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### AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR OF CHILDREN ON FAST FOOD

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### **ABSTRACT**

The potential of fast food market growth in India is tremendous. With a growth in the number of nuclear families, economic growth and increasing per capita income, fast food culture gained prominence in India. This research article aims to identify the consumer behaviour of children on fast food. The current study is mainly concentrated on the leading MNC's branded fast food restaurant located at Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. The researcher has taken 755 respondents as the sample size and empirical research design was adopted. The samples were collected through questionnaire. The tool used for analysing the data is Factor analysis. Based on the analysis and interpretation, it is inferred that the MNC's can offer variance in menu with nutritional choices at affordable price and convenient size (quantity); they can also customize the food as most of the children give importance to taste and favourite dish.

### **KEYWORDS**

Changing lifestyle, Consumption pattern and Fast food industry.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

he rapidly changing pace in our society regarding technology, information processing, had made it possible for children, as well as adolescents, to experience purchasing and consumption at a rate faster than that of their elders. Children today, have huge influence on their parent's purchases. Parents today, have a larger income and a higher education level; there are more single parent families, more liberalization of parent-child relationship, which has resulted into more open negotiation between parent and child rather than relationship regulated by authority and command. As a consequence, children are receiving now days more love and attentions from both parents and have being described as "Little Emperors and Empresses". Children today, in the new era, play an important role in consumer environment. Children have an enormous market potential.

### 1.1 FAST FOOD

Food diversity in India is an implicit characteristic of India's diversified culture consisting of different regions and states within. Traditionally, Indians like to have home-cooked meals – a concept supported religiously as well as individually. However, with times due to increasing awareness and influence of western culture, there is a slight shift in food consumption patterns among urban Indian families. It started with eating outside and moved on to accepting a wide variety of delicacies from world-over. Liberalization of the Indian economy in the early1990s 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 of Indian palate after the multinational fast food players adapted the basic Indian food requirements viz. vegetarian meals and selected non-vegetarian options excluding beef and pork totally from their menu.

### 1.2 FAST FOOD INDUSTRY IN INDIA

According to worldwatch.org, India's fast-food industry is growing by 40 percent a year and generated over a billion dollars in sales in 2013 as per their estimates. Before the entry of multinational fast food outlets, Nirula's was a popular domestic fast food provider for eating-out. Nirula's started with ice-cream parlours and later moved on the range of fast food including burgers, pizzas, sandwiches etc. Wimpy was another fast food provider besides Nirula's in Indian market. Wimpy was the only multinational fast food outlet in India before 1990s.

After the liberalization policy that came in force in 1991, multinational fast food providers have set up their business either jointly with Indian partners or independently. McDonald opened its first outlet in 1995 in New Delhi. It has 50 outlets in North India and 154 in total all over India. In 1995, Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) also entered the Indian market and opened its first outlet in Delhi. In 1996, Domino's set up its base in India. By 2000, Domino's had presence in all the major cities and towns in India. Domino's had grown from one outlet in 1995 to 101 outlets in April 2001. Pizza Hut entered India in June 1996 with its first outlet in Bangalore.

McDonald's, Domino's, Pizza Hut, Pizza Express, Pizza Corner and Nirula's are the most popular and frequently visited fast food outlets. With changing life style and aggressive marketing by fast food outlets, fast food is also becoming popular in small towns; therefore, success of existing fast food outlets and entry of more is inevitable.

### 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- 1. To identify the factors influencing children in the selection of fast food retail outlets.
- 2. To identify the opinion on fast food restaurant and the perception in choosing menu in fast food.
- 3. To offer suggestions to the fast food industry to devise various promotional strategies to increase the customer delight of consumers.

### 3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

With the opening of the Indian economy in food sector, large numbers of international players have entered into this sector and there has been increasing competition for domestic companies. Now a larger number of fast food choices are available before children to choose from. It is imperative to know how all these have changed the food purchase decisions for children. What is their perception about all these changes? What are the major factors that affect their purchasing decisions of children for fast food products in Coimbatore? How they have been socialized to act as consumers? Changes taking place in the socio cultural environment, when, why, how and where children purchase or eat fast food, and finally how children influence the market, especially the fast food industry in Coimbatore?

### 4. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Globalization has influenced the lives of people around the world in numerous ways. With the shrinking of the global marketplace, regional cultures become more dynamic and changes in culture influence consumer behaviour. The Indian fast food industry has witnessed about 40% growth year after year for more

than a decade. MNC giants such as McDonalds, KFC, Pizza Hut, Dominos Pizza and Subway have established their presence in the Indian market since India liberalized its economic policies in the early 1990's. The Indian fast food market is growing at the rate of 30 – 35%,

About 62% of the children like eating fast food .They are a big target segment for the marketers. Due to the changes taking place in the socio cultural environment children's roles in the consumer behaviour process is changing. Thus there is a need to study the children's consumer behaviour, consumption pattern, how they socialise to act as consumers and finally to offer suggestions to the fast food industry to device various promotional strategies to increase the customer delight of consumers.

### 5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The study is limited to Coimbatore District. The size of the sample comparing to the population may be less and it may not represent the whole population
- Since the study is about the behaviour of children, the findings may be valid only for the present time as they might change due to the growth of fast food industry.
- The area of study is limited to Coimbatore District and hence, the result cannot be generalized for other geographical areas.
- Unable to trace bias of the respondents

### 6. RESEARCH DESIGN

This design plays way to systematically solve the research problems. It includes the overall research design, the sampling procedure, data collection method and analysis procedure. In this study Empirical Research Design is used to identify the consumer behaviour of children in the age group of 8 to 16 in Coimbatore District.

The nature of the data is both Primary and Secondary data. The secondary data is collected journals, magazines, text books, and websites to support this study. The primary data is collected through questionnaire and direct personal interviews. The structured questionnaires for finding children consumer behaviour were open ended, multiple choice and ranking questions.

Sample for the study consisted of children in the age group of 8 to 16 years. The total size of the Sample was 755 consisting of children of Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu. Simple random samples are drawn from among children of Coimbatore. Data was collected, when they were in malls, fast food outlets and schools. Questionnaire was handed to them with a request to fill it on the spot.

The tool used for analysing the data is Factor analysis followed by correlation. Further the significance of correlation was tested at the 1% level of significance.

A pilot study was conducted by collecting data from 50 children in the age group of 8 to 16 years using a well structured questionnaire. Reliability analysis was used to determine the extent to which the items in the questionnaire are related to each other, to get an overall index of the repeatability or internal consistency of the scale as a whole, and to identify problem items that should be excluded from the scale. To check the reliability of the questionnaire alpha analysis was used. In this the number items are 20 and the alpha value is 0.706 (i.e. 71.6%). Since the reliability is 71.6%, it is concluded that the data are more reliable for the study.

A Tool used for analysing the data is Factor analysis. Researcher used Factor analysis followed by correlation and also checked KMO (Kaiser- Meyer-Olkin) factor. The fixed hypothesis states that the variables of consumer behaviour have no significance influence on the attributes to choose a fast food restaurant and also check whether is there any significance influence on the opinion of respondents on fast food restaurant.

### 7. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY

### 7.1 FACTOR ANALYSIS

Factor analysis is a multivariate statistical technique used to condense and simplify the set of large number of variables to smaller number of variables called factors.

### 7.1 LEVEL OF PERCEPTION ON CHOOSING MENU IN FAST FOOD

Here the variables are, Based on the price (A1), Based on my mood (A2), Favourite dish (A3), I try out new dishes (A4), Based on friends' suggestions (A5), Choose the healthiest options available (A6), Based on the preferences of children (A7) and Already tried and tasted dishes (A8) are taken in account to analyse by using Factor analysis and correlation study.

### 7.1.1 KAISER-MEYER-OLKIN MEASURE OF SAMPLING ADEQUACY

The significance (0.00) is less than the assumed value (0.05) & KMO coefficient = 0.548. This implies that the factor analysis is valid.

TABLE 7.1.1: ROTATED FACTOR LOADINGS FOR THE LEVEL OF PERCEPTION ON CHOOSING MENU IN FAST FOOD VARIABLES

Perception on choosing menu in fast food variables	F1	F2	F3	Communality
A1	-0.264	0.393	0.643	0.638
A2	0.018	-0.031	0.786	0.619
A3	0.362	0.737	-0.007	0.674
A4	0.704	-0.011	0.095	0.505
A5	-0.180	0.768	-0.026	0.623
A6	0.532	-0.400	0.164	0.469
A7	-0.724	-0.109	0.142	0.556
A8	0.140	-0.161	0.569	0.369
Eigen value	1.670	1.410	1.380	
% of var. explained	20.88	17.61	17.19	55.67
Cum. % explained	20.88	38.48	55.67	

Table 7.1.1 gives the rotated factor loadings, communalities, Eigen values and the percentage of variance explained by the factors. Out of the 8 variables associated with the level of perception on choosing menu in fast food of children, 3 factors have been extracted and these 3 factors put together explain the total variance of these variables to the extent of 55.67%. In order to reduce the number of factors and enhance the interpretability, the factors are rotated. The rotation increases the quality of interpretation of the factors. There are several methods of the initial factor matrix to attain simple structure of the data. The varimax rotation is one such method to obtain better result for interpretation is employed and the results are given in Table 7.1.2.

TABLE 7.1.2: CLUSTERING OF LEVEL OF PERCEPTION ON CHOOSING MENU IN FAST FOOD

Factors	Level of perception on choosing menu in fast food	Rotated factor loadings
Factor I (20.88%)	1 - A4	0.704
	2 - A6	0.532
Factor II (17.61%)	3 - A3	0.737
	4 - A5	0.768
Factor III (17.19%)	5 - A1	0.643
	6 - A2	0.786
	7 - A7	0.142
	8 - A8	0.569

Three factors were identified as being maximum percentage variance accounted. The two perception variables A4 and A6 were grouped together as factor I and accounts 20.88% of the total variance. The two perception variables A3 and A5 constituted the factor II and accounts 17.61% of the total variance. The four perception variables A1, A2, A7 and A8 constituted the factor III and accounts 17.19% of the total variance.

The two perception variables 'Try out new dishes' (A4) and 'Choose healthiest options available' (A6) were grouped together as factor I and accounts 20.88% of the total variance.

### 7.1.3 CORRELATION ANALYSIS

The correlation is the study of finding the relationship between the variables. If there are only 2 variables in the study of correlations there it is called simple correlation otherwise the study in either partial or multiple correlation. In this study the simple inter-correlations analysis is performed between the selected variables and the results are presented in the form of correlation matrix

In this section the results of inter-correlation analysis between the perceptions on choosing menu in fast food variables based on the first factor are presented through correlation matrix. The results of the inter-correlation analysis with its significance are presented in the form of correlation matrix.

The Table 4.1.3 describes the results of inter-correlation analysis in terms of correlation coefficient & its significance at 1% level.

TABLE 7.1.3: CORRELATION MATRIX - PERCEPTION ON CHOOSING MENU IN FAST FOOD VARIABLES BASIS OF THE FACTOR I

Perception variables	Try out new dishes	Choose healthiest options available
Try out new dishes	1	0.198**
Choose healthiest options available		1

<sup>\*\*</sup>Significance at 1% level of significance

It is found from the Table 7.1.3 that the variables of perception on choosing menu in fast food on the basis of factor I considered have significant intercorrelation.

It is concluded that the perception variables such as 'Try out new dishes' (A4) and 'Choose healthiest options available' (A6) have significant interrelationship between them.

### 7.2 LEVEL OF OPINION ON FAST FOOD RESTAURANT

Here the variables are Welcoming the consumers (C1), Internal Layout(C2), Internal Decoration(C3), Choice in menu(C4), Suitability of Fast food (price and value) (C5), Convenience of timing(C6), Information about the products(C7), Convenience of size (quantity) (C8), are taken in account to analyse by using Factor analysis and correlation study.

### 7.2.1 KAISER-MEYER-OLKIN MEASURE OF SAMPLING ADEQUACY

The significance (0.00) is less than the assumed value (0.05) & KMO coefficient = 0.548. This implies that the factor analysis is valid.

TABLE 7.2.1: ROTATED FACTOR LOADINGS FOR THE LEVEL OF PERCEPTION ON OPINION ON FAST FOOD RESTAURANT

Perception on opinion of fast food restaurant variables	F1	F2	Communality
C1	0.185	0.348	0.155
C2	-0.381	0.072	0.151
C3	-0.100	0.828	0.695
C4	-0.677	-0.076	0.464
C5	0.668	0.091	0.454
C6	0.774	0.055	0.602
C7	-0.038	0.847	0.718
C8	0.823	0.053	0.680
Eigen value	2.39	1.53	
% of var. explained	29.85	19.13	48.98
Cum. % explained	29.85	48.98	

Table 7.2.1 gives the rotated factor loadings, communalities, Eigen values and the percentage of variance explained by the factors. Out of the 8 variables associated with the level of perception on the opinion of fast food restaurant of children, 2 factors have been extracted and these 2 factors put together explain the total variance of these variables to the extent of 48.98%. In order to reduce the number of factors and enhance the interpretability, the factors are rotated. The rotation increases the quality of interpretation of the factors. There are several methods of the initial factor matrix to attain simple structure of the data. The varimax rotation is one such method to obtain better result for interpretation is employed and the results are given in Table 7.2.2.

TABLE 7.2.2: CLUSTERING OF LEVEL OF PERCEPTION ON OPINION OF FAST FOOD RESTAURANT

Factors	Level of perception on opinion in fast food	Rotated factor loadings
Factor I (29.85%)	1-C5	0.668
	2 – C6	0.774
	3 – C8	0.823
Factor II (19.13%)	4 – C1	0.348
	5 – C2	0.072
	6 – C3	0.828
	7 – C4	-0.076
	8 – C7	0.847

Two factors were identified as being maximum percentage variance accounted. The three perception variables are C5, C6 and C8 were grouped together as factor I and accounts 29.85% of the total variance. The five perception variables C1, C2, C3, C4 and C7 constituted the factor II and accounts 19.130% of the total variance.

The three perception variables 'Suitability of Fast food (price and value)' (C5) 'Convenience of timing' (C6) and 'Convenience of size (quantity') (C8) were grouped together as factor I and accounts 29.85% of the total variance.

### 7.2.3 CORRELATION ANALYSIS

 $The Table 7.1.2 \ describes \ the \ results \ of inter-correlation \ analysis \ in \ terms \ of \ correlation \ coefficient \ \& \ its \ significance \ at \ 1\% \ level.$ 

TABLE 7.2.3: CORRELATION MATRIX - PERCEPTION ON CHOOSING MENU IN FAST FOOD VARIABLES BASIS OF THE FACTOR I

Perception variables	Suitability of Fast food (price and value)	Convenience of timing	Convenience of size (quantity)
Suitability of Fast food (price and value)	1	0.320**	0.483**
Convenience of timing		1	0.569**
Convenience of size (quantity)			1

<sup>\*\*</sup>Significance at 1% level of significance

It is found from the Table 4.2.3 that the variables of perception on opinion of fast food restaurant on the basis of factor I considered have significant intercorrelation.

It is concluded that the perception variables such 'Suitability of Fast food (price and value)' (C5) 'Convenience of timing' (C6) and 'Convenience of size (quantity') (C8) have significant interrelationship between them.

### 8. CONCLUSION

The emergence of the fast food industry has, transformed urban food culture in India to certain extent. The changing lifestyles with the increasing nuclear families and a rise in the urbanization in India over the past years have also supported the growth of the restaurant market in India. Thus, it can be rightly said that the fast food industry will benefit from other factors as well, such as increases in nuclear families, single-person households and the proportion of women in the workforce; as well as changing lifestyles and eating patterns. Children like eating fast food and are the big target segment for the marketing people. Children not only consume fast food but also influence the consumer behaviour of the family.

- Fast food restaurants can offer variance in menu with nutritional choice to their customers. The menu can be offered with a variance in toppings and fillings of Pizza, Burgers and Sandwiches as most of the children like these.
- Fast food restaurants should also try to provide nutrition information to customers. Consumers expect healthier lifestyle, fast food chains may introduce variety of healthy food items to attract and retain the young consumers. To develop awareness on healthy menu among consumers, nutritional information of each fast food can be provided in the menu card.
- The prices of the fast food in MNC's should be affordable and they should not compromise on quality. This will increase the frequency of visits of children.
- Convenience in size (quantity) should be provided by fast food restaurants, they can customize the food as most of the children give importance to taste and favourite dish.

Based on the analysis and results, we can say that with more and more acceptability of fast food outlets and change in life style, competition among fast food outlets with respect to quality of food, Variety in menu and customer service will be more prominent in the days to come.

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