

Profiling of Malaysian Young Consumers Towards Fast Food Consumptions

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ABSTRACT

The rampant growth of fast food industry has created an extravagance trend of fast food consumption, especially for young and active university student. This study is intended to profiling the young consumers which identify the characteristic, timing and frequency, reason for eating and also their decision making of the university student towards fast food consumption. The discussion also includes attributes and position of fast food restaurants that influence young consumer's choices. The findings are supported by a research survey using a convenience sampling technique that is being carried out in one of local university in Kelantan. A total of 215 questionnaires were distributed to the students in Universiti Teknologi MARA (Kelantan) and the data obtained were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 19.0. This finding reveals the critical characteristic of young consumer that eventually helps the fast food provider to understand the profile of their existing and potential customer. Results show this young consumer eats fast food when even they like and choose the simplest menu to occupy their appetite and budget. This information later on can be used to influence young consumer buying patterns for the fast food. Thus, at the same time can improve the variation of fast food product offered by the fast food provider. The planning for future research will then be focus in-depth on explaining the trend of fast food consumption among the university student.

KEYWORDS: Fast Food Product, Consumption, University Student, Young Consumer, Consumer's Preferences.

INTRODUCTION

International fast food consumption is increasing in popularity and is more global than ever before. Furthermore, customers form perceptions of fast food restaurants, which often differ from country to country. The rapid growth of fast food industry has created an extravagance trend of fast food consumption, especially for young and active university student. With a hectic life around the clock, university student mostly prefers food that is expressive or quick meal to accommodate their gastronomic need. In [6] highlight that fast food is the world's fastest growing food type and it is quick, reasonably priced and readily available substitutes to home cooked food. Cooking is not an option for the student if they stay in college or hostel even if they stay outside the college, most of the students prefer to eat at the stall or restaurant. It shows that fast food has become a significant symbol for the modern culture as it satisfies people in a relatively short time [14]. Different menus of fast food are available to choose from making this fast food become popular among teenagers who are at a stage in life in which they experience increased autonomy, both in terms of availability of meals outside the home and discretionary income [5, 8]. A study done by [12] indicates popular fast foods consumed are hamburger types, french fries, fried chicken, doner, pizza, cold sandwiches and so forth. In [7, 11] explaining multiple factors that may influence consumption and purchasing decisions and studies among teenagers like that taste preference, parental modelling, convenience, food availability and value. It has been recognized that college students are major customers of the fast food industry [15]. The focus of attention was placed on a specific fast food market: young consumer which is university students. Hence, this research is being conducted as it is aimed to investigate and identify the characteristic and preferences of these young consumers towards fast food restaurants and to further understand the relevant criteria that are used by them to make decisions. Therefore, the findings of such study have a very important implication for developing need-oriented type marketing strategies and targeting promotional efforts, so as to penetrate new markets as well as re-examining the current market needs [16]. This finding will actually help the fast food provider to understand the critical characteristic of this young consumer that later on can be used to influence their buying pattern for the fast food. Thus, at the same time can improve selection of fast food product offered by the fast food provider.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Fast Food

In [3] defined fast food as food and drinks for immediate consumption either on the premises or for consumption elsewhere. Teenagers in this study refer to the student are the group of people that likely consume any types of food that can satisfy their need which make fast food the first alternative in their list. However, there is a study by [6] reported that the young Indian consumer has passion for visiting fast food outlets for fun and change but home food is their first choice. Students seem to eat fast food at any time they want to eat due to active life. According to [4] stated that limited time and enjoy the taste are two reasons people chooses fast food.

Fast Food Industry in Malaysia

Evolution of fast food industry has produced various fast food provider or franchisor that comes out with a variety of fast food menu to suit consumer's preferences. In Malaysia, approximately there are 6000 franchise outlets of food and beverages dominate the market that valued at \$493 million (RM1.8 billion). The American franchises like Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), McDonalds, A & W, Burger King, Subway, Starbucks, Dunkin Donuts, Pizza Hut, Domino Pizza, Shakeys Pizza, Kenny Rogers Roasters, Haagen Dazs, Swensons, Famous Amos, Auntie Anne's and the Outback Steak House have been leading the fast food and restaurant industry in our country.

Factors That Influence Buying Fast Food

There are various factors underlying for the student to buy fast food. A study by [13] found that the main attributes towards fast food such as taste, cleanliness, convenience, speed and predictability were ranked high in the choice of a fast food item. On the other hand, attributes such as healthiness, provision of choice and friendly staff were relevant to consumers when they were thinking of alternative outlets. Another study by [9] found that customers are looking beyond than the physical product alone. Basically, the customers will form their own value and expectation on the various market offerings. Therefore, they expect and demand more from the food supply. Among the things demanded by the consumer are varieties of food, qualities, nutritious, safe foods and at a reasonable cost.

In [17] explained on several description of food quality such as freshness, presentation, taste and innovative food. It applied the quality attributes in a way it assesses the importance of freshness of the product, food tastier, innovation in food and how the food supplier presented the food that can change preference and purchasing behavior of the consumers towards the food on sale. Based on present conducted by [13], it found fourteen attributes include price, quality, freshness, the taste, local product vs international product, food safety, attractiveness packaging, "halal" status, healthy food, the outlet within vicinity, easy to cook, advertisement, influence of friends versus family member and the influence of preferred brand have been chosen as the major influential factors for fast food purchasing and consumption in regard of the Malaysian culture and socio-economic perspective.

DATA AND METHODS

Data were collected by research team consist of student from UiTM (Kelantan). Using the non-probability sampling technique, a total of 215 respondents were selected as a sample of the study. The respondents come from various programs in order to make a better mixture of different backgrounds between respondents to increase the generalization of the result. The respondents were approached in the class to complete the survey questionnaire. Data collection was performed between April and May 2015. The questionnaire consists of twenty five questions which divided into five sections which consist of scale questions and categorical questions. Data obtained in the study were analyzed by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 19.0 for the Windows package program. Data were tabulated with absolute values and percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographics

Table 1 summarizes the demographics of the respondents. 68.4% of the respondents were female, while 31.6% were male. In terms of age, it shows that respondents were aged 20-21 years (57.7%), followed by 18-19 years (38.1%). As has been mentioned in the methodology section, the respondents are students from various faculties in UiTM Kelantan. It was found that majority of the students are from business faculty which represent 67.9% of total respondents from Program BM111 (Diploma in Business Studies), while students from AM110 (Diploma in Public Administration) is the lowest (3.7%). In terms of student's semester, most of the students currently in semester 4

(47.4%). Over half of these students stay in the collage (56.3%) which provided by the university and 41.4% of respondents stay outside or rent a house. One question about pocket money is being asked. It reveals that student's pocket money was around RM101-200 (34.9%) is the highest and second is below RM100 (30.7%).

Table 1: Demographics

Variables		N = 215	
		Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	68	31.6
	Female	147	68.4
Age	18-19 years	82	38.1
	20-21 years	124	57.7
	22-23 years	8	3.7
	Above 23 years	1	0.5
Program	BM111	146	67.9
	AD112	18	8.4
	BM119	28	13.0
	AM110	8	3.7
	AD118	15	7.0
Semester	Part 2	88	40.9
	Part 3	1	0.5
	Part 4	102	47.4
	Part 5	15	7.0
	Part 6	7	3.3
	Part 7	2	0.9
Place of living	College	121	56.3
	Non resident	89	41.4
	With family	5	2.3
Pocket money	Below RM100	66	30.7
	RM101-RM200	75	34.9
	RM201-RM300	41	19.1
	Above RM301	33	15.3

Timing of Eating Fast Food

Table 2: Timing of eating fast food

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Lunch	16	7.4
	Sneak	5	2.3
	Dinner	21	9.8
	Anytime when I feel like to eat fast food	173	80.5
	Total	215	100.0

Respondents were asked about the timing of eating the fast food whether they like to have it during lunch, sneak, dinner or anytime when they feel like to eat fast food. Based on Table 2, a significant proportion of respondents (80.5%) chose to buy fast food at anytime when they feel like to have it. A further (9.8%) of respondents prefer it for dinner and (7.4%) during lunch. The remaining (2.3%) chose for sneak. This shows that with a hectic life around the clock, university student mostly prefers food that is expressive or quick meal to accommodate their gastronomic need.

Frequency of Eating Fast Food

Frequency of eating fast food was shown in Table 3. Respondents were generally like to eat 1-2 times a month for both gender female (36.1%) and male (50%). A further (17.6%) for male and (27.2%) for female like to eat 1-2 times a week., while (16.2%) male and (27.2%) female like to eat once a month. About (10.3%) male and (2.7%) female rarely eat the fast food, the remaining (5.9%) male and (6.8%) female eat fast food more than 3 times a week. Obviously, student's spending habits of the fast food have an effect on their pocket money availability. This trend must be improved so that the spending habit on unnecessary expenses can be overcome.

Table 3: Frequency of eating fast food

Gender		Frequency					Total
		rare	once a month	1-2 times a month	1-2 times a week	more than 3 times a week	
Male	Count	7	11	34	12	4	68
	% Gender	10.3%	16.2%	50.0%	17.6%	5.9%	100%
Female	Count	4	40	53	40	10	147
	% Gender	2.7%	27.2%	36.1%	27.2%	6.8%	100%

Reason for Choosing Fast Food

Respondents were asked about the reason for eating fast food product. From Table 4, it shows that a significant proportion of respondents (48.4%) choose a fast food product because of save time due to simple meal or snack. As suggested by [2], a busier (with study) lifestyle and a quick meal solution were the other reasons for the consumers to be dependent on fast food as their regular meals house. A further (15.8%) choose fast food for fun while (15.8%) choose fast food during friends outing and (11.2%) during a family outing. Only (4.2%) of respondents choose fast food for changes and the remaining (3.7%) chooses it when there is no other food in stock.

Table 4: Reason for eating fast food

Reason	Frequency	Percent (%)
Save time because simple meal or snack	104	48.4
For changes	9	4.2
For fun	36	16.7
Family outing	24	11.2
Friends outing	34	15.8
No other food in stock	8	3.7
Total	215	100.0

Individuals Influencing Decision

Respondents were asked about the influence of choosing the fast food products and the highest percentage of (70.2%) goes to 'myself' which they are highly influenced by their appetite to eat. Another (20%) of respondents were influenced by their friends and the remaining (4.2%) and (5.6%) influenced by spouse/partner or lover and others respectively.

Table 5: Individual's influencing decision to choose fast food

Valid		Frequency	Percent
	Myself	151	70.2
	Spouse/partner or lover	9	4.2
	Friends	43	20.0
	Others	12	5.6
	Total	215	100.0

Factors Influence the Choice of Fast Food Restaurant

Table 6: Factors influence the choice of fast food restaurant

	SA	%	A	%	N	%	NA	%	SNA	%
Cheap price	26	12.1	50	23.3	102	47.4	27	12.6	10	4.7
Hygiene	3	1.4	39	18.1	117	54.4	43	20.0	13	6.0
Freshness	11	5.1	35	16.3	94	43.7	63	29.3	12	5.6
Suit with taste	36	16.7	69	32.1	75	34.9	30	14.0	5	2.3
Halal status	32	14.9	70	32.6	82	38.1	24	11.2	7	3.3
Healthy	8	3.7	13	6.0	78	36.3	77	35.8	39	18.1
Fast service	47	21.9	86	40.0	65	30.2	11	5.1	6	2.8
Location is near	36	16.7	72	33.5	72	33.5	25	11.6	10	4.7
Attractive advertisement	32	14.9	58	27.0	90	41.9	29	13.5	6	2.8
Brand name	17	7.9	60	27.9	90	41.9	37	17.2	11	5.1
Variety of menus	38	17.7	89	41.4	62	28.8	20	9.3	6	2.8
Food presentation	31	14.4	70	32.6	85	39.5	21	9.8	8	3.7

Key: SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, NA=Not Agree, SNA=Strongly Not Agree

The core of the survey was made up of 12 evaluation statements aimed at determining the factors that influenced the choice of fast food outlet amongst consumers. Table 6 summarizes the frequencies of respondents recorded during data generation. Respondents were asked to respond to a series of statements and indicate on the 5-point scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree to what extent they agreed with each statement.

Price as a Factor

Respondents were asked where their choice of fast food was as a result of the cheap price. A significant proportion of respondents (12.1%), strongly agreed that their choice of fast food outlet was influenced by the cheap price that offered. A further (23.3%) of respondents agreed with the statement, while 47.4%, 12.6% and 4.7% of respondents were neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. The result suggests that cheap price is the significant factor for university student.

Hygiene as a Factor

Majority of respondents (54.4%) were neutral to the statement that they chose the fast food because the food is hygienic. Significantly, 20% and 6.0 % of respondents strongly disagree and disagree respectively that their choice is influenced by the food being hygienic. While, 1.4% and 18.1% of respondents strongly agreed and agreed with the statement respectively. The results indicate that hygiene is not the strong factor that influenced respondents to choose the fast food product.

Freshness as a Factor

Majority of respondents (43.7%) were neutral to the statement that they prefer to purchase fast food because of the food freshness. 29.3% of respondents disagree and another 5.6% of respondents strongly disagree with the statement. Meanwhile, 5.1% and 16.3% strongly agreed and agreed respectively with the statement. The results indicate that while the majority of respondents had no opinion regarding the freshness of the food influence the buying factor, majority of the respondents disagree and strongly disagree with the statement which suggesting that freshness is not a significant factor.

Suit With Taste as a Factor

Respondents were asked whether their choice of fast food outlet was a result of the fast food tasting better than home-cooked food. The bulk of respondent (34.9%) were neutral to the statement. 16.7% and 32.1% strongly agreed and agreed with the statement while, 14% and 2.3% strongly disagree and disagree respectively with the statement that they prefer to purchase fast food because the food suit to their taste. The results suggest that suite with taste is not a critical factor influencing the choice of university students in selecting the fast food franchise.

Halal Status as a Factor

Majority of respondents (38.1%) were neutral towards the halal status of the fast food products that they chose. 14.9% and 32.6% of respondents strongly agreed and agreed of choosing fast food products based on the halal status of the products. Meanwhile, 11.2% and 3.3% strongly disagree and disagree with the statement. The result indicates that while the majority of respondents had no opinion regarding the halal status, majority of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed with the statement which suggesting that halal status is a significant factor.

Healthy as a Factor

36.3 % of respondents neutral about the statement they chose fast food because it is good for health. 35.8% disagree and 18.1% strongly disagree with the statement. Only 3.7% strongly agree while, another 6.0% agree that the fast food is good for health. The result suggests that healthy of the product is not a significant factor that influence the respondents to choose fast food products.

Fast Service as a Factor

Majority of respondents (40%) agreed that they chose fast food products because of the fast speed of services. Another 21.9% strongly agree with the statement. 30.2% of respondents neutral about the statements while 5.1% and 2.8% disagree and strongly disagree about the statement. The result suggests that fast service is a significant factor for respondent in choosing the fast food franchise.

Location as a Factor

16.7% and 33.5% of respondents strongly agree and agree respectively. They chose fast food because of outlet location is near to their place of living. 33.5% of respondents neutral about the statement, while 11.6% and 4.7%

disagree and strongly disagree with the statement. The result suggests that location is a significant factor for respondents to choose the fast food product.

Advertisement as a Factor

Majority of the respondents (41.9%) neutral about the statement they chose fast food because the advertising is attractive. 14.9% strongly agree and another 27% agree with the statement. Only 13.5% and 2.8% disagree and strongly disagree with the statement respectively. The result indicates that while the majority of respondents had no opinion regarding the advertisement influencing their choice, the majority of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed with the statement which suggesting that advertisement is a significant factor.

Brand Name as a Factor

41.9% of respondents neutral about the statement they purchase fast food because they believe in the fast food brand. 27.9% of respondents agree and another 7.9% strongly agree with the statement. Only 17.2% and 5.1% disagree and strongly disagree about the statement. The result indicates that while the majority of respondents had no opinion regarding the brand name of the fast food franchise influencing their choice, majority of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed with the statement which suggesting that brand name is a significant factor.

Menu Variety as a Factor

The variety of the menu selection available is another factor explored by the survey. The bulk of respondents (41.4%) agree with the statement that their choice of the fast food product was influenced by the variety of the menu offered. 17.7% were strongly agreed with 28.8%, 9.3% and 2.8% neutral, disagree and strongly disagree with the statement. The result suggests that menu variety is a significant factor.

Food Presentation as a Factor

Majority of the respondents (39.5%) were neutral with the statement that they prefer to purchase fast food because of the food presentation is very attractive. Meanwhile, 14.4% and 32.6% of the respondents strongly agree and agree with the statement respectively. 9.8% and 3.7% of respondents disagree and strongly disagree with the statement. The result indicates that while the majority of respondents had no opinion regarding the food presentation influencing their choice, majority of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed with the statement which suggesting that food presentation is a significant factor.

Rating of Fast Food Restaurant

Table 7 displays the rating of fast food restaurant. KFC got the highest rate by the respondents which is 61.9%, followed by Mc Donald 17.2%, Pizza Hut 6.5%, Dominos Pizza with 5.6%. Ed'dee and Kenny Roger have a same percentage 2.3% and the lowest are from three fast food providers consist of Marry brown, Burger King and Eddle Fried Chicken which also have same percentage 1.4%. KFC has the highest rate due to the location itself that situated in the center of Machang's town. The distance between UiTM and Machang's town is around 10 kilometers, meanwhile other fast food restaurant situated outside Machang district.

Table 7: Rating of fast food restaurant

			Frequency	Percent
Valid	1	KFC	133	61.9
	2	Mc Donald	37	17.2
	3	Burger King	3	1.4
	4	Dominos Pizza	12	5.6
	5	Pizza Hut	14	6.5
	6	Marry Brown	3	1.4
	7	Ed' Dee	5	2.3
	8	Kenny Rogers	5	2.3
	9	Eddle Fried Chicken	3	1.4
		Total	215	100

Rating of Fast Food Menu

Table 8: Rating of fast food menu

			Frequency	Percent
Valid	1	Fries	57	26.5
	2	Chicken Nugget	16	7.4
	3	Fried Chicken	38	17.7
	4	Pasta	18	8.4
	5	Roasted Chicken	19	8.8
	6	Buns and Bread	10	4.7
	7	Pizza	31	14.4
	8	Burgers	17	7.9
	9	Fish Burger	9	4.2
		Total	215	100

From the analysis, in term of rating of fast food menu in Table 8, it shows that fries become the first ranking with 26.5%, followed by fried chicken 17.7%, pizza 14.4%, roasted chicken 8.8%, pasta 8.4%, burgers 7.9%, chicken nugget 7.4%, buns and bread 4.7% and last ranking is fish burger 4.2%. Fries are dominated in the rating of fast food menu due to the fact that the food itself is quick and easy to be eaten. On top of that, the price of the fries is the cheapest among all the fast food menu and this shows that the student prefers to get something cheap or affordable to eat. This situation again can be relates to the student pocket money availability where they need to spend wisely on their food purchase and other necessary requirement.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, the consumption pattern among young consumers shows a great potential for fast food industry in Malaysia. It is supported due to the busy lifestyle that encouraged them by eating the fast food. The demand of fast food among youngsters is increasing day by day, and therefore the number of 'Quick Service Restaurant' is also increasing in Malaysia. In relation, fries fast foods are more preferable among young consumers, hence KFC became the first choice as priority among all respondents. Study done [1] found that student by like to hang out and sit at the fast food restaurant such as KFC and McDonalds as the places are very comfortable with air-conditioning, comfy chairs and also with internet access Through all, the factors that influence fast food attributes the most are fast service and variety of menus. This is parallel to studied by [10] students like to eat fast food as it is delicious, inexpensive and fast to serve.

This study has its limitation like other empirical studies. Our sample consisted only from one university that may affect the generalizability of the results. Thus, this study can be strengthened by increasing the sample size as the data analysis results and findings may vary substantially when the sample size is increased or decreased. If having more universities' student involvement, it would create a more diffused result and findings. This sort of research is required especially to the food provider to understand the young consumer's preference and behavior towards fast food. Future research can be undertaken to see the life style pattern of university student on the fast food preference and the spending habit of these young generations.

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