

Consumption of Fast Food: Eating Behaviors among Educated Youth in Pakistan

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Abstract:

Pakistan has gone through changes of living standards for everyday comforts toward unfortunate dietary patterns, for example, high fast food utilization. The youth are considered to be the most affected and influenced by these changed eating practices. In order to gain useful insight on this dietary pattern, this research established an Online Research survey, to explore the current trend of fast food consumption among educated people and to analyze different dynamics of the fast food industry in Pakistan. The research questionnaire had used as an instrument for data collection. Data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel. Results showed that Adults spend more cash on fast food because of its taste. Educated youth like to eat fast food outside their homes as an amusement more than their need. It is additionally found that the consumption of fast food was one of the causes of health problems among the youth.

Keywords: consumption; eating behavior; fast food; obesity; nutrition

1.Introduction

Universally, food consumption has become an inevitable part of our daily lives, despite the awareness of its dangers. In addition, the increased dependence on fast-food restaurants in the vicinity and attractive home delivery systems has led to a radical change in the lifestyle of all individuals, regardless of age (Drewnowski and Specter, 2004). Consumers have redesigned their modern sink with fast-service menu items, acting as an agent that saves time in this hectic life and over-programmed activities. Therefore, these foods are also known as "FAST FOOD". These alternatives to homemade food also have a brighter appearance, such as saving time, profit in the case of an individual, prepared

food that is served quickly and right in front of us is like a blessing after a hard day at work, the Modern invention for meeting places with peer groups and a wide range of fast food styles allows you to experience foods from different cultures so you can explore different tastes (Holmboe-Ottesen, 2000).

The fast food industry grew in the 40s in California, changing consumer practices in many countries of the world, including Asian countries (Schlosser, 2001). The consumption of fast food has increased considerably in Pakistan due to different aspects such as the attractiveness of eating out, socializing, urbanization, etc. People like to eat in a modern way because of the globalization that has conditioned the preparation and presentation of fast food. Urbanization is also changing the standard of living and it is claimed that the food needed is connected to it. There has been an increase in Western-style food consumption in developing countries with an improvement in the income situation (Regmi and Dyck, 2001).

Fast food consumption is growing rapidly and Pakistanis from all walks of life have climbed the junk food cart. The rich eat at McDonald's or KFC, while the more solvent are satisfied with Bismillah Burger and Noora French Fries with the same taste. The fact is that, as in the rest of the world, the increase in fast food consumption continues to increase in Pakistan among all classes. The fast food industry in Pakistan is experiencing an accelerated boom. Despite strong competition, this sector has managed to generate profitability and is also well received by the local masses. Recent statistics have revealed that the fast food industry is the second largest in Pakistan, with around 169 million consumers. Not only that, but this sector also accounts for 16% of total employment in the

manufacturing sector. An industry with such dynamics also has great possibilities for exceptional growth in the future.

International data suggest that the percentage of fast food consumers can vary depending on the different segments of the population. In Turkey, about a third of the research participants chose fast food as a snack one or more times a day, while only 15% consumed the recommended daily amount of fruit and vegetables (Akram et al, 2010). (Goyal and Singh, 2007) revealed in their research that young Indian consumers were eager to visit fast food places, but home-made food was their first preference. (Dhar, T., & Baylis, K. 2011), a professor of agricultural economics and consumption at the University of Illinois, Urbana, Champaign, studied the ban on advertising junk food in the Canadian province of Quebec from 1984 to 1992 and its effects on fast food shopping. The study indicated a 13% reduction in the week for fast food expenses. Greater awareness of good nutrition and negative effects of fast food in children can also be of great help. Schools can play a positive role in this sense.

As stated before, several studies were conducted to investigate the factors that effect on fast-food consumption in Pakistan. However, these studies were conducted to explore as whole population, with no such studies that assessed specific group of educated youth in Pakistan. Understanding the patterns of behavior of fast food consumers should enable policy makers to control on prospective vulnerabilities (Wright et al., 2005). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the factors that influence educated youth towards the consumption of fast food, to understand the current trend of dietary patterns despite the in-depth knowledge of negative consequences for health.

2. Review of Research Literature

Young people are influenced by many factors on their decisions for choosing a place for eating outside their homes. For example, (Campbell-Smith, 1967) has presented in his research the model of experience, which explains the components of a fast food centers offer. (Cugini, Foskett et al. 2002) categorized the factors into five classes, based on their importance, such as (1) food and drink, (2) service, (3) cleanliness and hygiene, (4) value and (5) the environment. (Kivela, Inbakaran et al. 2000) highlighted some characteristics to measure the quality of product that is essential for young people to be attracted. These

characteristics are: the variety of the menu, taste and the consistency of food products, in order to examine their effect on customers. (Namkung and Jang, 2007) have also noted that product presentation, variety, taste, freshness and temperature are important factors in quality assessment.

The quality of service in catering place plays a vital role, out of food (Hansen, Jensen et al., 2005). There is a significant impact of front desk service on the relation between the fast food restaurant and consumers. The young consumers can be attracted by welcoming attitude of front desk staff (Edwards and Gustafsson, 2008). In addition, some studies show that the physical environment can be used to influence consumers' expectations about restaurant qualities (Baker, Grewal and others 1994, Wall and Berry, 2007), since all these factors are part of this experience.

(Ariffin, Bibon et al. 2011) assessed the behavior of young people from the environmental point of view of the restaurant and its special effects on their disposition, their satisfaction level and their actions. The research has identified some environmental components that restaurant managers should consider when trying to create an appropriate environment for young people. The authors' conclusion is that it is fundamental to discover the complexity of the behavior of young people.

Consumer inclinations are based on a certain level of wisdom; however, their sentiments play a vital role in shaping behaviors towards food consumption (Kashif et al., 2015). (Senauer, 2001) proposed to carefully analyze food for the consumer behavior, it is necessary to take into account psychological factors (for example, attitudes, and perceptions) that develop choices and attitudes (Jun et al., 2014). It is broadly recognized that consumer preferences originate from a complex process. Knowledge, beliefs, and behavior is interdependent (Ghanian et al., 2016), and attitudes are most likely to influence decisions of fast food consumption. Relatively, an encouraging relationship between consumer attitudes towards Fast food and fast food consumption frequencies has been found (Dave et al., 2009). Therefore, a better understanding of consumer attitudes towards fast food can help inform public health efforts to improve dietary practices. Other studies show that the practical aspect (Driskell et al., 2006; Steptoe et al., 1995), rapid purchase, availability, palatability (Rydell et al., 2008), ethics nutritional value, brand value, food quality (Schröder

and McEachern, 2005), taste, flavor, cultural and social factors (Bryant and Dundes 2008, Cheang 2002) quick options and menu options (Bowman and Vinyard, 2004, Driskell et al., 2006, Steptoe et al., 1995) can affect the purchase of fast food, inspire consumers to go more frequently for fast food consumption.

3. Methodology

3.1. Study Design

This study is essentially an exploratory research to understand in depth the trends that have improved fast food consumption. Empirical research was conducted to study the effects of fast food consumption on the eating habits of educated adults who use reliable data sources. Data collection was performed using the questionnaire method using a standardized questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed by the researcher from various published sources. The questionnaire included closed-ended questions for the establishment of respondents, but questions about the reasons for fast food consumption were provided on the 4-point Likert scale from 0 to 3. (3=Strongly agree, 2= Agree, 1= Disagree, 0= N/A). "The questionnaire includes fast food habits, foods and restaurants, frequency of consumption. The ages 18-24, 25-35 and 36-50 were grouped in both sexes to have appropriate calculations for different questions. The fast food was classified as fries, burgers, chicken and pizza, while the drinks they included all the Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Sprite, 7 up, dew and fresh fruit juices.

3.2. Sample of Study

Students studying at different universities in China formed population of this study that represents the educated population of youth in Pakistan. The questionnaires were distributed to a total of 200 students through the use of different sources. The questionnaires were distributed and collected by hand from the respondents who were studying at various universities in Shanghai city. Others who were enrolled at the universities other cities of China were sent questionnaires by mail, wechat and other electronic means. The data obtained from the convenience sample were generalized to infer the patterns of consumption of the educated population of youth in Pakistan. Due to lack of time, only five days were provided to reply to the questionnaire. A total of 33 people participated in this study, including

17 men and 16 women. The respondents were representing 8 cities of Pakistan (Table 1). 75.75% respondents were in the age group of 25-35 while there were 12.12% respondents in each of age group 18-24 and 36-50.

Table 1

City-Wise Number of Respondents who participated the Survey

Gender	Age	City								Total
		Kchi	Lah	Isad	Pesh	Mul	Raw	Glt	Sar	
Male	18-24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	25-35	4	5	2	1	0	0	1	1	14
	36-50	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	3
Total		4	6	2	1	0	0	3	1	17
Female	18-24	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	4
	25-35	3	1	2	2	2	0	1	0	11
	36-50	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total		4	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	16
Grand Total		8	8	4	3	2	1	5	2	33

Key: kchi=Karachi, Lah=Lahore, Isad=Islamabad, Pesh=Peshawar, Mul=Multan, Raw= Rawalpindi, Glt=Gilgit, Sar= Sargodah

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. Reason of Consuming Fast Food

Table 2 Shows that majority respondent agreed that they liked to eat fast food. Due to good taste and fluent availability, people prefer fast food over home cooked food. Table 2 reveals that 93.93% respondents agreed the quick service as the factor for choice of consuming fast food. The other factors for consumption of fast food by educated youth as "absolutely important" in their restaurant preferences are taste (general: 93.93%, female: 93.75%, male: 94.1%), environment (general: 75.75%, female: 68.75%, male: 82.35%), Variety of quality food items (general: 87.5%, female: 75%, male: 100%) and convenience (general: 78.78%, female: 93.75%, male: 64.70%). In general 33.33% respondents disagreed that the fast food is inexpensive. This also reveals that the cost of fast food is not affordable for all categories of social classes.

Table 2

Table Showing the Responses of Participants for the Items asked about the Reasons of Fast Food use.

Reasons	SA		A		D		N/A		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
They are quick service	3	6	14	8	0	0	0	2	33
They are inexpensive	1	2	9	9	7	4	0	1	33
I like the taste	2	6	14	9	1	0	0	1	33
offers a variety	3	1	14	11	0	1	0	3	33
I like the environment	7	4	7	7	2	5	1	0	33
I am too busy to cook	1	5	3	5	6	6	7	0	33
Convenient	3	4	8	11	2	0	4	1	33
Total	20	28	69	60	18	16	12	8	231

Key: SA=strongly agree, A= agree, D= disagree, N/A= not applicable

4.2. Frequency of Fast-Food Intake

In the general sample, the rate of going to fast-food restaurants is high for both genders (female: 87.5%, male: 76.47 %). Among males 41.17% go to a fast-food restaurant once a week and 29.41% males prefer to go to fast food points in a Month. Among females the frequency of going to fast food places is 50% once in a week while 37.7% females go to fast food restaurants once a Month. The table 3 also indicates that the trend of going to restaurants on daily basis is still low in both genders (males: 5.88%, female: 0%). This concludes that the consumers do not rely on the fast food rather they have other choices of traditional variety of meals which are available in other restaurants at comparatively cheaper cost. One of the reasons for not going to fast food points on daily basis is the disagreement of respondents (33.33%) in Table 2 for the statement that the fast food is inexpensive. The other reasons behind why consumers do not prefer to go to fast food places on daily basis can be an interesting area for other researchers to explore.

Table 3

Frequency of Fast Food Intake by Gender

Gender	Age	Frequency of Fast Food intake				Total
		Every day	once a week	once a Month	Not very often	
Male	18-24	0	0	0	0	0
	25-35	1	6	3	0	10
	36-50	0	1	2	4	7
	Total Male	1	7	5	4	17
Female	18-24	0	3	0	1	4
	25-35	0	5	5	1	11
	36-50	0	0	1	0	1
	Total Female	0	8	6	2	16
Total		1	15	11	6	33

4.3. Type of Fast Food Used by Consumers

Table 4 shows the consumption frequencies of the most-preferred fast-foods. Table 4 shows that the most preferred single fast-food in males is Pizza, Fries and Broast (17.64% each) while in females the favorite choice of meal is Burger (18.75%) followed by Pizza (12.5%), Fries (12.5%) and Broast (12.5%). The female respondents of various age groups showed difference in their food choice in which fries were consumed at a trendy level. The respondents of all ages consumed particularly more than one type of fast food. In general sample, the combination of different types of fast food was most taken by both genders (39.39%). This trend concludes that consumers take more than one type of fast food at a time. French Fries are compulsory part of the meal with burger and broast.

Table 4

Type of Fast Food Preferred by Consumers

Gender	Age	Types of fast food					Total
		Burger	Pizza	Fries	Broast	combination	
Male	18-24	0	0	0	0	0	0
	25-35	2	3	3	2	4	14
	36-50	0	0	0	1	2	3
	Total	2	3	3	3	6	17
Female	18-24	1	1	1	0	1	4
	25-35	2	1	1	2	5	11
	36-50	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Total	3	2	2	2	7	16

4.4. Types of Beverages Used by Consumers

Consumption of cold drinks with fast food was seen in both males and females. Overall the majority of the respondents liked Sprite and 7up (n=12, 36.36%). The type of beverage which was consumed the highest in males was Coca Cola (n=5, 29.41%) while the highest consumption in female group was Pepsi (n=5, 31.25%). The least-preferred consumption of drink with fast food among both genders is fresh fruit juice (males: 5.88% and female: 6.25%).

Table 5

Types of Beverages Consumed by Various Groups

Gender	Age	Types of beverage					Total
		Coca Cola	Pepsi	sprite/7 up	Dew	Fresh fruit juice	
Male	18-24	0	0	0	0	0	0
	25-35	5	0	5	3	1	14
	36-50	0	0	2	1	0	3
	Total	5	0	7	4	1	17
Female	18-24	2	1	1	0	0	4
	25-35	1	5	3	1	1	11
	36-50	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Total	3	6	5	1	1	16

4.5. Various Timing Preferred by Consumers

As seen from the Table 6, both genders in age group of 25-35 years mainly took fast food as Lunch (n=6 35%, n= 6, 37.5%) and dinner (n=5, 29.41%, n=3, 18.75 % respectively). Overall the consumption of fast food was observed most in the lunch (n=8, 45.45%) than other meal .This reveals that adults studying in higher intuitions or working in offices get convenience to have lunch in a fast food points because of its fast service rather than go to their homes.

Table 6

Different timing of Fast Food Consumed by Various Groups

Table 6. Different timing of Fast Food consumed by various Groups

Gender	Age	Time of taking Fast Food				Total
		Lunch	Brunch	Dinner	More than one time	
Male	18-24	0	0	0	0	0
	25-35	6	3	5	0	14
	36-50	1	1	0	1	3
	Total	7	4	5	1	17
Female	18-24	2	1	1	0	4
	25-35	6	2	3	0	11
	36-50	0	1	0	0	1
	Total	8	4	4	0	16

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Fast food is convenient and tasty, even if it is prepared with not very nutritious or unhealthy ingredients. Hamburgers, roasts, fries and pizzas are famous fast food. People with a busy schedule mainly consume this type of food. The basic population, which eats fast food and spends heavily on money, is made up of the youth. There are also many more side effects of fast food and people are not aware of their

negative consequences. Aspects that have an impact on customers' food choices are: the attraction for going out to eat, socializing, the taste for university students, the attractive atmosphere, the fascinating advertisements in the press and in the electronic media of fast food companies and good others. (Kivela, Reece et al. 1999) examined the differences between restaurant attribute ratings based on the demographics of their customers. In this study, the authors divide the restaurants into four categories, based on their prices, locations, environment, services, style and specificity. The results indicate that the main determining factors for choosing a restaurant are: age, income and type of people in the restaurant. For example, the atmosphere of a restaurant is an important factor for people between 25 and 34 years. Fast food companies are aimed at young people through great promotional strategies, delicious recipes and attractive advertising. The working class prefers fast food to its workplace because of its work commitments and also compromises the quality of food due to lack of time and ease of access. The researchers also estimated that about a third of the population consumes fast food. The results of this research have shown that in Pakistan people eat and buy fast food mainly at lunch. According to MacFarlane (2009), people who ate fast food at home were more likely to be heavy.

This study has limitations as data obtained from the convenience sample. Due to less time, data had been collected urgently and generalized for consumption patterns of all Pakistani educated youth consumers. In future this research can be extended to cover more people to gain better results. Some other sampling techniques can also be applied.

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