczek et al., 2017), and harder to obtain or prepare when they are described as healthy compared to when no health claims are made (Judd, Newton, Newton, & Ewing, 2014). Importantly, these perceptions persist regardless of objectively measured taste evaluations, prices, or convenience, but nonetheless lead to both lower consumption and satisfaction. The desire to satisfy hedonic goals further motivates people to believe that healthy eating comes at too high a monetary or physical cost. As such, it is relatively easy to persuade consumers that the expense (Talukdar & Lindsey, 2013), hassle (Judd et al., 2014), and poor taste quality of healthy food is unjustified at a particular moment (Hagen, Krishna, & McFerran, 2017). Conceptually, healthful indulgences share two important characteristics. First, they represent an “improved” version of foods generally perceived as unhealthful, consumed primarily for reasons of taste, pleasure, and indulge. Second, they carry a claim or label either explicitly or implicitly suggesting that the food is more healthful (and, thus, “better for you”) than conventional versions. In their attempts to combine a healthful lifestyle with the pleasures of indulgences, consumers increasingly seek products that offer both a superior taste and health benefits. The increasing availability of healthful indulgences designed to satisfy people’s cravings for everyday treats accompanied by reduced guilt seems to provide an optimal solution. Consumers no longer need to cut back on indulgence, but instead can engage in satisfying, smart- snacking consumption behaviors. Manufacturers are able to increase their market shares while providing real value to consumers and society at large benefits from more healthful eating patterns that potentially reduce the growing problems related to overweight and obesity.

2.4 Objective of the research

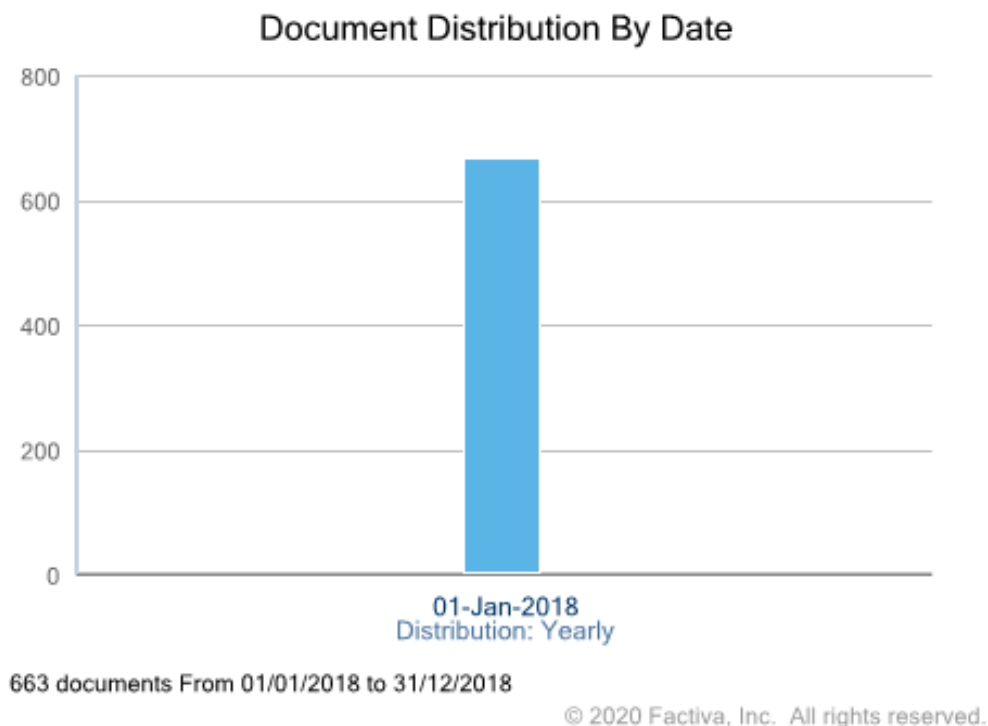
Through my research, I want to study the media discussion around the construct of the indulgence in the food industry and how the meanings, drivers, consequences and elements that characterize the indulgent consumption in the food industry discussed by media have changed over time.

CHAPTER 3- RESULTS & CONTRIBUTES OF THE RESEARCH

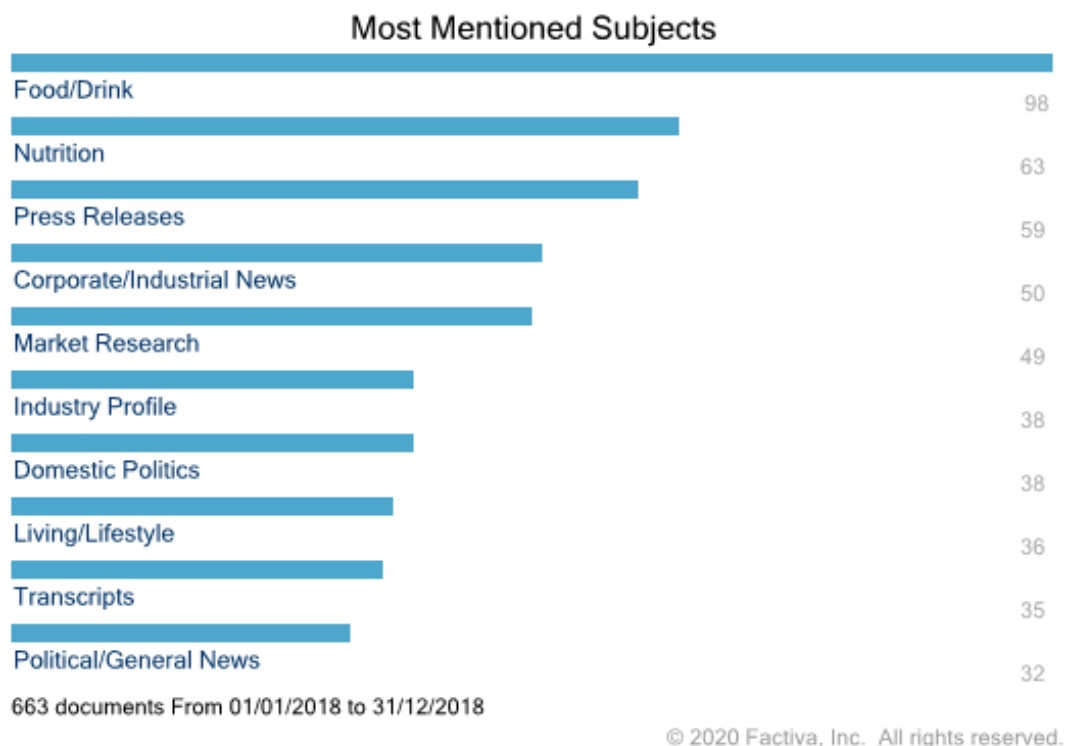
3.1 Research objective & methodology

Through the research, I observed how the institutional media describe the construct of the indulgent consumption in the food industry and how the construct of indulgence have, over time, manifested itself for its meanings, drivers, consequences and elements, in the media discussion. The research is based on a qualitative textual analysis. The articles were collected from *Factiva*, until theoretical saturation, reaching most recent 100 articles, thus covering two years: 2018 and 2019. *Factiva* is an international news database produced by Dow Jones, the leading global provider of economic and financial information. Through *Factiva*, users have access to a wide range of information from newspapers, newswires, industry publications, websites, company reports, and more. The broad range of content provides both local insight and global perspective on business issues and current events. The collection of the articles on *Factiva* has been conducted through the selection of 4 key words: 1) *indulgence and consumption*, 2) *indulgent and consumption*, 3) *indulge and consume*, 4) *indulging and consuming*, selecting articles related to the food industry.

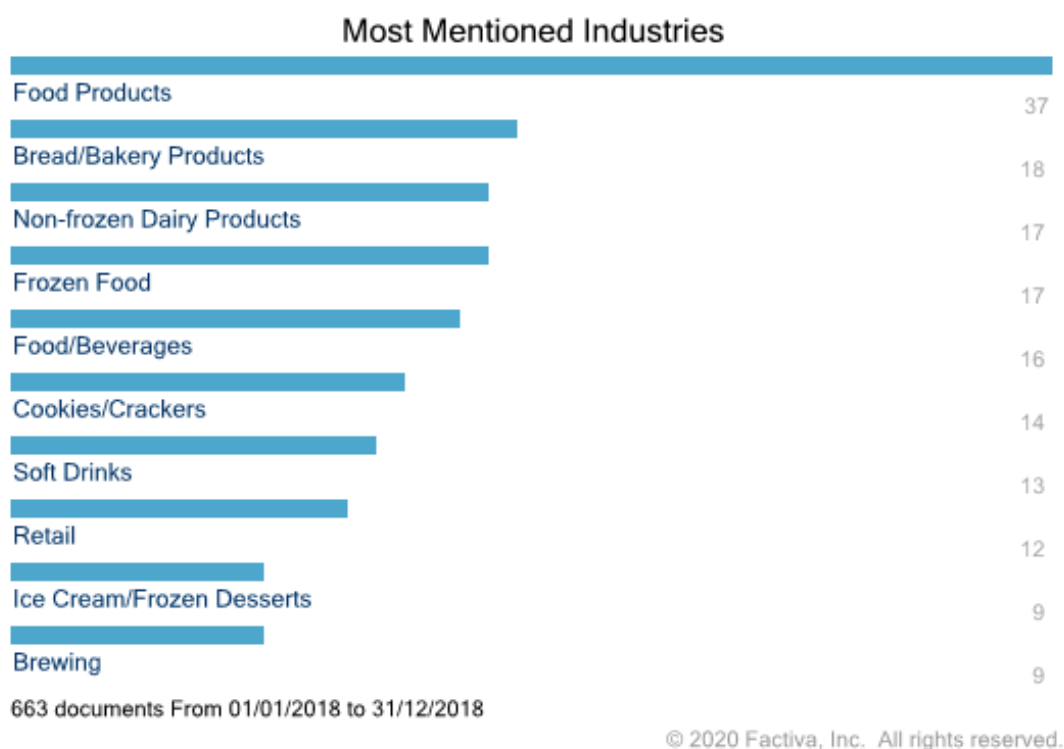
Among the four key words, “*indulgence and consumption*”, is recognized as the one that shows, in both years, a higher number of results.



Picture 10. Factiva, document distribution by date-2018

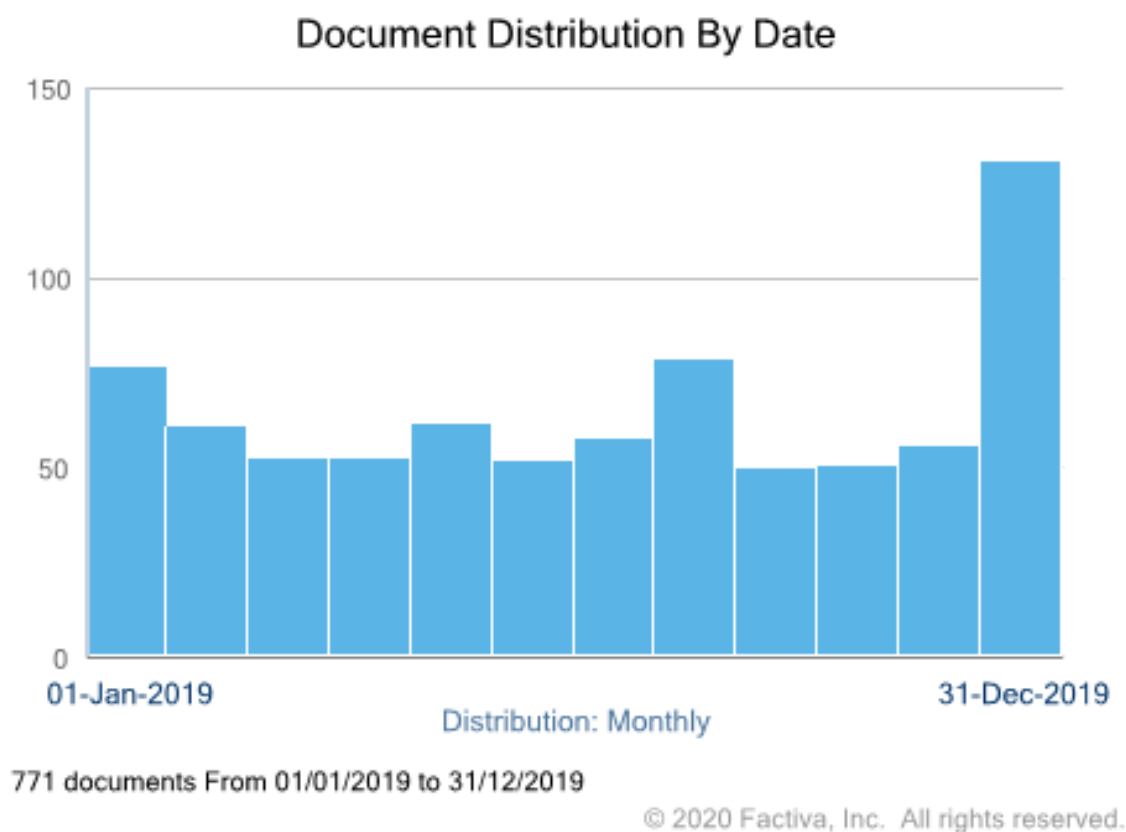


Picture 11. Factiva, most mentioned subjects-2018

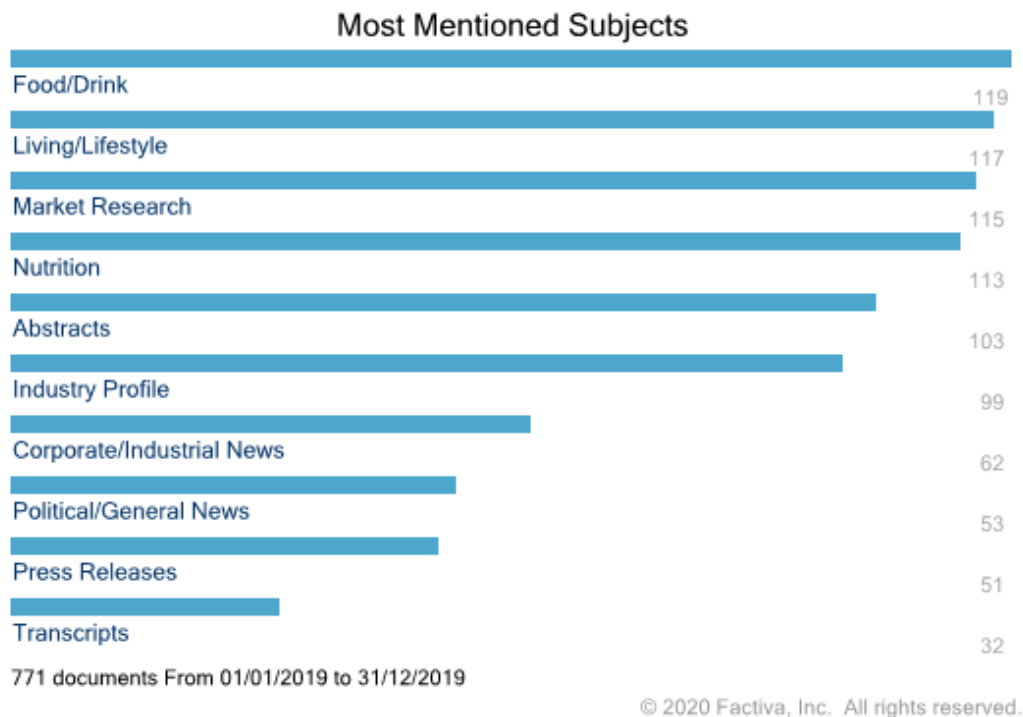


Picture 12. Factiva, most mentioned industries, 2018

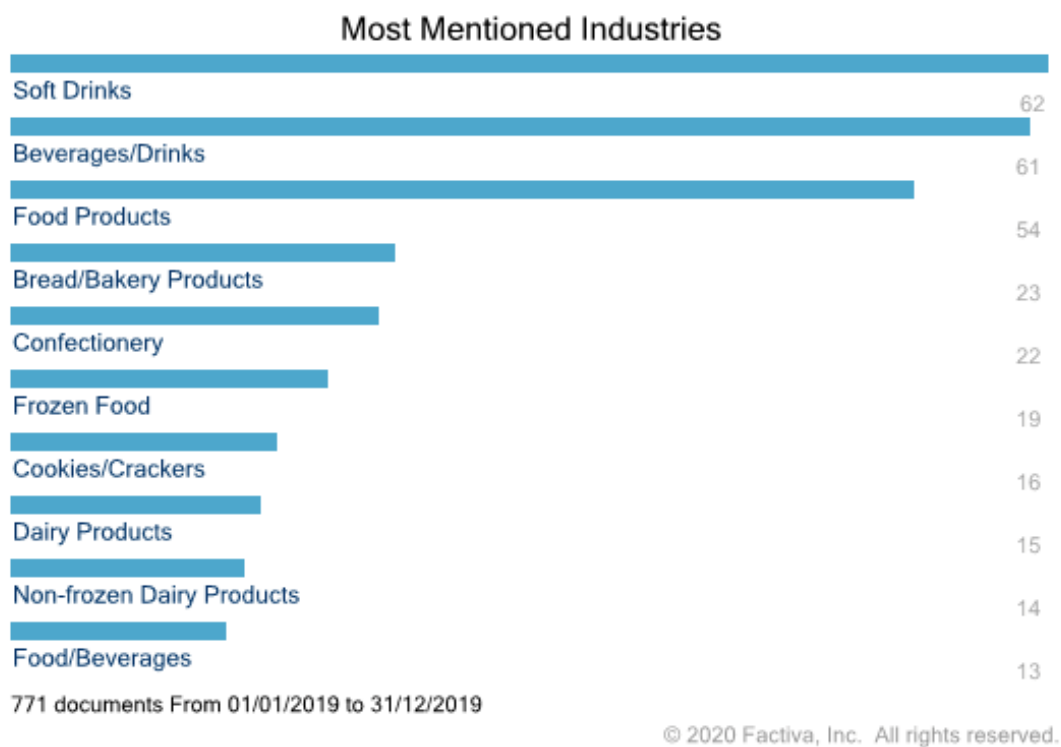
The above graphs, show the results of the research by using the keyword “*indulgence and consumption*” in 2018. The research was conducted from January 1st 2018 to December 31st 2018. The result is showed yearly and it consists in 663 articles. The graphs in picture 1 shows that the highest number of results related to the keyword of “*indulgence and consumption*” is related to the subject of *food/ drink* for its 98 articles. Also the picture 2 shows that the most mentioned industry related to the selected keyword is *food products* for its number of 37 articles.



Picture 13. Factiva, document distribution by date-2019



Picture 14. Factiva, most mentioned subject-2019



Picture 15. Factiva, most mentioned industries,2019

The above graphs show the results of the research by using the keyword “*indulgence and consumption*” in 2019. The research has been conducted from January 1st 2019 to December 31st 2019. Differently from the previous year, the result in 2019 is showed monthly and it consists in 711 articles. The graphs in picture 5 shows how the higher number of results related to the keyword of “*indulgence and consumption*” is related to the subject of *food/ drink* for its 119 articles. It is interesting to see that the subject of *food/ drink* is followed by *living/lifestyle* in 2019 for 117 articles, differently from 2018 where the first subject of *food/ drink* was followed by *nutrition* for 63 articles. This result is interesting because it will be later shared in the research that the media describe the indulgent consumption with a healthy connotation only in 2019 and that this kind of indulgence is mainly driven by specific lifestyles. The last graph in picture 6 shows how in 2019, the most mentioned industries when it comes to “*indulgence and consumption*” is *soft drink* for 62 results. Once typed the above keywords, the articles have been selected for their content’s relevance to the objective of the research and downloaded from the data base. The next step was to insert the one hundred articles into an excel file divided into multiple sections. The excel file has been adopted as the tool to conduct the content analysis of the articles. The textual analysis was selected as the research methodology for this research. The articles ere codified based on these dimensions:

- *Article background*: in this section the date of publication and the source of publication of the articles were established. It has been shown that the country of origin of the media were mainly UK and US and the media were of four types: 1) lifestyle journals, 2) news journals, 3) company snapshot, 4) consulting report.
- *Construct*: in this section the construct of indulgence was extrapolated from the article. The construct of indulgence was codified based on its valence (positive and negative) and its consequences on consumers (positive and negative). The consequence on consumers resulted always 100% aligned to the valence of the construct, except in the category of the *Negative classic indulgence*, as it will be shown later in the description of the categories, the consequences on consumer were aligned with the valence of the construct only for the 97%
- *Drivers*: in this section multiple drivers to the indulgent consumption were listed. They have been chosen taking inspiration on what the consulting reports and literature related to studies on the indulgent consumption in food say about the indulgence consumption. The drivers chosen were the following: 1) Vegan/vegetarian lifestyle, 2) Healthy lifestyle, 3) Luxury lifestyle, 4) Innovation seeker, 5) Premium seeker, 6) Status need, 7) Self- treatment, 8) Licensing, 9) Reward, 10) Unconditioned behaviour, 11) Impulsive consumption, 12) Temptation.
- *Consequences*: in this section multiple consequences to the consumption of indulgences were listed. They are divided between positive and negative. The positive consequences selected were the following: 1) Pleasure, 2) Happiness, 3) Comfort, 4) Self-treatment, 5) Self-esteem, 6) Wellbeing. The

negative consequences selected were the following: 1) Unhappiness, 2) Sadness, 3) Guiltiness, 4) Regret.

- *Company*: this last section was added for the articles which were strictly related to a specific company. It describes the company, its brand and products, its country of origin and the performance and the strategy that the company adopted to face the market's dynamics.

Eventually, the type of product which translate the indulging moment were underlined in each article

3.2 Macro categories analysis and results

Through the textual analysis of the article, four macro-categories of indulgence emerged 1) *Positive classic indulgence*, 2) *Negative classic indulgence*, 3) *Positive healthy indulgence*, 4) *Negative healthy indulgence*.

Depending on how the construct was narrated by the media , the articles are characterized by positive and negative valence. The category of *Positive classic indulgence* is the prevalent, existing for the 62% of the articles, followed by the category of *Negative classic indulgence* for its 25%, *Positive healthy indulgence* for its 11% and *Negative healthy indulgence* for its 2%. In each category, the construct of indulgence were driven by several and different drivers and each driver had a linked consequence on consumers. The categories in fact differ for the elements that drive the indulgent consumption and the consequences on consumers.

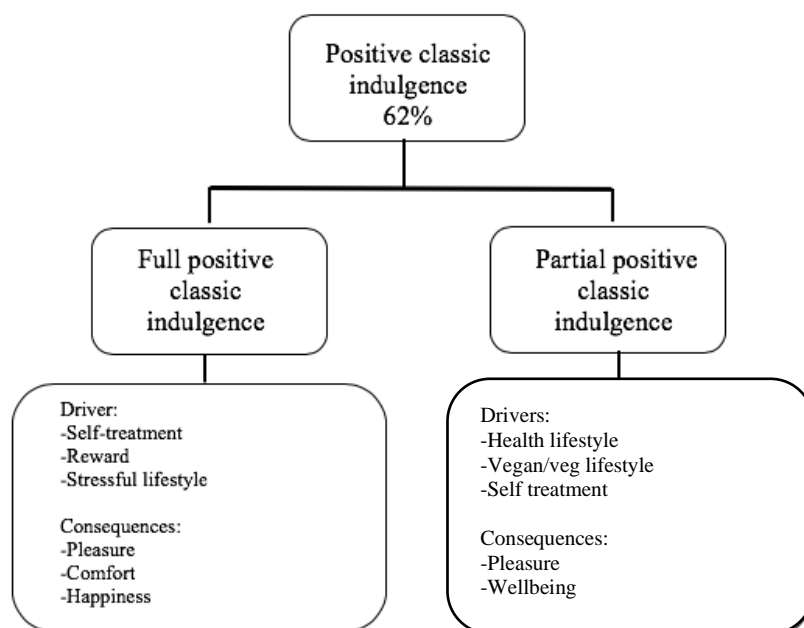
CATEGORIES	POSITIVE CLASSIC INDULGENCE	NEGATIVE CLASSIC INDULGENCE	POSITIVE HEALTHY INDULGENCE	NEGATIVE HEALTHY INDULGENCE
ARTICLES %	62%	25%	11%	2%
MAIN DRIVERS 50%>	Self-treatment Reward Stressfull lifestyle Healthy lifestyle	Healthy lifestyle Temptation	Healthy lifestyle Vegan/ veg lifestyle	Healthy lifestyle
MAIN CONSEQUENCES 50%>	100% POSITIVE Pleasure Comfort Happiness Wellbeing	97% NEGATIVE Guiltiness Unhappiness Wellbeing	100% POSITIVE Wellbeing Pleasure Happiness	100% NEGATIVE Sadness Unhappyness
PRODUCTS	Snack Sweet treats Chocolate Desserts Plant-based food	Sweet treats Plant-based food	Plant- based food Vegan replacements Healthy snacks	c

Picture 16. Categories of the construct: 1) *Positive classic indulgence*, 2) *Negative classic indulgence*, 3) *Positive health indulgence*, 4) *Negative health indulgence*. Percentage of articles in each category, main

drivers of each category, main consequences in each category, products showed as indulgences for each category.

3.2.1 Positive Classic Indulge

It is clearly shown that, over the past two years, the media described the construct of indulgent consumption mainly with a positive valence. What is interesting is that, differently from all the others macro categories, the *Positive classic indulgence* macro category could be split into two further micro categories: 1) *Full positive classic indulgence* 2) *Partial positive classic Indulgence*.



Picture 17. Distinction of Positive classic indulgence macro category into two micro categories of Full positive classic indulgence and Partial positive classic indulgence. Description of the main drivers and consequences for both micro categories.

The *Full Positive Classic indulgence* micro category is made by half of the articles and fully represents the construct for its positive classic meaning of individual moment of pleasure and self-treatment. This is the reason why I decided to name it as *Full positive classic indulgence*. Its reasonable in fact that the micro category describes as indulgences, mainly the consumption of sweet treats, desserts, chocolate and snacks. The main drivers of the indulgent consumption were the feelings of self-treatment and reward and the stressful lifestyle. Some sentences were collected among the articles for clearly representing the above drivers and consequences described. When it comes to the feeling of self- treatment, the consumption of indulgence were described as mood-lifting treat or a moment where consumers are freely to indulge. They want taste and texture as essential elements for their indulging experience: "Ice cream are eaten all year round and is considered a mood-lifting treat. People wants to lift their spirits even when is cold and dark outside"; "People wants to treat themselves and enjoy their meal, calories counting should not be an after thought. Food should be

something that is cherished not a concern. Food and beverage brands need to ensure that taste and texture are never affected in their products”; “one of the first reason why consumer buys biscuits is because they perceive the product as a treatment”.

When the driver is the feeling of reward, the indulgent consumption were represented as a pleasure that consumers can allow themselves while they are conducting a healthy lifestyle: *“whilst consumers are increasingly tapping into the healthy-eating agenda, they also continue to show advocacy for indulgent treats that can be enjoyed as a reward. So, finding the balance is key, he says”*; *“for example, even the most health-oriented consumer might eat healthy six days in a week then let loose with a 'cheat day' on the seventh.”* When it comes to stressful lifestyle as a driver, the articles shown how consumers tend on perceiving indulging as a comfort moment from their busy and stressful life or from their moments of boredom. Here the indulgent products were seen as “beloved friends” who helped the individual to feel better: *“we associate sweet treats with joy, we sometimes think they'll make us feel better if we're stressed, anxious or sad”; “snacking and food are a comfort from stress, busy life and boredom”; “ as a treat, chocolate improves mood and impact in lowering stress level”* The consequences on consumers were all positive and they were expressed through the feelings of pleasure, comfort and happiness: *“Let’s allow ourselves to enjoy our meals, calorie counting should not even be an afterthought”* The other half of the articles is part of the second micro-category. I decided to name the second micro category as *Partial positive classic indulgence* because here the construct of indulgent consumption, differs from its classic meaning, above described. In this micro category, indulgence were placed within the broader discussion of the so-called “*Better for you*” products. However it still kept the connotation of pleasure. Due to the increasing general interest of the healthy lifestyle and the spread of vegan, vegetarian and flexitarian lifestyles, consumers are more and more demanding for food products that can fit their lifestyles without losing the pleasure of eating. Being vegan or following a healthier lifestyle does not mean renouncing to the moments of indulging. This is why, over time food companies and brands have been offering alternative foods which are much more appealing and tastier then before: *“Instagram is glutted with vegetarian food images that will leave all but the most committed carnivore salivating; these platefuls of vibrant excess evoke a greediness that just a few years earlier would have seemed alien to the cause”*. Nowadays consumers want products that taste good and make them feel good through additional benefits of higher proteins or higher fibres and lower sugar, without making them feeling guilty while they eat, this are the so-called “*better for you*” products. Differently from the *Full positive classic indulgence* micro category, here the indulgences are described through plant-based food and vegan/veg alternatives as well as tasty snacks restyled with the “*Better for you*” twist. Reasonably, the main drivers of this micro category are healthy and vegan/ veg lifestyles: *“There is an increase of people who follow a vegan lifestyle and the offer of vegan food is now larger. Traditionally, most people’s perception of vegan cuisine extends to lentil burgers, lentil pie, lentil Bolognese, but now, suddenly, vegan food has managed to restyle itself as being at once indulgent and healthy,”*; *“Around the world, the demand for plant-based dairy alternatives has grown and markets have expanded as a result”*; *“We're what we eat. Under this precept, new generations are mostly informed and alert to what they introduce*

to their body to promote their quality of life.”; “Over the last year, we’ve seen how important it is for people to feel good about what they eat and order, driving an even greater increase in socially-conscious and health-conscious dining”; “This is very important to us. We are committed to enabling consumers to make informed choices, allowing them to enjoy biscuits and snacks which suit their individual lifestyle. We recognise the importance of offering a variety of permissible snacks to cater to different consumer needs and occasions and have a wide range of initiatives to drive the agenda on sugar, portion control and calorie reduction”. Self-treatment is also seen as a main driver in this micro category as well: “Consumers are demanding more than just indulgence – they want a treat that’s healthy but still tasty”; ““If you try these bars, you won’t be able to stop talking about them to anyone who will listen, but it’ll be because of how good they taste. It’s hard to believe how good they are for you, too, but it’s true.”; “We believe it is possible for consumers to treat themselves with a little bit of indulgence whilst at the same time making a better-for-you choice, by choosing a portion controlled pack of biscuits.” The consequences are expressed through the feeling of pleasure and, differently from the other micro category, through the feeling of wellbeing: *“Consumers are looking for fortified and functional foods that promote gut health, fuel their brains, and benefit their physical appearance, while not wanting to give up taste”.*

3.2.2 Negative Classic Indulgence

The category of *Negative classic indulgence* described mainly the consumption of two products as indulgences: on one hand snacks and sweet treats and on the other hand plant-based products. Two are the main drivers: temptation and healthy lifestyle. Specifically, healthy lifestyle appear as a driver, because the healthiness trend is growing and is impacting also on the perception of indulging behaviours among consumers: *“consumers nowadays conduct much more healthy and conscious lifestyle. The fact that mostly of the consumers are always on diet increase the feeling of guiltiness associated to the consumption of indulgent products”; “consumers are increasingly worry about how what they eat is impacting their health. They are either scaling back on frozen treats, or looking for alternatives that are better-for-them”,* increasing the negative consequences on consumers as the feeling of guiltiness, unhappiness (meant also as a feeling of unhealthiness) and regret, but enhancing the positive consequence of wellbeing through pursuing a healthier lifestyle. When it comes of temptation as a driver, it is associated to an unconditioned behaviour and cravings for indulgences that the individual cannot fully manage by himself: *“it’s true that saying “NO” when you are offered sweets by your loved ones especially during this festive season is going to be difficult.”; “my cravings were intense and seemed never-ending, and if I cheated I felt like a loser. I was irritable and moody”.* The consequences are fully negative and expressed through the sentiments of guiltiness, unhappiness and regret: *"As soon as it's consumed, my carnal bliss disintegrates. I feel a wave of self-loathing. I haven't felt this guilty since sexually experimenting at university. I feel like I've done something wicked, transgressive and dangerous to my body."*

3.2.3 Positive Healthy Indulgence

The category of *Positive healthy indulgence* describes as indulgences the consumption of plant-based food, vegan replacements and “*Better for you*” sweet treats and healthy snacks. The main driver of the category are the healthy lifestyle as expression of the growing trend of healthiness already found in the *Negative classic indulgence* category and vegan / vegetarian lifestyle as expression of how new consumers’ needs and habits are impacting on the consumption of indulgences: “*But now, suddenly, vegan food has managed to restyle itself as being at once indulgent and healthy*”; “*over the last year, we’ve seen how important it is for people to feel good about what they eat and order, driving an even greater increase in socially-conscious and health-conscious dining*”; “*people still looking for excitement and pleasure although they follow a lifestyle which does not include the classic pleasure from dairy-based products. Taste, texture will win the hearts and minds of all consumers - carnivores and vegans alike.*” Differently from the previous category where the construct of indulgence was described negatively as a consequence of the increase of the healthy lifestyle, here the discussion of the media shifts into positive, describing the construct of indulgence as “*permissible indulgence, healthy indulgence, guilt-free indulgence*”. The consequences are fully positive and they are expressed by the feeling of pleasure and wellbeing: “*even if the consumer search for healthier alternatives, they don’t want to cut on the taste and on the pleasure of the moment of indulgence. Consumers are happy because they can indulge without feeling guilty.*”; “*consuming an entire pint of ice cream was once an act cloaked in shame, conducted from the privacy of one’s couch and preferably while wearing sweatpants. Now, because of the better for you ice creams, lower in sugar and higher in functional benefits, some, even the waistline conscious, are unabashedly eating a whole pint in one sitting from the container*”; “*consumers are looking for fortified and functional foods that promote gut health, fuel their brains, and benefit their physical appearance, while not wanting to give up taste*”.

3.2.4 Negative Healthy Indulgence

The category of Negative healthy indulgence existed only for the 2% of the sample and is mainly expressed by plant-food alternatives. Even the small percentage, the category is still interesting to discuss, because differently from the category of *Positive healthy indulgence*, here the need of a permissible indulgence and the growing trend of healthiness, which is the driver of the category, is seen as impacting negatively consumers choices and lifestyles. The growing habit of consuming “free-from” food (eg. Gluten-free, lactose-free, dairy-free) even when is not required from personal healthy reasons can be extremely bad for the individual health: “*While gluten and dairy-free diets are extremely important to people who cannot physically process these foods, applying such limitations broadly to everyone’s diet might lead to detrimental physical and mental health effects*”. The articles collected in this category also explained how the consumer is biased by the plant-based food alternatives, believing they are better for their health and they have less calories, while they are highly processed and not good at all for individual healthiness: “*Clean-label concerns most relevant to plant-*

based protein foods relate primarily to long ingredients lists, the use of novel or unfamiliar ingredients, criticism that products are "highly processed" and the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs)."As a consequence of this new healthy lifestyle, people are getting extremely obsessed by their healthiness and it provokes feelings of sadness, anxiety and unhappiness while they crave and choose food which is generally recognised as "bad food": "Cutting out processed foods and treats might mean saying no to dinners with friends and feeling anxious about events that involve 'bad foods.' "; "Labelling foods such as quinoa, kale, and chia seeds as 'good' implies that other foods are bad or impure. This gives way to an all-or-nothing mentality in maintaining a healthy diet and to a feeling of failure when this rigid and restrictive diet regime is not fully achieved."

3.3 The evidence of plant-based food

Is interesting to see how, across the four categories of indulgence, a constant product perceived as indulgence is plant-based food and plant-based alternatives. People's preferences in food are nowadays changing and plant-based food enhances their need of healthiness: *"This line of allulose-powered, plant-based frozen treats boast a series of incredible health benefits, from the low caloric impact to a great source of probiotics, which will help keep off the pounds, improve digestive health, and avoid the stomach discomfort associated with dairy and sugar alcohol consumption"; "it's no secret that plant-based alternatives have increasingly become a healthy alternative for vegans and non-vegans for their incredible taste"; "plant-based has become, to a certain extent, synonymous with 'healthy', similar to what happened to gluten-free a few years ago."* The global meat and dairy sector is currently going through an unprecedented level of competition and disruption, driven by the growth of viable plant-based alternatives across many categories. Gone are the days when plant-based alternative products were for the niche consumer and warranted limited shelf space. Companies across the spectrum are now investing heavily in acquiring and creating new products and brands which will appeal to the surging consumer demand for plant-based products. The growth in the plant-based sector has largely been driven by the mainstream emergence of the 'flexitarian' consumer (people who still consume meat and dairy but seek to reduce the levels they consume), as well as increased numbers of vegetarians and vegans, as consumers respond to a combination of ethical, environmental and health concerns. While the plant-based trend has been developing for some time, media coverage has picked up significantly in 2019 in line with the increase in new product development and demand for the products. There are various types of plant-based alternative products on the market undergoing significant levels of new product development: mostly of them are meat alternatives and milk alternatives. Indeed, in the last year, there has been significant investment and innovation in meat-free alternatives and dairy-free alternatives that attempt to replicate the taste and texture of meat and are good enough to replace milk. (Deloitte, Plant based report 2019). Existing food and beverage companies are moving to plant-based to protect and enhance their positions in the market, both through internally driven product development, brand innovation and inorganic growth through the acquisition of the new disruptor brands and products. Regarding product development and innovation, among the articles,

is cited the Burger king 's new product development. The fast food company, to satisfy the demand of indulgent food from the healthy/ new lifestyle's segment, launches its first plant -based whopper in Uk: *"We wanted our first plant-based Whopper to replicate the indulgence and flame-grilled taste of the real thing as closely as possible, and we're thrilled with the result"; "What does make a big difference to animals and the planet is when non-vegans choose a plant-based menu option, enjoy it and then order it again. And that's exactly who Burger King's plant-based Whopper is aimed at, flexitarians who want to reduce their meat consumption for health or environmental reasons, or are considering going vegan."* It interesting to explore that, among the articles, it was also shown a negative perception of plant-based food as "healthier food". Nowadays consumer are worry on how processed is food: *"Consumers are usually concerned first and foremost with how 'processed' meat and dairy are today, and it is this processing that makes meat and dairy unhealthy in their eyes"*. When it comes to plant -based food, mostly of the time consumers are biased; they will pick up plant-based food as healthier choice, despite it is highly processed as well as it contains a longer ingredient list: *"plant-based 'has become, to a certain extent, synonymous with 'healthy', similar to what happened to gluten-free a few years ago. As a result, the clean label' battle stands on plant-based food, and some food companies are responding to it making clean label as an higher priority when launching plant-based food. Nestlé, for example, has looked to ensure its Incredible Burger has strong clean-label credentials, which also means its plant-based protein range is in tune with its company-wide approach: "Nestlé is committed to creating tasty and nutritious food with ingredients lists that people recognise," a Nestlé spokesperson explains. "We are taking the same approach in plant-based foods such as our Garden Gourmet range. Our Garden Gourmet Incredible Burger for example is vegan and has one of the simplest and cleanest ingredients lists in the market."* Until when plant-based product can then be then considered good for the individual or, are they only the result of a consumers' bias by a good marketing strategy from food companies? It would be interesting to answer to the question above in the future research.

3.4 The change of the construct of indulgence in 2019 vs 2018

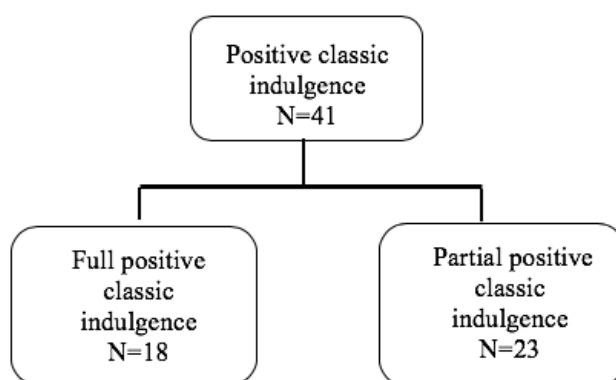
Despite the short time frame selected, it's interesting to see how the media approach to the construct has already changed between the past two years. The majority of the sample consists of 65 articles from 2019, versus a sample of 35 articles from 2018. The fact that the articles collected in 2019 are almost the double of the articles collected in 2018, clearly shows how the relevance of the construct increased in one year only. Also, it will be better explained later , how the distinction between classic indulgence and health indulgence, comes clearly alive only in 2019.

CATEGORIES	POITIVE CLASSIC INDULGENCE	NEGATIVE CLASSIC INDULGENCE	POSITIVE HEALTH INDULGENCE	NEGATIVE HEALTH INDULGENCE
N ARTICLES 2019 = 65	41	11	11	2
N ARTICLES 2018 = 35	21	14	0	0

Picture 18. Number of articles in each category of indulgence in 2019 vs 2018

Same as before, the sample from 2019 was split into the four macro categories of indulgence and it results that the number of articles that took part to each macro category: 1) *Positive Classic indulgence* 2) *Negative classic indulgence*, 3) *Positive Healthy indulgence*, 4) *Negative Classic indulgence*, are respectively $n=41$, $n=11$, $n=11$ and $n=2$

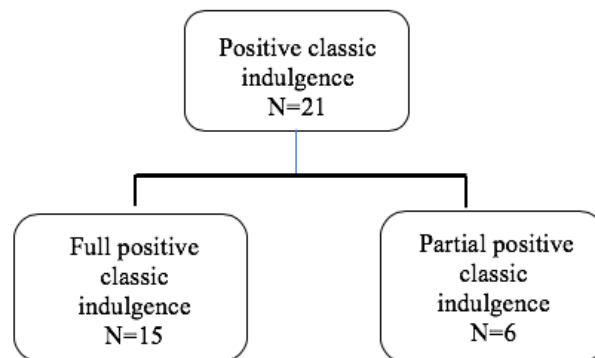
The numbers show how the *Positive Classic indulgence* macro category is the prevalent one ($N=41$). Following the above distinction of the two micro categories that co-exists in the *Positive classic indulgence*, the number of articles collected in the micro categories were respectively: $n=18$ and $n=23$ for *Full positive classic indulgence* and for *Partial positive classic indulgence*.



Picture 19. Micro categories of positive classic indulgence in 2019

The data shows how in 2019 the media declined the construct of indulgent consumption mainly in the discussion related to the “*Better for you*” trend, demonstrating how the media focus in 2019 was mainly on describing the moment of indulging through the consumption of hybrid products. More over the 2019 sample seems to be established equally by *Negative classic indulgence* and *Positive health indulgence*. Despite both categories are made by 11 articles each, however the topic of healthiness in the indulgence consumption is already described by the medias in the *Partial positive classic indulgence* which is the biggest category for the number of its articles, as described above. As a result, the indulgence in food sector in 2019, is primarily associated to the moment of pleasure through the consumption of products which are good for the individual health. The result clearly shows how the healthiness trend in food industry took place and spread out over the last year. More over, the category of *positive health indulgence* took place only in 2019 as a consequence of the strong interest on healthiness from consumers and food companies in 2019. The category of *negative health indulgence*, completely counters back the healthiness trend. Despite the number of the articles is very small is still interesting to underline it since it shows how the sentiment toward the trend of healthiness is not

only positive and it not only finds consensus among the majority of the consumers but it can be also negative when the trend manifests itself in its extreme until provoking obsessions, fanaticism and anxiety among consumers. 35 articles were collected from 2018. The interesting data is that, as seen in picture 9, in 2018 the articles were collected only for the two categories of classic indulgence: *Positive classic indulgence* and *Negative classic indulgence* and the number of the articles were respectively N= 21 and N=14. Same as before, the *Positive classic indulgence* category were split in *Full positive classic indulgence* and *Partial positive classic indulgence* micro categories.



Picture 20. Micro categories of positive classic indulgence in 2018

Differently from 2019, where the construct of *positive classic indulgence* was mainly described as part of the experience of the consumption of “better for you” products, in 2018 the micro category of *full positive classic indulgence* prevails for its sample of 15 articles, versus the small sample of 6 articles collected for the micro category of *Partial positive classic indulgence*. This means that in only one year the media change their focus in describing the indulgent consumption. From 2018 to 2019, the media moved from talking about classic indulgence with a positive valence for its traditional meaning of individual absolute pleasure to talking about classic indulgence with still a positive valence but as a moment of pleasure part of the new and broader “*better for you*” experience. This means that in only one year the trend of healthiness has grown surprisingly (N=6 vs N=23) and has provided new connotations and meanings to indulgent consumption in food industry. Additionally, in 2019 the drivers of the *partial classic indulgence* were the feeling of self- treatment as well as the health consciousness among consumers and the increase of new lifestyles such as vegan, vegetarian and flexitarian with their new diets and habits. In 2018, instead, in the micro category of partial positive classic indulgence, the feeling of self -treatment is kept as driver, however only the healthy lifestyle is recognized as a second driver, without any insight regarding new lifestyles as above described as additional drivers. The result is aligned on what has been previously underlined: the lifestyle has been found as a topic of discussion

related to indulgent consumption only in 2019 and it is not listed as a subject related to indulgent consumption in 2018. An other interesting insight is that, comparing 2018 vs 2019, the number of articles collected for the *Negative classic indulgence* is higher (N=14 vs N=11). This means that the perception of the indulgent consumption for its negative valence associated to the feelings of guiltiness and sadness was stronger in 2018 than in 2019. Eventually, it is also very interesting that the two categories of health indulgence have appeared only in 2019. This means that, despite the small sample of articles which describes the construct of the indulgence into “the better for you” trend, it is clear that the media have minted the typical keyword characterizing the healthy indulgence such as “permissible indulgence, healthy indulgence, guilt-free indulgence”, only in 2019.

3.5 Conclusion, limits of the current research and future research

3.5.1 Conclusion

I have explored the construct of the indulgent consumption in the food industry through a qualitative research conducted on a sample of one hundred articles collected from Factiva during the time frame of two years, 2018 and 2019. The objective of the research was to study, through a qualitative textual analysis, what's the discussion of media around the construct of indulgence consumption in the food industry and how the elements characterizing the construct of the indulgence have changed over time. The research resulted into the creation of four main categories of indulgence consumption, each of them with own drivers to the indulging consumption and own consequences to the indulging behavior. The four categories differ for the way the construct is described and for their valence. Two categories have been recognized for the construct of classic indulgence: positive classic indulgence and negative classic indulgence and two categories have been recognized for the construct of health indulgence: positive health indulgence and negative health indulgence. Regarding the construct of positive classic indulgence, a further classification has been done. It was recognized that in the same category of classic indulgence, not all the articles described the construct for its classic meaning of individual pleasure, but within the category main articles described the construct by associating it to the trend of hybrid products, the so called “better for you” products. By the consumption of this products, indulging got a healthier meaning but it is still associated to a moment of pleasure. Interesting insights were found in the comparison between 2018 and 2019. It resulted that in 2019 the most prevalent category is the positive classic indulgence for its meaning of pleasurable moment while adopting healthier behaviors through the consumption of hybrid products. Instead in 2018 the classic positive indulgence is still prevalent but for its full meaning of pleasurable and individual moment of pleasure and . More over the comparison between 2018 and 2019, shown that the category of health indulgence is only described during 2019, underlying how the trend of healthiness associated to the indulgent products in the food industry become alive in 2019.

3.5.2 Limit of the current research and future research

The research clearly shows how in 2019 new meanings were developed around the construct of the indulgent consumption. As described in the previous chapters, the food industry is now living big changes, shifting the offer to healthy and wellbeing, due to new and different consumers' habits, lifestyles and demand for food products which taste good and make them feel good. Indulging does not mean feeling guilty anymore. Companies and brands are also reinventing themselves to respond to the increasing demand for healthiness. Brands such as Coke, Magnum, Halo Top, Burger king and so on are now re-inventing their products, developing new offer and positioning themselves as the best choice for whom who doesn't want to renounce to indulging while following a healthy lifestyle as well as alternative lifestyles. A limit of the current research is to focus the research only on the short time frame of the past two years. The contribution of the research would have been much stronger if it would have been extended to the last five years, for better understanding how the meanings related to the indulgent consumption and the media discussion around indulgent consumption have gradually changed over time. A recommendation for the future research would be then to extend the research to a larger time frame. Another limit was given by the restricted types of articles selected. The types of articles used for the research were mainly journals of lifestyle and news. An improvement for the further research would be to conduct the research across companies' reports for better understanding how the brands are reacting to the increasing trend of healthy indulgence and how they are leveraging on it. The method adopted was useful to deep dive into the articles' content. A recommendation would be to continue the research on the topic and to extend the qualitative textual analysis to the next 5 years to see how the trend of healthy indulgence will develop in the future and as questioned above, which direction plant-based food will take in the future. More over the research was conducted only on indulgent consumption in the food industry. An interesting point would be to extend the research of indulging consumption also to the other industries related to indulgence such as luxury and experiences to see if the trend of healthiness and sustainability, when it comes to assuming vegan and flexitarians lifestyle for animal and environment's concerns, will spread out and assume different connotations in the other industries. Eventually, an interesting point of the research, is the discussion among media about the negative valence of the healthy indulgence. The articles found, described healthiness as the nowadays' obsession, without giving to it any positive connotation. Because of the small amount of the articles, the research lined to this specific topic was limited. I will leave to the future research the challenge of elaborating further information on the "dark" side of the healthiness and studying how potentially the healthiness trend may shift from positive to negative generating strong negative effects on consumer behaviors and psychology and impacting again the consumers' demand and the companies' offer.

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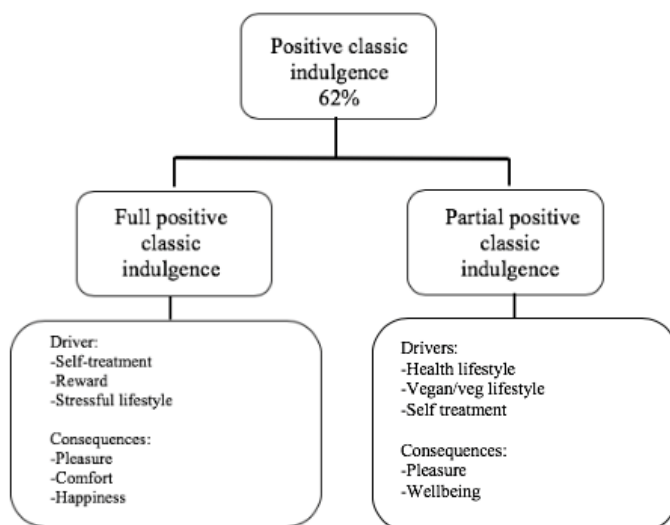
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APPENDIX

Results of the textual analysis conducted on the articles' samples collected through Fativa

CATEGORIES	POSITIVE CLASSIC INDULGENCE	NEGATIVE CLASSIC INDULGENCE	POSITIVE HEALTHY INDULGENCE	NEGATIVE HEALTHY INDULGENCE
ARTICLES %	62%	25%	11%	2%
MAIN DRIVERS 50%>	Self-treatment Reward Stressfull lifestyle Healthy lifestyle	Healthy lifestyle Temptation	Healthy lifestyle Vegan/ veg lifestyle	Healthy lifestyle
MAIN CONSEQUENCES 50%>	100% POSITIVE Pleasure Comfort Happiness Wellbeing	97% NEGATIVE Guiltiness Unhapiness Wellbeing	100% POSITIVE Wellbeing Pleasure Happiness	100% NEGATIVE Sadness Unhappyness
PRODUCTS	Snack Sweet treats Chocolate Desserts Plant-based food	Sweet treats Plant-based food	Plant- based food Vegan replacements Healthy snacks	ç

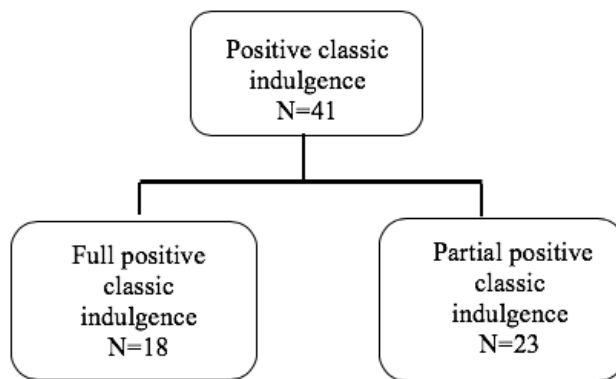
Picture 16. Categories of the construct: 1) Positive classic indulgence, 2) Negative classic indulgence, 3)Positive health indulgence, 4)Negative health indulgence. Percentage of articles in each category, main drivers of each category, main consequences in each category, products showed as indulgences for each category.



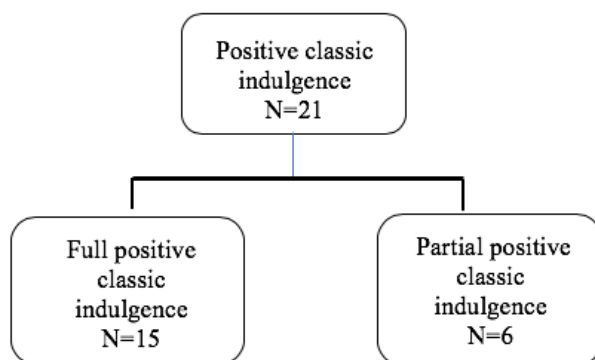
Picture 17. Distinction of Positive classic indulgence macro category into two micro categories of Full positive classic indulgence and Partial positive classic indulgence. Description of the main drivers and consequences for both micro categories.

CATEGORIES	POITIVE CLASSIC INDULGENCE	NEGATIVE CLASSIC INDULGENCE	POSITIVE HEALTH INDULGENCE	NEGATIVE HEALTH INDULGENCE
N ARTICLES 2019 = 65	41	11	11	2
N ARTICLES 2018 = 35	21	14	0	0

Picture 18. Number of articles in each category of indulgence in 2019 vs 2018



Picture 19. Micro categories of positive classic indulgence in 2019



Picture 20. Micro categories of positive classic indulgence in 2018



Dipartimento di Impresa e Management

Corso di Laurea Magistrale in Marketing

Cattedra in Analisi del comportamento d'acquisto

THE MEDIA DISCUSSION AROUND THE EVOLUTION OF MEANINGS, DRIVERS AND
CONSEQUENCES OF THE INDULGENT CONSUMPTION IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY: THE
RISE OF THE HEALTHY INDULGENCE

RELATORE

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ANNO ACCADEMICO 2018/2019

CHAPTER 1-THE INDULGENT CONSUMPTION

1.1 The luxury industry: numbers and trends

Among the indulgent industries, the luxury industry is analyzed for its numbers and trends. The luxury industry includes both luxury goods and experiences. The most renowned which takes part of the category are: luxury cars, personal luxury goods, luxury hospitality, fine wines and spirits, gourmet food and fine dining, fine art, furniture and housewares, private jets and yachts, and luxury cruises. The data collected from Bain& Company, 2018-Luxury market study, show that the industry is overall growing for mostly of its segments, gaining 5% in 2018 and raising to an estimated €1.2 trillion and will keep growing in the future. Indeed from the study, is expected that younger generations will drive the growth of the luxury market in the incoming years. Millennials and Generation Z will represent approximately 55% of the 2025 market and will contribute 130% of market growth between now and then, offsetting the decline in sales among older generations.

1.3. The leisure industry: numbers and trends

The paragraph has been divided among the travel industry and the hospitality industry. These are both part of the broader industry of leisure which is listed among the indulgent industries. Millennials are seen as a generation of people who are willing to spend more for experiences as travels, recreation and dining out, rather than durable goods. The travel industry, according to Deloitte, 2018 -travel and hospitality industry outlook, is seen as one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world. Its future growth will be most likely driven by the higher purchase potential of millennials since it is predicted that they will earn their maximum profit in the next decades. Also, it is described how the growth of the travel segment is due to the development of new trends among millennials when it comes to travelling: activity-based trips and “bleisure” travels. The focus in the paragraph moves later on the hospitality industry. When it comes to accommodations, consumers nowadays have a larger choice as well as tools to find the perfect place. Millennials are focusing much more on peer to peer accommodations rather than standards hotels, but traditional hospitality seems to be still a growing segment. Millennials are increasingly looking for experiences rather than simple accommodations: this is the reason why the focus their research on AirBnb and other home rental websites. Despite the experience, millennials are also focusing on wellness while they look for a hotel. The trend of healthiness is rising among hospitality companies which are enriching their offer and meeting the needs of the health-conscious consumers. It is expected that health and wellness will expand into more facets of the travel ecosystem over the years and it will become a key element of the travel experience.

1.4 The food industry: numbers and trends

Millennials expenditure for food is increasing: they want good food and they seem willing to pay a higher price for premium food. This is also shown by the switching from Baby Boomers to Millennials in spending more in gourmet and luxury restaurants. When it comes to talking about indulgent consumption, for many years the perception of the indulgence such as decadent and sinful behavior has dominated. Traditionally, the type of indulgence related to the hedonic food is known as classic indulgence. Contrasting feelings derive from the classic indulgence: if in the short term, this is seen by the individual, as a self-treatment and a reward deserved especially after having experienced high levels of stress, on the other hand, in the long term, people manifest concerns around indulging behaviors as they are associated to guiltiness feelings as well as having a negative impact on the individual's health. Nowadays a new concept of indulgent consumption is spreading out due to the increasing consumers' desire for healthiness as well as the changing of consumer's lifestyles and habits related to food: the healthy indulgence.

1.4.1 The healthiness in food industry: numbers and trends

According to Nielsen, 2017- Health & Wellness report, in the food industry, both healthy and indulgent categories have grown over the past two years but healthy product categories outperformed indulgent product categories, respectively +5% and 2+%. It is shown how the healthy food categories have recorded the strongest sales growth in developing regions. The data registered speak clear: worldwide consumers are trying to take charge of their healthy by making healthier food choices. The trend of healthiness is varied and is spreading out over different consumption categories such as food, fitness, personal care, sportswear, travel and mental well-being. It is expected that the trend will be grow in the next year since Millennials and Generation Z have been recognized to be more willing to pay a premium price for healthy products than older generations.

1.5 From classic indulgence to healthy indulgence

Healthy indulgence refers to the growing trend of scrumptious foods with healthy twist that drain away any residual of guiltiness. As stated earlier, consumer nowadays have a desire for healthiness. According to a 2008 Business Insights report, "the global healthy food market is growing in value and volume each year, pushed by rising levels of diet-related illnesses, consumer interest in nutrition, and technological advances in the food industry". At the same time, people are not ready to give up to their moments of pleasure. Consumers are looking for the "happy medium": products which taste great and do not make them worried about the waistline. To respond to consumers' desire for healthiness, companies are now investing in new product development to expand their portfolio and to position themselves within the healthy category. They are offering products with great taste that do not force consumers to break the calorie bank or that can offer them even additional benefits: the so called "Better for you" products.

1.5.1 The rise of plant-based food

Together with the growing demand for healthier products, the demand for plant-based food is growing too, due to the increase of people who prefer to cut from their diet meat and dairy products, as well as decide to follow particular lifestyles such as being vegans, vegetarians and flexitarians. A combination of ethical, environmental and health concern is the reason why people decide to switch to a plant-based diet. In the past two years, sales of plant-based food has grown significantly as a consequence of the growing interests into these lifestyles. As a consequence, food companies are expanding their portfolio of products and brands investing either in product innovations and in acquiring in their portfolio external plant-based food brands. The aim is to protect their position on the market and to position themselves with an offer that can result interesting to this growing segment.

1.6 The impact of the healthy indulgence on consumers' behavior

Nowadays there is a growing interest into individual mental and physical wellbeing translated as individual happiness and peace of mind. According to a study conducted by Business insider, Millennials (aged 18 to 35) and Gen Xers (36 to 49) are significantly more stressed than the "average" stress level, while older generations struggle less with stress. Millennials are living in a time where multiple drivers to stress exist. The general interest into happiness has indeed increased in the last decade: indulgence has assumed a positive connotation where happiness, serenity, love and self-respect are considered as goals achieved through the performance of acts of "good" indulgence. Aligned with this growing trend and need, the healthy indulgence demarcates the subtle difference between self-indulging and taking care of themselves giving a completely new meaning to the classic indulgence.

CHAPTER 2- THE SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE ON THE INDULGENT CONSUMPTION

2.1. Drivers and meanings of the indulgent consumption

The contemporary consumeristic culture has been marketed by a dialectic between asceticism (i.e. self-discipline as moral responsibility) and the hedonistic search for gratification and pleasure. The behaviours that offer short-term benefits but long-term damages are known as "vices". Conversely, behaviours that provide little pleasure in the short term but a long-term advantages are called "virtues". Virtues versus vices as well as needs versus luxury describe in literature the comparison between indulgent and utilitarian consumption. Indulgent consumption is defined as the choice of the consumer to "allow himself to choose an option considered as a pleasure, a treatment for himself, compared to an option or alternative options". Two typical domains of indulgent consumption, frequently examined in scientific research, are luxury and hedonistic food. The literature explains how the consumption of indulgences can develop short-term negative emotions in the individuals, such as guilt, regret, shame and embarrassment, since they are considered as less legitimate

choices and not optimal by nature. The consumption of indulgent products has often been the subject of discussion in studies related to the exercise of self-control by the individual and especially in the dilemmas that arise about the ability to resist temptation, since, when it comes to hedonistic consumption, consumers experience an internal struggle between desire and will. Justification plays an important role among people in indulgent consumption. Having a reason behind indulgent consumption refers to a type of rational or justified indulgence such that the consumption of such a product is earned or deserved, developing in the consumers more positive (and less negative) feelings. Consumers seem to perceive that they are allowed to consume indulgent products after they have progressed towards achieving a goal of their own, for the effort invested in a task or action, for excelling in a performance, as a result of negative emotional experiences, as a result of moral or pro-social behavior. Overall the majority of the research examining emotional responses to indulgence, has shown that having a reason to indulge reduces the negative emotions (e.g., guilt and regret) associated with the indulgent consumption. That's why adding small utilitarian additions to a luxury product serve as justification and reduce guilt. Since the indulgent consumption is often expensive for one's health and well-being (and sometimes for one's bank account), consumers often have to compensate their desire for pleasure with its potential consequences. In this way, the individual becomes a judge and self-master, pursuing gratification and pleasure in life while exercising self-control. If consumers experience negative emotions such as guilt and regret after indulgent consumption, why do they continue to indulge in such vicious acts? Some researchers have recognized the positive results of indulgent behavior. Indulgent consumption offers people fun and satisfies psychological and physiological needs that the acquisition of basic necessities may not satisfy. Consumption of indulgences is perceived as a mood-repairer: it makes consumers feel good or happy and serves as a strategy to mitigate negative emotions such as sadness or helping to perceive less stress. The possibility of experiencing happiness through short-term consumption of indulgences has the potential to contribute to consumers' general well-being, responding to the growing consumers' interest and need to individual well-being and happiness.

2.2 The indulgent consumption as eating pleasure

Indulgent consumption in food is mainly related to the consumption of hedonic food. Past research has found that the consumption of hedonic food is associated with an individual's emotional state: many people eat in order to distract themselves from, compensate for, or cope with negative sentiments such as stress, anxiety, frustration, fear, daily hassles, sadness, boredom, depression, and fatigue. The foods eaten under these circumstances are sometimes referred to comfort foods, and most of these foods are indulgent and sweet, because such foods can provide immediate satisfaction and even psycho-physical benefits. When it comes to eating pleasure, the literature have adopted contrasting conceptualizations, developing two different perceptions of eating pleasure: the visceral eating pleasure and the epicurean eating pleasure. Scope of the paragraph is to analyze the literature research regarding these conceptualizations. It is mainly described that the visceral eating pleasure is associated to a negative view of eating pleasure, equating

it with the satisfaction of visceral impulses triggered by the environment or by negative emotions. In contrast, the epicurean eating pleasure is associated to a more positive view of eating pleasure, equating it with the enduring pleasure derived from the aesthetic appreciation of the sensory and symbolic value of food.

2.3 The raise in the scientific literature of a new trend within food indulgence: the healthy indulgence

When it comes to eating behaviors, consumers frequently face dilemmas or conflicting goals. Choices may be classed as indulgent when compared with others that are probably healthier. Nowadays health is becoming an increasingly important personal and societal value and it is not surprising that consumers have started to pay more attention to the health benefits of food. Marketplace is enhancing consumers' everyday health decision-making, by making health-relevant information easier for consumers to access, use, and understand. Nowadays consumers are much more conscious about their health than before: "Health consciousness is the degree to which a person plays an active role in maintaining his or her health". It is demonstrated by previous researches that health-consciousness stimulates preventive health care positive attitude towards organic food, purchase intentions, and increases focus on the health-related properties of food products. Health-conscious consumers are aware of and concerned about their health, they are motivated to improve or sustain their state of well-being by pursuing healthy behaviors, such as consuming healthy food and they are fully aware of healthy food's benefits. Nowadays consumers are progressively changing lifestyle and the number of Health-conscious consumers is growing. To respond to this growing demand for healthiness, the marketplace is offering more and more healthier options, not only food brands but also restaurants, retailers and other distributors have added healthier options to supplement their typically indulgent product offerings. Many consumers assume that food cannot be tasty and nutritious at the same time and thus tend to employ a heuristic that classifies virtuous foods as "healthy but not tasty" and vice food as "unhealthy but tasty. However, food and beverage companies have begun to nullify this perceived dichotomy by bundling vice and virtue ingredients (for example, Oreo cookies in Yocrunch Yogurt), which addresses the consumer's desire to gain health benefits, but without the cost of adopting extreme measures to do so. Food companies are investing in product development to meet consumers' demand for the so called "healthful indulgences". These products combine "the best of both worlds": they are tasty and delicious and at the same time they have a healthy twist that takes away any guilt. Healthful indulgences allow consumers to find the happy balance between great taste and not breaking the calorie bank.

2.4 Objective of the research

The objective of the research is to study how the meanings, drivers and consequences related to the indulgence consumption as well as the elements that characterize the indulgent consumption have changed over time through the media discussion.

CHAPTER 3- RESULTS & CONTRIBUTES OF THE RESEARCH

3.1 Research objective & methodology

The objective of the research is to explore the discussion of media around the indulgent consumption in food industry. The research conducted is a qualitative textual analysis on a sample of 100 articles published by institutional media. The articles were collected from Factiva, the leading database for economic and financial publications. The research on Factiva was conducted through the selection of specific keywords related to the indulgent consumption, selecting articles related to the topic of indulgence consumption in food industry. The selection of the articles depended on the relevance of their content to the objective of the research. The articles selected were then codified based on 5 dimensions: article background, construct, drivers to the construct, consequences of the construct, company.

3.2 Macro categories analysis and results

Through the textual analysis of the articles, four macro categories of indulgence emerged: 1) Positive classic indulgence, Negative classic indulgence, Positive healthy indulgence, Negative healthy indulgence. The category of *Positive classic indulgence* is the prevalent, existing for the 62% of the articles, followed by the category of *Negative classic indulgence* for its 25%, *Positive healthy indulgence* for its 11% and *Negative healthy indulgence* for its 2%. The valence (positive or negative) of each category depends on how the media narrated the construct in the articles. The categories differ for the element that drive to the indulgent consumptions as well as the consequences of the indulgent consumption on consumers.

3.2.1 Positive Classic Indulge

The category of positive classic indulgence is the bigger one. Differently from the other macro categories, the category of Positive classic indulgence is divided into two further micro categories: the full positive classic indulgence category and the partial positive classic indulgence category. This further distinction comes from the different drivers to positive classic indulgence as well as its consequences. The meaning of classic positive indulgence is declined differently in the two micro categories: in the micro category of full positive classic indulgence, the indulgence consumption is described for its classical meaning of pleasure and self -treatment, while in the partial positive classic indulgence, the construct is described within the discussion around the “better for you” products. So the connotation of pleasure related to the indulgent consumption is kept but it is shaped by a healthy twist.

3.2.2 Negative classic indulgence

The category of negative classic indulgence describes the indulgent behaviour for bringing in the short term the feeling of pleasure and self -satisfaction but in the long term the feeling of guiltiness, sadness and unhappiness mainly due for having break the calories and having abandoned himself to a decadent sin as well

as the negative impact of the indulgence consumption on consumer's health. Drivers and consequences are further described for this category.

3.2.3 Positive healthy indulgence

The construct of indulgence is described in this category by media as “permissible indulgence”, “healthy indulgence” and “guilt-free indulgence”. The category stressed out the new perception of indulgence that enhances the feelings of pleasure, happiness and wellbeing and do not let the consumer feel guilty after having indulged. It is interesting to see that, rather than the other categories, for the healthy indulgence the drivers were the healthy lifestyles and vegan/ vegetarian lifestyles, showing the increasing of the new lifestyle and habits related to food as well as an increased health -consciousness among consumers.

3.2.4 Negative healthy indulgence

This category exists for a very small percentage (2%) but yet is very interesting to explore as it described the healthy indulgence with a negative valence. In this category, the healthiness trend is not described positively as always but as an obsession such as people who decide spontaneously to eat free “from -food” and to limitate themselves to the consumption of specific foods, perceive that what is not labelled as vegan, organic, free from etc , as a bad food. The consequence is that the individual experiment feeling of anxiety if the healthy food is being cheated and limitate himself in attending social occasions (eg dining out with friends).

3.3 The evidence of plant-based food

Plant-based foods and plant-based alternatives are described as indulgences among all the categories of indulgent consumption, as a consequence of the growing trend amog people who decide to adopt a meat free and dairy free diet for environmental, ethic and health reasons.

3.4 The change of the construct of indulgence in 2019 vs 2018

The paragraph shows how the media discussion around the construct has changed already over the past two years. The majority of the sample consists of 65 articles from 2019, versus a sample of 35 articles from 2018. The fact that the articles collected in 2019 are almost the double of the articles collected in 2018, clearly shows how the relevance of the construct increased in one year only. Also, it is explained along the paragraph, how the distinction between classic indulgence and health indulgence comes clearly alive only in 2019. What is interesting from the comparison is that in 2019 the biggest category was the positive classic indulgence instead in 2018 the biggest category was the negative classic indulgence, meaning that in one year the discussion around indulgence consumption changed. Also, regarding the positive classic indulgence, in 2019 the micro category of partial positive indulgence is the main one in the macro category of positive classic indulgence, instead in 2018 the micro category of full positive classic indulgence is the main one in the category of positive

classic indulgence. The data shows how in 2019 the media declined the construct of indulgent consumption mainly in the discussion related to the “*Better for you*” trend, demonstrating how the media focus in 2019 was mainly on describing the moment of indulging through the consumption of hybrid products. Also the category on positive and negative healthy indulgence existed only in 2019, demonstrating that the trend of healthy indulgence spread out only in 2019.

3.4 Conclusion, limits of the current research and future research

The research clearly shows how in 2019 new meanings were developed around the construct of the indulgent consumption. As described in the previous chapters, the food industry is now living big changes, shifting to healthy and wellbeing offer, due to new and different consumers’ habits, lifestyles and demand for food products which taste good and make them feel good. Indulging does not mean feeling guilty anymore. Companies and brands are also reinventing themselves to respond to the increasing demand for healthiness. Brands such as Coke, Magnum, Halo Top, Burger king and so on are now re-inventing their products, developing new offer and positioning themselves as the best choice for whom want to enjoy the pleasure of indulging despite they follow a healthy lifestyle as well as alternative lifestyles,. A limit of the current research is to focus the research on short time frame, the contribution of the research would have been much more impactful if it would have been extended to the last five years to understand how the discussion of media has changed over time as well as to extend the research for the next five years to understand how it will change in the future. Also, would be interesting to extend this research also to the other industries related to the indulgence consumption such as luxury and experiences to see if the trend of healthiness and sustainability, when it comes to assuming vegan and flexitarians lifestyle for animal and environment’s concerns, will spread out and assume different connotations in the other industries. The limited types of journals used was a limit as well: the researched was conducted mainly on lifestyle and news journals. An improvement would be to extend the research to companies’ reports to understand deeper how brands are leveraging on the healthy trend and how they are facing with the competition on one hand and on the other hand with consumers’ new needs and habits related to food. The articles found, described healthiness as the nowadays’ obsession, without giving to it any positive connotation. Because of the small amount of the articles, the research linked to this specific topic was limited. I will leave to the future research the challenge to elaborate further information on the “dark” side of the healthiness, studying how it potentially may shift from positive to negative generating strong negative effects on consumer behaviors and psychology and impacting again the consumers’ demand and the companies’ offer.

