

“Factors Influencing Fast-Food Consumption Among Young Consumers”

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ABSTRACT

The fast-food industry has become an important part of the modern food market, particularly among young consumers whose eating habits are influenced by changing lifestyles, convenience, affordability, and social trends. This study examines the key factors influencing fast-food consumption among young consumers and explores how these factors affect their purchasing decisions. The research focuses on variables such as taste preferences, price, convenience, promotional activities, peer influence, brand image, and the growing role of digital food delivery platforms. A descriptive research design was adopted, and data were collected from a sample of young consumers using a structured questionnaire. The findings indicate that convenience, taste, affordability, and easy accessibility are the primary drivers of fast-food consumption, while social media marketing and peer recommendations also play a significant role in shaping consumer preferences. Although respondents acknowledge the health concerns associated with frequent fast-food consumption, these concerns often have a limited impact on their purchasing behaviour due to busy schedules and changing lifestyle patterns. The study concludes that fast-food businesses should balance customer satisfaction with healthier menu options and transparent nutritional information to meet evolving consumer expectations. The findings provide useful insights for restaurant managers, marketers, and policymakers in understanding the purchasing behaviour of young consumers and developing strategies that encourage both business growth and healthier food choices.

Keywords: Fast-food consumption, Young consumers, Consumer behaviour, Purchase decision, Convenience, Food preferences.

INTRODUCTION

The fast-food industry has experienced remarkable growth over the past two decades, becoming one of the most dynamic sectors of the global food service market. Rapid urbanization, increasing disposable income, changing lifestyles, and technological advancements have significantly transformed the eating habits of consumers, particularly among young people. Fast-food outlets offer quick service, affordable prices, attractive menus, and convenient locations, making them a preferred choice for students and young professionals. The increasing popularity of online food delivery applications and digital payment systems has further enhanced the accessibility of fast food, encouraging frequent consumption among younger generations.

Young consumers represent one of the largest customer segments for the fast-food industry. Individuals in the age group of approximately 18 to 30 years are often influenced by busy academic schedules, employment commitments, social gatherings, and exposure to digital marketing. These factors encourage them to choose ready-to-eat meals instead of preparing food at home. Fast-food products such as burgers, pizzas, fried chicken, sandwiches, rolls, and beverages have become a regular part of their dietary habits because they save time and offer a wide variety of choices. The growing presence of international and domestic fast-food brands has also intensified competition, leading companies to introduce innovative menu items, attractive promotional campaigns, and customer loyalty programs aimed at attracting young consumers.

Consumer behaviour plays a significant role in determining the success of fast-food businesses. Purchasing decisions are influenced by several factors, including taste, price, convenience, food quality, service quality, brand reputation,

promotional offers, peer influence, and social media advertising. Young consumers are highly active on digital platforms, where advertisements, influencer promotions, online reviews, and food-related content frequently shape their preferences. Attractive discounts offered through mobile applications and food delivery platforms further motivate repeat purchases. As a result, understanding the behavioural patterns of young consumers has become essential for businesses seeking to maintain a competitive advantage in the fast-food market.

Although fast food provides convenience and satisfies consumer preferences, excessive consumption has raised concerns regarding health and nutrition. Frequent intake of high-calorie, high-fat, and highly processed foods has been associated with various lifestyle-related health issues such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular diseases. Despite increasing awareness of healthy eating habits, many young consumers continue to purchase fast food because of its affordability, convenience, appealing taste, and easy availability. This demonstrates that consumer decisions are often influenced by practical and social considerations rather than health awareness alone.

The expansion of digital technology has also transformed the fast-food industry. Mobile applications, online ordering systems, digital payment options, and food delivery services have made purchasing fast food easier than ever before. Restaurants now use personalized promotions, customer reviews, reward programs, and targeted social media campaigns to influence consumer behaviour. These technological developments have changed not only the way customers purchase food but also the frequency with which they consume fast-food products. Consequently, businesses need a better understanding of the factors that drive consumer preferences in an increasingly digital marketplace.

Several previous studies have examined consumer behaviour in the fast-food sector by focusing on factors such as price, taste, service quality, and brand loyalty. Other researchers have explored the influence of advertising, customer satisfaction, and digital marketing on purchasing decisions. However, consumer preferences continue to evolve due to technological innovation, changing lifestyles, and increasing health consciousness. Furthermore, the relative importance of different influencing factors may vary across regions, cultures, and demographic groups. Therefore, there is a continuing need to examine the factors affecting fast-food consumption among young consumers in the present market environment.

The research gap identified in this study lies in the limited understanding of how multiple factors—including convenience, affordability, taste, peer influence, digital marketing, and health awareness—collectively influence fast-food consumption among young consumers. While earlier studies have often focused on individual determinants, fewer studies have examined these factors together to provide a comprehensive understanding of current consumer behaviour. Moreover, the rapid growth of online food delivery services and social media marketing has created new purchasing patterns that require further academic investigation. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the combined influence of these factors on fast-food consumption among young consumers.

The findings of this research will be valuable for fast-food businesses, restaurant managers, marketing professionals, researchers, and policymakers. Businesses can use the results to develop effective marketing strategies, improve customer satisfaction, introduce healthier menu options, and strengthen customer relationships. At the same time, the study contributes to academic knowledge by providing updated evidence on consumer behaviour in the fast-food industry and supporting future research in marketing and consumer studies.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the major factors influencing fast-food consumption among young consumers.
2. To examine the impact of taste, price, convenience, and food quality on fast-food purchasing decisions.
3. To evaluate the influence of social media, advertising, and peer groups on fast-food consumption.
4. To assess the role of health awareness in shaping the fast-food consumption behaviour of young consumers.
5. To provide suggestions for improving marketing strategies and promoting healthier consumer choices.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the major factors influencing fast-food consumption among young consumers?
2. How do taste, price, and convenience affect their purchasing decisions?
3. What role do social media and peer influence play in fast-food consumption?
4. Does health awareness significantly influence the fast-food consumption behaviour of young consumers?
5. What strategies can fast-food businesses adopt to meet changing consumer expectations while encouraging healthier food choices?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Sarhan et al. (2025) conducted a qualitative study among university students in Saudi Arabia to identify the factors contributing to fast-food consumption. The study found that convenience, taste, affordability, busy academic schedules, and easy accessibility were the primary reasons for frequent fast-food intake. Social gatherings and the availability of food delivery services further increased consumption among young adults. The researchers suggested that health promotion initiatives should focus on changing lifestyle habits rather than only increasing nutritional awareness.

2. Hassan et al. (2025) presented a narrative review on fast-food consumption patterns in Asian low- and middle-income countries. The review highlighted that rapid urbanization, changing lifestyles, aggressive marketing, digital food delivery platforms, and increasing disposable income have significantly influenced fast-food consumption among young consumers. The study concluded that cultural changes and technological advancements have become major drivers of food choice in developing economies.

3. Abu Asab and Barakat (2025) examined fast-food consumption behaviour among consumers in Jordan. Their findings revealed that taste, convenience, brand preference, promotional offers, and social influence significantly affected consumer purchasing decisions. The study also found that younger consumers were more likely to consume fast food regularly due to busy lifestyles and the widespread use of online ordering applications.

4. Parks et al. (2025) conducted a systematic review to investigate how digital food communication influences the eating behaviour of young adults. The review reported that exposure to social media advertising, influencer marketing, and online food content positively influenced food preferences and purchase intentions. The authors concluded that digital marketing has become an important factor affecting food-related decision-making and consumption patterns among young consumers.

5. Faustino de Souza et al. (2025) reviewed research on ultra-processed food consumption among adolescents. The study found that frequent consumption was associated with convenience, taste preferences, peer influence, and extensive exposure to food marketing. The review also emphasized that increasing consumption of processed and fast foods poses significant long-term health risks, highlighting the importance of promoting healthier dietary choices among young people.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The present study adopts a **descriptive research design** to examine the factors influencing fast-food consumption among young consumers. A descriptive research design is appropriate because it helps in describing the characteristics, attitudes, and purchasing behaviour of respondents without manipulating any variables. The study focuses on identifying the major factors that influence young consumers' decisions to purchase and consume fast food, including taste, convenience, price, promotional activities, peer influence, and health awareness. This design enables the researcher to collect factual information and analyse consumer behaviour in a systematic manner.

Population of the Study

The target population for this study consists of **young consumers aged between 18 and 30 years** who regularly consume fast food. The respondents include college students, university students, and young working professionals who are familiar with fast-food products and frequently purchase food from restaurants, cafés, and online food delivery platforms.

Sample Size

A sample of **100 respondents** was selected for the study. The sample size was considered adequate to obtain meaningful information regarding the consumption behaviour of young consumers while allowing effective analysis within the scope of the research.

Sampling Technique

The study uses the **convenience sampling method**, a non-probability sampling technique. Respondents were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate in the survey. This method was chosen because it is economical, time-efficient, and suitable for collecting responses from young consumers in educational institutions, workplaces, shopping areas, and public locations.

Sources of Data

The study is based on both **primary** and **secondary** sources of data.

Primary Data

Primary data were collected directly from respondents using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of both demographic questions and statements related to fast-food consumption behaviour. The questions focused on factors such as taste, price, convenience, food quality, promotional offers, brand image, peer influence, social media advertising, frequency of consumption, and health awareness. Most of the opinion-based questions were measured using a **five-point Likert scale**, ranging from **Strongly Agree** to **Strongly Disagree**.

Secondary Data

Secondary data were collected from a variety of reliable sources, including research journals, books, published articles, conference papers, government publications, industry reports, and authentic online databases. These sources provided background information on consumer behaviour, fast-food marketing, changing lifestyle patterns, and previous research findings related to fast-food consumption among young consumers.

Data Collection Instrument

A **structured questionnaire** was used as the primary instrument for collecting data. The questionnaire was designed in simple and clear language to ensure that respondents could understand and answer the questions easily. It consisted of two sections:

- **Section A:** Demographic information such as gender, age, educational qualification, occupation, and frequency of fast-food consumption.
- **Section B:** Questions measuring the factors influencing fast-food consumption, including taste, affordability, convenience, promotional activities, peer influence, digital marketing, service quality, and health awareness.

The responses collected through the questionnaire formed the basis for statistical analysis and interpretation.

Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaire was distributed to the selected respondents through both **online and offline modes**. Online responses were collected using digital survey forms, while printed questionnaires were distributed to students and young professionals. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, and participation was entirely voluntary. Confidentiality of the information provided by respondents was maintained throughout the research process.

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were organized, classified, coded, and entered into statistical software for analysis. The following statistical tools were used:

- **Percentage Analysis** to summarize demographic characteristics and response patterns.
- **Frequency Distribution** to present the number of respondents under different categories.
- **Mean Analysis** to identify the importance of various influencing factors.
- **Chi-Square Test** to examine the association between demographic variables and fast-food consumption behaviour.
- **Correlation Analysis** to determine the relationship between selected influencing factors such as convenience, price, taste, and purchase behaviour.

The results were presented using tables and interpreted to achieve the objectives of the study.

Scope of the Study

The study focuses on identifying the major factors influencing fast-food consumption among young consumers aged 18–30 years. It examines how economic, social, psychological, and marketing-related factors affect purchasing behaviour. The findings are expected to help restaurant managers, marketers, researchers, and policymakers better understand consumer preferences and formulate effective business and health-related strategies.

Limitations of the Study

The study has certain limitations. It is based on a sample of only **100 respondents**, which may not fully represent the entire population of young consumers. The use of convenience sampling limits the generalization of the findings. The study relies on self-reported responses, which may be influenced by personal opinions and individual perceptions. In addition, the research is conducted within a limited time frame and geographical area, and therefore the findings should be interpreted within these constraints.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The data collected from **100 young consumers** were analysed using percentage analysis. The findings are presented below with suitable interpretations.

Table 1: Gender of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	56	56
Female	44	44
Total	100	100

Interpretation:

Out of 100 respondents, 56% are male and 44% are female. This indicates that both genders are adequately represented in the study.

Table 2: Age of the Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18–20 years	24	24
21–23 years	39	39

24–26 years	22	22
27–30 years	15	15
Total	100	100

Interpretation:

The majority (39%) of respondents belong to the 21–23 years age group, followed by 24% in the 18–20 years category. This shows that fast-food consumption is highest among college-age youth.

Table 3: Frequency of Fast-Food Consumption

Frequency	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Daily	16	16
2–3 times a week	42	42
Once a week	28	28
Occasionally	14	14
Total	100	100

Interpretation:

Most respondents (42%) consume fast food two to three times a week, indicating that fast food is a regular part of their eating habits.

Table 4: Main Reason for Choosing Fast Food

Reason	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Taste	34	34
Convenience	28	28
Affordable Price	18	18
Variety of Menu	12	12
Social Influence	8	8
Total	100	100

Interpretation:

Taste is the most influential factor (34%) encouraging young consumers to purchase fast food, followed by convenience (28%).

Table 5: Influence of Social Media on Fast-Food Purchase

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	26	26
Agree	38	38
Neutral	18	18
Disagree	12	12
Strongly Disagree	6	6

Total	100	100
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Interpretation:

A total of 64% of respondents either agree or strongly agree that social media advertisements influence their fast-food purchasing decisions.

Table 6: Importance of Price in Purchasing Fast Food

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	24	24
Agree	41	41
Neutral	15	15
Disagree	13	13
Strongly Disagree	7	7
Total	100	100

Interpretation:

About 65% of respondents consider price an important factor while purchasing fast food, showing that affordability significantly affects buying behaviour.

Table 7: Health Awareness and Fast-Food Consumption

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	19	19
Agree	31	31
Neutral	20	20
Disagree	21	21
Strongly Disagree	9	9
Total	100	100

Interpretation:

Half of the respondents (50%) agree that health awareness influences their fast-food consumption, while the remaining respondents are either neutral or disagree, indicating mixed perceptions regarding healthy eating.

Table 8: Satisfaction with Fast-Food Quality

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Highly Satisfied	22	22
Satisfied	48	48
Neutral	17	17
Dissatisfied	9	9
Highly Dissatisfied	4	4
Total	100	100

Interpretation:

The majority of respondents (70%) are satisfied or highly satisfied with the quality of fast food available, indicating a positive perception of product quality.

Table 9: Preferred Mode of Purchasing Fast Food

Purchase Mode	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Dine-in	24	24
Takeaway	21	21
Online Food Delivery Apps	55	55
Total	100	100

Interpretation:

More than half of the respondents (55%) prefer ordering fast food through online delivery applications, reflecting the increasing popularity of digital food ordering among young consumers.

Table 10: Overall Factor Influencing Fast-Food Consumption

Factor	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Taste	30	30
Convenience	25	25
Price	18	18
Social Media	12	12
Peer Influence	9	9
Health Considerations	6	6
Total	100	100

Interpretation:

Taste is identified as the most significant factor (30%) influencing fast-food consumption, followed by convenience (25%) and price (18%). Health considerations have the least influence on purchasing decisions, indicating that young consumers prioritize enjoyment and convenience over nutritional concerns.

Correlation Analysis**Objective**

To examine the relationship between convenience and frequency of fast-food consumption among young consumers.

Hypotheses

- H_0 : There is no significant relationship between convenience and fast-food consumption.
- H_1 : There is a significant positive relationship between convenience and fast-food consumption.

Table 11: Correlation between Convenience and Fast-Food Consumption

Variables	Pearson Correlation (r)	Significance (p-value)	Interpretation
Convenience and Fast-Food Consumption	0.684	0.000	Significant Positive Correlation

Interpretation

The Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.684$) indicates a moderately strong positive relationship between convenience and fast-food consumption. The p-value (0.000) is less than the significance level of 0.05, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and it is concluded that convenience significantly influences the frequency of fast-food consumption among young consumers.

Chi-Square Test

Objective

To determine whether there is a significant association between Gender and Frequency of Fast-Food Consumption.

Hypotheses

- H_0 : There is no significant association between gender and frequency of fast-food consumption.
- H_1 : There is a significant association between gender and frequency of fast-food consumption.

Table 12: Chi-Square Test Result

Test	Value
Chi-Square (χ^2)	10.82
Degrees of Freedom (df)	3
Significance (p-value)	0.013

Decision

Since the p-value (0.013) is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Interpretation

The Chi-Square test indicates a significant association between gender and the frequency of fast-food consumption among young consumers. This suggests that consumption frequency differs between male and female respondents. Therefore, gender has a statistically significant influence on the pattern of fast-food consumption in the selected sample.

Summary of Statistical Analysis

Statistical Test	Variables	Result	Decision
Pearson Correlation	Convenience & Fast-Food Consumption	$r = 0.684$, $p = 0.000$	Significant Positive Relationship
Chi-Square Test	Gender & Frequency of Fast-Food Consumption	$\chi^2 = 10.82$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.013$	Significant Association

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study examined the factors influencing fast-food consumption among young consumers using responses collected from 100 participants. The findings indicate that fast food has become a regular part of the lifestyle of young consumers, mainly because of its convenience, taste, affordability, and easy availability. The majority of respondents reported consuming fast food at least once or twice a week, reflecting the growing demand for quick-service restaurants and online food delivery services.

Among the various factors examined, **taste** emerged as the most influential factor affecting fast-food consumption. Respondents preferred fast food because of its attractive flavours, variety of menu options, and overall eating

experience. **Convenience** ranked as the second most important factor, indicating that busy academic and professional schedules encourage young consumers to choose ready-to-eat meals instead of preparing food at home. **Price** also had a significant influence, suggesting that affordable meal combinations and promotional offers attract young customers with limited budgets.

The study further revealed that **social media marketing and online food delivery applications** have a considerable impact on purchasing behaviour. A majority of respondents agreed that advertisements, influencer promotions, discounts, and online reviews encourage them to purchase fast food more frequently. This finding supports recent studies that emphasize the growing importance of digital marketing in influencing consumer behaviour. The increasing use of smartphones and food delivery platforms has made fast food more accessible, resulting in higher purchase frequency among young consumers.

Although respondents were aware of the health risks associated with excessive fast-food consumption, health concerns were not considered the primary factor influencing their purchasing decisions. Many participants acknowledged that convenience and taste often outweighed nutritional considerations. This observation is consistent with previous research, which reported that lifestyle pressures frequently influence food choices despite increasing awareness of healthy eating habits.

The findings are largely consistent with earlier studies that identified taste, convenience, affordability, and promotional activities as the major determinants of fast-food consumption. However, this study also highlights the growing influence of digital platforms, including food delivery applications and social media marketing, which have become more prominent in recent years. The results suggest that technological advancements have significantly changed the purchasing behaviour of young consumers compared to traditional buying patterns.

The practical implications of this study are valuable for restaurant owners, marketing professionals, and policymakers. Fast-food businesses should continue to improve food quality, maintain reasonable prices, and use responsible digital marketing strategies to attract customers. At the same time, restaurants can introduce healthier menu alternatives, provide transparent nutritional information, and promote balanced meal options to encourage healthier eating habits. Educational institutions and public health authorities may also conduct awareness programmes to educate young consumers about maintaining a balanced diet while making informed food choices.

Overall, the study demonstrates that fast-food consumption among young consumers is influenced by a combination of personal preferences, economic factors, technological developments, and social influences. Understanding these factors will help businesses design effective marketing strategies while supporting initiatives that encourage healthier food consumption.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

The study concludes that fast-food consumption among young consumers is influenced by several interrelated factors, including taste, convenience, affordability, promotional activities, social media influence, and accessibility. Among these, taste and convenience were identified as the strongest determinants of purchasing behaviour, followed by price. The findings also indicate that digital marketing and online food delivery platforms have significantly changed consumer purchasing patterns by making fast food more accessible and attractive.

Although most respondents were aware of the possible health risks associated with frequent fast-food consumption, health awareness alone was not sufficient to reduce consumption. Busy lifestyles, changing food preferences, and attractive promotional offers continue to encourage young consumers to purchase fast food regularly. Therefore, consumer behaviour is influenced by a combination of economic, psychological, social, and technological factors rather than by health considerations alone.

The study contributes to a better understanding of the factors affecting fast-food consumption and provides useful information for researchers, marketers, restaurant managers, and policymakers interested in consumer behaviour and food marketing.

Suggestions

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are recommended:

1. Fast-food restaurants should introduce healthier menu options without compromising taste and quality.
2. Businesses should provide clear nutritional information to help consumers make informed food choices.
3. Marketing campaigns should promote responsible consumption while maintaining customer engagement through digital platforms.
4. Educational institutions and health agencies should organize awareness programmes highlighting the importance of balanced diets and healthy eating habits.
5. Food delivery platforms should encourage healthier meal combinations and provide nutritional details alongside menu items.
6. Restaurants should continue improving service quality, hygiene, and customer satisfaction to strengthen long-term customer loyalty.

Limitations of the Study

- The study is limited to a sample of 100 respondents.
- Convenience sampling was used; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to the entire population.
- The research relies on respondents' opinions, which may involve personal bias.
- The study was conducted within a limited geographical area and time period.

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