

Examining fast-food consumption behaviour of students in Manipal University, India

Narayan B. Prabhu M.
Assistant Professor: Sales and Marketing,
Welcomgroup Graduate School of Hotel Administration,
Manipal University, Manipal.
Email: narayan.prabhu@manipal.edu

Abstract

Eating out in India has evolved from an occasion-driven activity to an everyday activity and fast-food has become a significant symbol for the modern culture as it tends to satisfy customers in a relatively short time. 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 consumption patterns across the country. In this paper, efforts are taken to learn the fast food consumption behavior of students' in Manipal University campus which has nearly 25,000 students from different parts of India and from across the world. It also has over one hundred fast food outlets with varied themes to tantalize the taste buds of its diverse clientele. Survey analysis shows that the majority of students prefer burgers, pizzas and rolls, while male students prefer fizzy drinks, fresh juice and milk shakes as beverages. Female students tend to prefer fresh juice, coffee and mock-tails, especially on weekends, while with their friends. It is important to note that both male and female have given similar priority for factors deemed to be important in directing them to a particular item, such as quality of the product, timeliness of service and a reasonable price, while some differences exist in aspects related to cleanliness and hygiene, and brand image as per the T-test for equality of means.

Key words: fast food, consumption behavior, Manipal University



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Introduction

Fast food is a rapidly growing industry in the world as well as in India, and especially in urban areas (small and large cities). Consumption of fast foods has become almost a global phenomenon, as more and more people are lured by it day in and day out irrespective of their demographic characteristics. However, not much research literature is available on fast food references of consumers' especially the young consumers in India. Fast food denotes food which is prepared and served quickly at outlets called fast food outlets. Finger food comprises most of the fast food, and can be eaten without cutlery or crockery. Fast foods include chips, sandwiches, hamburgers, fried chicken, French fries, chicken nuggets, fish, pizza or ice-cream, although there are now also many fast food restaurants in India which offer slower foods like chilly mashed potatoes or salads.

The liberalization of the Indian economy in the early 1990s and the subsequent entry of new players set a significant change in lifestyles and the food tastes of Indians. Fast food is one which gained acceptance by the Indian palate after various multinational fast food players, such as the American company McDonald's, adapted the basic Indian food requirements viz. vegetarian meals and selected non-vegetarian options excluding beef and pork totally from their menu. Multinational fast food outlets initially faced protests and non-acceptance from Indian consumers. This was due to primarily to perception that these fast food players serve only chicken and do not serve vegetarian meals as such. In addition, fast food is perceived to be an expensive luxury besides being out-of-way and divergent with meals usually associated with the Indian culture.

Today, the fast food industry is adapting to Indian food requirements and is growing rapidly in India and the region. It is gaining acceptance primarily from the Indian youth

and younger generations and is becoming part of daily life. Keeping in mind the Indian habits and changing preferences towards food consumption, this study has as its focus tried to understand the factors affecting the perception of Indian youth, in the age group of 20-30 years, towards consumption of fast food as well as towards making choices of which fast food outlets to patronize.

Literature Review

Fast food have been defined by (Bender & Bender, 1995) as a "general term used for a limited menu of foods that lend themselves to production-line techniques; suppliers tend to specialize in products such as hamburgers, pizzas, chicken, or sandwiches". The fast food industry, originally conceived in Southern California during the 1940s, not only altered the eating habits of Americans, but also those in many other countries around the world, including Asian countries (Schlosser, 2001).

Consumption patterns of students are very interesting to review. In a study at Universities in Ankara, in Turkey, research was conducted the aim of which was to determine fast-food consumption habits of university students. There were 401 respondents who were students, of whom 297 were female (74.0%) and 104 were male (26.0%). It was determined that 98.0% of the students go to fast-food restaurants. The percentage of those students who prefer to go to fast-food both during the week and at the weekend was 43.8%. In the sample, the most preferred fast-food was pizza (285 points), and this was followed by chicken doner (278 points) and hamburgers (273 points); while the most preferred beverage was fizzy drinks (57.6%). (Yardimci, Ozdogan, Ozcelik & Surucuoglu, 2012).

Fast food chains have been, innovative and forceful at inviting customers, enticing them away from their kitchens at home and driving them up to fast food centers. Fast

food chains have been highly innovative and forceful at inviting and luring customers out of their kitchens up to fast food centers. Cullen, (1994) in his work, titled "Time, tastes and technology: the economic evolution of eating out" interpreted that the rising Americanization of eating out had tracked a culture of fast food and provided more importance to convenience and eating out behaviour due to certain reasons, and the result was that dramatic changes occurred in the fast food consumption patterns of Asian countries (Shetty, 2002).

Structural changes in the demand for food in Asia have projected that Asian countries have been undergoing transformations in their economies supported by rapid urbanization and this trend would continue in the years to come (Huang & Howarth, 1996). Kara, Kaynak, & Kucukemiroglu, (1995), presented the consumers' perceptions of and preferences for fast-food restaurants in the US and Canada. According to their study, the consumers in the age group of 12 to 24 years look for variety, price, delivery service and location in America, and mainly for price and novelties in Canada. In this study efforts are taken to understand the fast food consumption patterns of university students in Manipal, India.

In a study by Harsh Kumar, Rajdeep Palaha and Amandeep Kaur, (2013), the fast food habits of the hostlers were studied in relation to their consumption and awareness and to study the role of their parents and advertisements in prompting them to eat fast foods. Although, there are trend changes and their impacts are on whole societies, whether they belongs to lower, middle classes and/or elite classes, they exist. Hostel life for students for example is entirely different from living at home especially in terms of eating habits. So, by keeping this view in mind the study was conducted at the Lovely Professional University hostels to interrogate the consumption patterns and awareness of the hostel students relating to fast food eating.

The study emphasized the ambiguity in the knowledge, awareness and consumption behaviours amongst university students living in hostels. It provided converging evidence of a direct causal link between food advertising, the parents' roles and behavioral pattern of the hostel students relating to fast food consumption. The study was conducted during the October-November 2011 at the Lovely Professional University hostels. At present 18,000 students resided in the university hostels according to information obtained from the university authority. A total of 10.06% of the total samples i.e. 1811 students were targeted and non-parametric test (chi-square) was applied to check the goodness of fit, at a 95% level of significance. The survey provided converging evidence of a direct causal link between food advertising, parents' roles and behavioural patterns of hostel dwellers relating to fast food consumption. Understanding the hostel dwellers eating attitudes and behaviour is important in terms of their health which clearly shows that the adoption of a fast food consumption culture among university hostel dwellers at Lovely Professional University is a common feature. The study signified the direct ambiguity in the knowledge, awareness and prudent consumption behavior amongst university hostel dwellers.

Manipal University and the city

Manipal University is synonymous with excellence in higher education. Over 28 000 students from 57 different nations live, learn and play in the sprawling University town, nestled on a plateau in Karnataka's Udupi district. It also has nearly 2500 faculty and almost 10000 other support and service staff, who cater to the various professional institutions in health sciences, engineering, management, communication and humanities which dot the Wi-Fi-enabled campus.

The University has off-campuses in Mangalore and Bangalore, and off-shore

campuses in Dubai (UAE) and Melaka (Malaysia). The Mangalore campus offers medical, dental, and nursing programs. The Bangalore Campus offers programs in Regenerative Medicine. The Dubai campus offers programs in engineering, management and architecture, and the Melaka campus offers programs in medicine and dentistry. Manipal is a university town located in the state of Karnataka in India. It is a suburb within Udupi city and is administered by Udupi City Municipality. It is located in the rocky hinterland of the Malabar Coast of south west India, about 8 km (5.0 mi) east the Arabian Sea. From its location on a plateau, it commands a view of the Arabian Sea to the west and the Western Ghats range to the east. Manipal Group of Institutions alone attract over two hundred-thousand students every year

Methodology

The study was carried out in Manipal which has a pool of 25 000 students from across the world. A carefully piloted self-

administered questionnaire was used as a survey tool and it consisted of thirteen close ended questions with three on demographics and rest on consumption patterns. A total sample size of 150 students (30 students from each of five disciplines, namely Engineering, Medical, Pharmacy, Hotel Management and Management) in the University premises were expected, but only 109 respondents filled in the questionnaire out of which 105 were taken into consideration for analysis. Four were discarded due to human error

The questionnaires were physically distributed using a Convenience Sampling method. Finally, data was gathered and analyzed using the statistical tool, IBM SPSS V 16.0 and the analysis included a descriptive analysis, cross tabs and T- test for equality of means.

Analysis and Outcomes

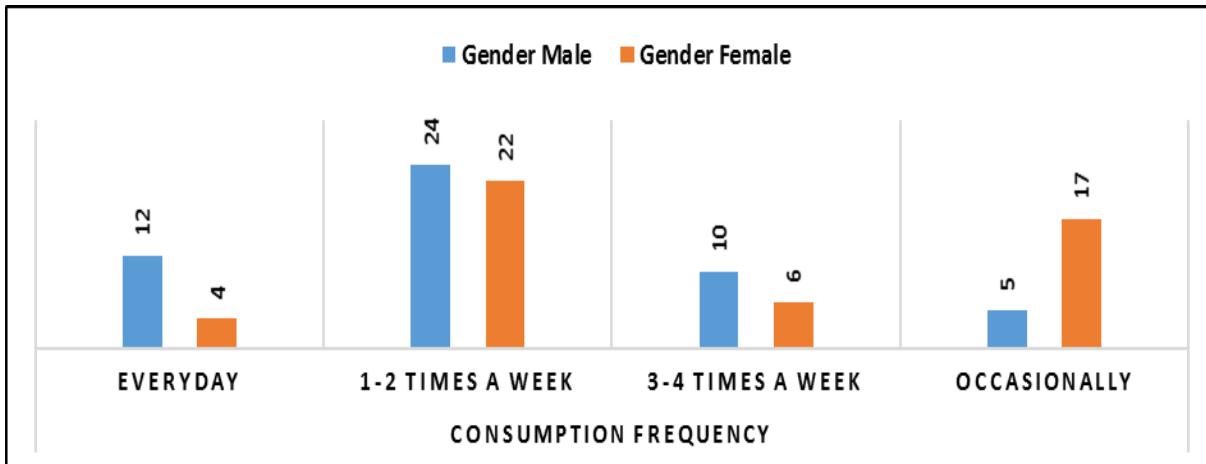
Figure 1 Demographics

Demographics of respondents	(%)	Faculties and courses attended	(%)
Age			
17-19	21	Medical	28
20-24	66	Engineering	21
25-29	9	Pharmacy	18
30-35	4	Management and Commerce	10
		Hotel Management	23
Gender			
Male	51		
Female	49		

Inference: from Figure 1, it is observed that the majority of participants (66%) were from the age group of 20-24 years followed by 17-19 years of age (21%). Furthermore, as

far as educational disciplines is concerned, the majority were surprisingly from Medical faculties (28%) followed by Engineering (21%) students.

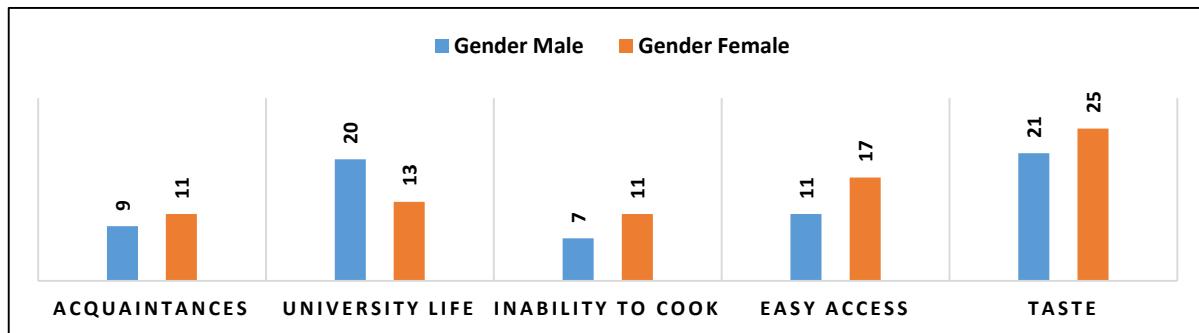
Figure 2 Consumption frequency vs. Gender



Inference: from Figure 2, it can be observed that male as well as female participants tend to eat out at fast food outlets 1-2 times a week the with next major

group being male participants going out almost every day and female participants going to fast food outlets only occasionally.

Figure 3 Influencing Factor vs. Gender



Inference: from the exhibit 5.3, it can be observed that male participants have given taste, university life and easy access as the influencing factors whereas the female participants have given taste, easy access and their inability to cook a meal as influencing factors to partake of fast foods.

From the Figure 4 which follows, it can be observed that, male participants prefer fizzy drinks, fresh juice and milk shakes as beverage and females prefer fresh juice, coffee and mocktails and these especially on weekends while out with friends.

Figure 4 Preferred drink vs. Gender

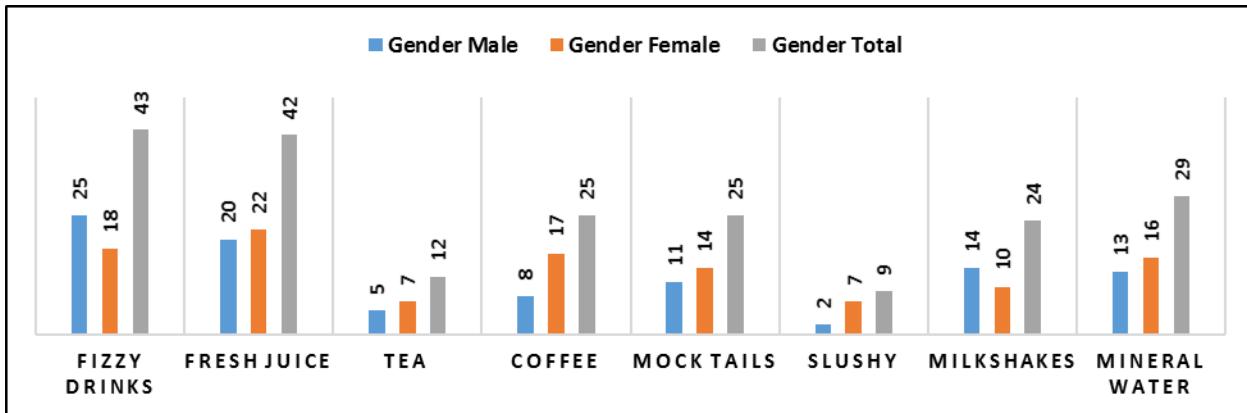
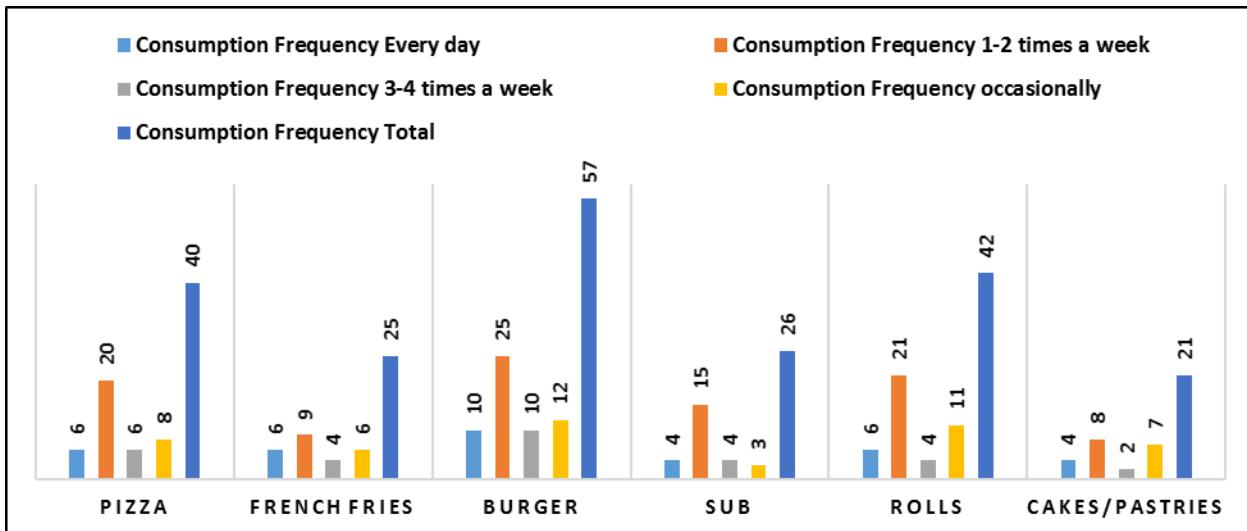


Figure 5 Type of food vs. Consumption frequency



Inference: from the exhibit 5.5, it can be learned that, participants prefer Burger most followed by rolls, Pizza and French fries and cakes and pastries with majority participants, going to a fast food outlet 1-2 times a week followed by 3-4 times a week and for some it is a case of visits for daily consumption.

From Figure 6, it can be learned that, participants who spend ₹ 100 - ₹ 200 have given more rating to cleanliness and hygiene and taste, who spend ₹ 200 - ₹ 300 have given more rating to taste and ambience, who spend ₹ 300 - ₹ 400 have given more rating to ambience and taste and who spend ₹ 400 - ₹ 500 has given higher rating to ambience and finally ₹ 500

have given higher rating to ambience and hygiene.

Figure 6 amount spend vs. factor of importance in fast food chain

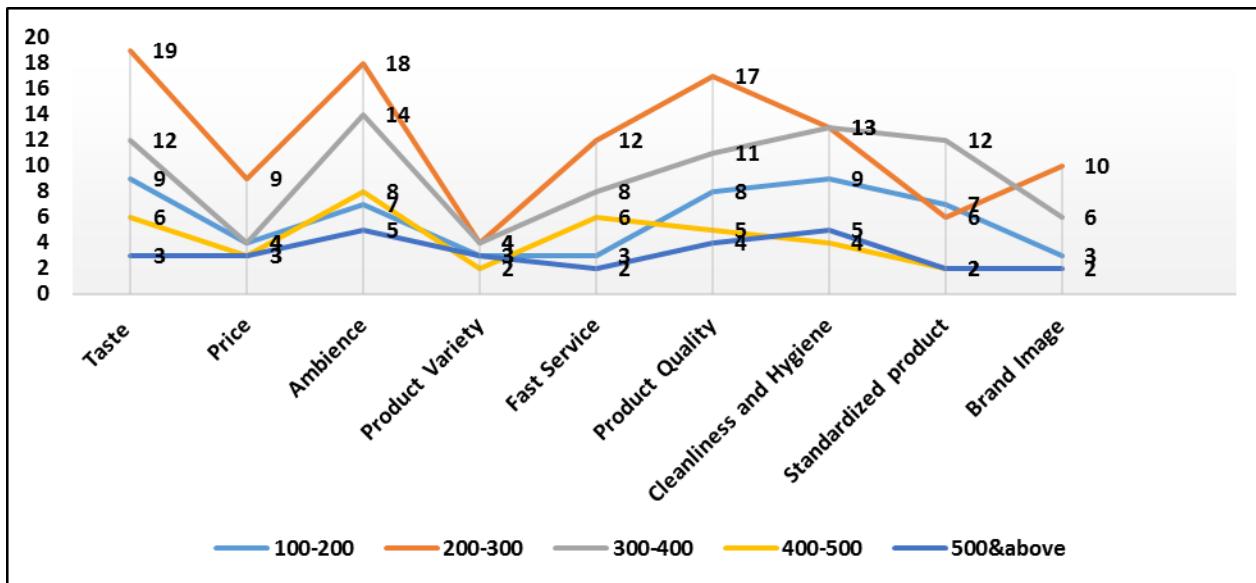


Figure 7 T-test (Gender vs. factors of importance in fast food chain)

T-Test For Equality of Means					
Factors		Mean	St. deviation	Sigma (2 tailed)	
Taste	Male	3.22	1.006	0.463	
	Female	3.35	0.75		
Price	Male	2.92	0.868	0.468	
	Female	3.04	0.763		
Ambience	Male	2.73	0.874	0.265	
	Female	3.45	4.519		
Product Variety	Male	2.92	0.771	0.466	
	Female	3.02	0.559		
Fast Service	Male	3.08	0.913	0.596	
	Female	3.16	0.657		
Product Quality	Male	3.27	0.874	0.648	
	Female	3.35	0.694		
Cleanliness and Hygiene	Male	2.96	1.058	0.023	
	Female	3.39	0.759		
Standardized Product	Male	2.9	1.005	0.594	
	Female	3	0.816		
Brand image	Male	2.52	0.995	0.079	
	Female	2.86	0.89		

N = 100(Male = 51, Female = 49)

Inferences: According to the results of the t-test performed in order to determine whether there was any significant difference between participants with respect to the gender groups and factors of importance for a fast food chain, it was found that female participants deferred when it comes to cleanliness and hygiene factors and also to some extent, with brand image, however not much difference has been found with respect to other factors.

Conclusion

Factors such as industrialization, a greater opening up to western culture, advertisement and mass effect of social media, no time for preparing food at home, urbanization and rapid development of the fast food industry, are the main factors which have led to the growth of fast food all over the world. Consumption of fast foods is also increasing day by day. As a result of these factors stated above, the eating habits of teens and children are changing which leads to greater obesity problems and other health related issues in teens and young children. Fast-food outlets are giving rise to both positive and negative effects after entering into the land of big-business. The positive effects are related to increasing job opportunities in a country which also helps in the economic growth of the country and in the development of the country in general. Whereas, the many negative effects relate to well documented public health issues and obesity problem in the youths and children.

College students, those are staying away from home and in hostels, are eating unhealthy food and because of the availability of various food choices around the city, they do not eat healthy food any more. University life, tastes and becoming socialized makes it difficult for the hostel dwellers to eat healthy food. Students prefer mostly to go out with the friends to fast food

restaurant. Results indicates that most of the students are willing to pay between ₹ 200 - ₹ 300 per visit to a fast food restaurant and most of them prefer to go out on weekdays and also on weekends. Burgers, pizzas and rolls are the popular choices among the various fast food items selected regularly by the students of Manipal.

Time, taste, cleanliness, hygiene and money are the main factors which have influenced students to opt for having fast food items. Student's behaviour is changing according to their tastes and preferences among the food items they select. The consumption of fizzy drinks and fresh juices are necessary, according to them, while having fast food items because the majority of the students agreed with the statement that they prefer these drinks. The study confirmed that male students are likely to consume more than the female students and there is amongst them an unwillingness to change their fast food habits. Social media, advertisements, and going out with friends are some of the factors which are tending to increase fast food consumption by the students in Manipal.

Manipal, as a university town, has wide diversity of students from the different corners of the country and also from abroad and these are factors which have allowed fast food consumption to take root. It is not only the meal between the students that is important, but also the resultant social gathering for the students where they enjoy their meals with their friends and colleagues and class mates.

Quick services and a convenient location are also amongst the reasons for the preference for fast food amongst the students. The taste of food is also important to them. Sometimes boredom also leads to the consumption of fast food among the people and later on, it becomes a habitual behaviour of the people rather than simply attending a social event or an enjoyable

night with a friend or two. It becomes important for the students and is in a sense an obligation for students to have meals at the lower price end of the market, because of the limited pocket money and the multiple visits to the fast food outlets. From the previous years there is thus a tremendous increase of fast food industry businesses in the Indian market and it is growing rapidly at

the rate of 30-35% per annum. Top brands like Pizza Hut, KFC, McDonald's and Subway restaurants are the most preferred among the Indians, and these restaurants have made their presence more visible and prominent in the country and there is thus an appreciable and very high growth of this sector in the Indian food market today.

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