

Preference and consumption pattern of fast foods among college students

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Abstract: With the advent of changing lifestyles, demand for fast food products is augmenting day by day, especially among the student community, the trend is tremendously enhancing. Globalization and urbanization have greatly affected ones eating habits and forced many people to consume fancy and high calorie fast foods. Hence the present short research was conducted to know the preferences and consumption patterns towards fast- food products among college students. The questionnaire was framed through a google form about the perception, consumption pattern and frequency of fast food intake and shared the link through an online platform for data collection. Among the respondents, 96% of females and 94% of males preferred fast foods. Only 3% of the females and 5% of the males had fast foods daily whereas 38% of females and 51% of males consumed fast foods weekly once. Nearly 34% females and 57% male's favored fast foods because of its taste, 10.5% females and 3% males preferred for a low cost. Nearly 91% of females and 31% of males chosen fast foods because of its availability. It was found that 34% of females and 13% of males were influenced by social media for fast food consumption, 38% of females and 56% of males preferred fast foods because of peer group influence. The majority of the female and male respondents preferred fried chicken (140±12.4) followed by pizza. Compared with other fast food types, preference for Pepsi or coke was found to be lesser among the college student respondents. Though the harmful effects on health-related to the consumption of fast foods are known, students prefer it to take due to their peer influences and social media advertisements. Nutrition education on healthy food choices must be imparted among adolescents to restrict the frequency of consuming fast foods.

Keywords: fast foods, college students, preference, consumption

INTRODUCTION

The fast food industry is one of the world's fastest growing sectors in the food industry. However, over a period of time, with a growth in the number of nuclear families, economic growth and increasing per capita income as well as globalization, fast food culture gained prominence in India. Fast food is the term given to food that can be prepared and served very quickly. While any meal with low preparation time can be considered to be fast food, typically the term refers to food sold in a restaurant or store with low quality preparation and served to the customer in a packaged form for take-out/take-away. The fast food industry in India has evolved with the changing lifestyles of the young Indian population. The sheer variety of gastronomic preferences across the regions, hereditary or acquired, has brought about different modules across the country. It may take some time for the local enterprise to mature to the level of international players in the field (Priyadarshini, 2016).

Fast food generally refers to the food that is quickly prepared within a short interval. Consumption of fast food has drastically increased in India. People, specifically the adolescents love to eat fried and roasted food. Taste, time, money cleanliness and hygiene are the major factors that have influenced students for fast food. The study showed that consumption of fast food among male students in the university is more than female students. Findings also revealed that consumers often visit fast food outlets not only for meals but for social gatherings among friends, colleagues, and classmates (Narayana and Prabhu, 2015). There is no correlation between the perception of fast food being unhealthy and the frequency of consumption of fast food among college girls. In their study, they have mentioned that it is the responsibility of the government to regulate the fast-food market and limit the fast food from schools and colleges for better health of the younger generation (Shami and Fatima, 2017)

Nair and Das, (2020) focused on identifying the correlation between demographic profiles and perception towards healthy eating habits. It further studies the relationship between perception of healthy eating habits and consumption of soft drinks, instant noodles, and fast food. A sample of 200 respondents between the age group 18-35 years were taken for the study. Three top-of-the-mind brands - Maggi, McDonald's, and Pepsi were taken for the study. Statistical tools were used to analyze the collected data. Bivariate statistical tools were used to analyze data and the findings suggested that there is a direct correlation between perception of healthy eating habits and consumption of Maggie, McDonald's and Pepsi.

Consumer behaviour is often studied because certain decisions are significantly affected by their behaviour or expected actions. With the advent of changing lifestyles, demand for fast food products is enhancing day by day. Especially among the student fraternity, the trend is immensely increasing. Keeping that point in view, the present study endeavors to find out the preferences and consumption patterns towards fast food products among college students.

METHODOLOGY

The study took place at Coimbatore and the study participants were students both male and female who were under 18 to 24 years of age pursued their post-graduation in various disciplines. Students who were less than 18 years of age or greater than 24 years of age were excluded. With background information, data regarding the preference, attitude, reasons for their preference, influenced factors, frequency, and type of fast food consumption among college students were collected using the questionnaire. The questionnaire was framed in Google form and the link was sent to the college students through Whats App and around 288 students submitted the forms completely. Incomplete forms were excluded from the study. The received responses were analyzed using Microsoft Excel sheets and the results were expressed in percentage and mean with standard deviation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Gender of the respondents

The participants of the present study were college students undergoing their post-graduation in various disciplines. Among the participants, 208 were females and 80 were males.

2. Consumption of fast food

a. Frequency of consumption

Among the respondents, 96% (199) of females and 94% (75) of males preferred fast foods, whereas 4% (9) of females and 6% (5) of males not preferred fast foods.

Table-1
Consumption of fast food among the respondents

Consumption of fast food	No of respondents			
	Female (n=199)		Male (n=75)	
	No	%	No	%
Daily	6	3	4	5
Weekly once	75	38	38	51
Weekly three times	20	10	11	15
Rarely	98	49	22	29
Total	199	100	75	100

From the above table it was clear that among the respondents, only 3% of the females and 5% of the males consumed fast foods daily. Around 38% of females and 51% of males consumed fast foods weekly once. It was pleasurable that among the respondents 49% of females and 29% of males chosen fast foods rarely.

b. Preference meal time and location for consumption

Around 11% of males and 18% of females preferred to eat fast foods at dinner, 10% of males and 40% of females preferred evening time. Only two percent of respondents from males and females respectively consumed fast foods in the mid-morning and bed-time. Nearly 63% of females and 81% of males wished to consume fast foods in street food stalls whereas 37% of females and 19% of males chosen high-end restaurants to consume fast foods.

3. Reason for the consumption of fast foods

Table 2
Intention towards consumption of fast foods

Intention towards consumption of fast foods	No of respondents			
	Females		Males	
	No	%	No	%
Taste	68	34	43	57
Appearance	7	3.5	5	6
Low cost	21	10.5	2	3

Ease to carry	12	6	2	3
Availability	91	46	23	31
Total	199	100	75	100

Around 34% of females and 57% males favored fast foods because of its taste, 10.5% of females and 3% males preferred fast foods as it low in cost. Nearly 91% of females and 31% of males chosen fast foods because of its availability.

4. Factors influencing for the consumption of fast foods

Dhange et al., (2018) stated that people consume fast food because of its delicious taste. They have put forward that 31.87% of their respondents were unaware of the harmful effects of fast food consumption. The study has suggested to, conduct an awareness campaign regarding the harmful effects of fast food consumption and the usefulness of a balanced diet.

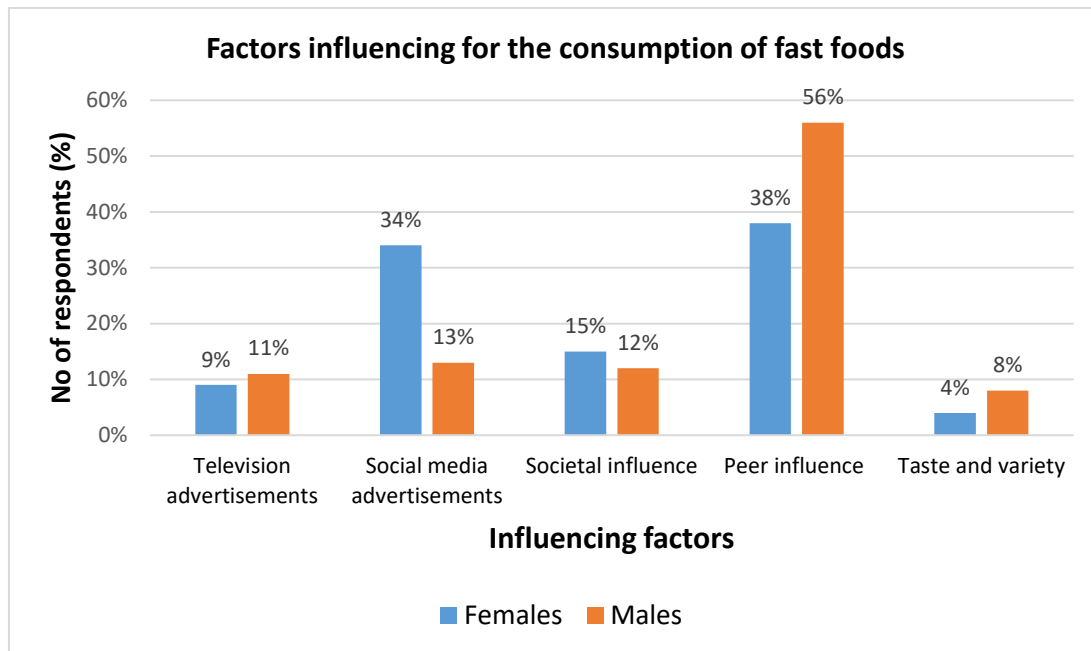


Figure 1 Factors influencing fast food consumption among respondents

The above figure shows that among the respondents, 34% of females and 13% of males were influenced by social media for fast food consumption. Only nine percent of females and 11 % of males were influenced by advertisements on television, 38% of females and 56% of males were influenced by peer groups, 12% of males and 15% of females were influenced by society. Among the respondents, only four percent of females and eight percent of males were influenced by taste and variety.

5. Preference of fast foods among the respondents

Alfaris et al., (2015) in their study reported that beef or chicken burgers were the main kinds of fast food meals usually eaten by the sample subjects (70.4%), followed by pizza (32.7%) and French fries (29.6%). A significantly higher rate of young adults than adolescent girls reported eating pizza usually (49.3% vs. 23.6%). On the other hand, only 4.1% of the participants usually consume hotdogs. Regarding portion size, most of the participants usually ordered either small (37.2%) or medium (44.9%) portion sizes of fast food meals. However, the large portion size was the choice for 17.9% of participants. The below table shows the fast food preference among the college student respondents

Table 3

Fast food preference among the respondents

Fast foods	No of respondents	
	Females	Males
Sandwich	25±5.4	10±2.1
Cutlet	52±6.8	32±2.6
Fried chicken	140±12.4	70±3.2
Nuggets	15±4.1	8±1.6

Pizza	81±2.4	5±1.2
Burger	18±2.6	4±1.4
Instant noodles	28±2.4	3±1.6
French fries	26±4.4	4±2
Pepsi/coke	6±1.8	4±1.4

From the above table it was clear that the majority of the female respondents preferred fried chicken (140±12.4) followed by pizza (81±2.4), cutlet (52±6.8), instant noodles (28±2.4) and French fries (26±4.4). Most of the male respondents also preferred fried chicken (70±3.2) and cutlet (32±2.6). Compared with other fast food types, preference of Pepsi or coke was found to be lesser among the college student respondents

CONCLUSION

Corporate fast food will not vanish from the landscape and it is far too profitable. The consumption of fast foods is increasing among students day by day. Although fast foods are tasty they have low nutritive value and high calories. Though the harmful effects on health related to the consumption of fast foods are known, students prefer it to take due to their peer influences and social media advertisements. Proper nutrition education on healthy eating must be imparted among adolescents to restrict the frequency of consuming fast foods.

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