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Consumers' Interest in Fast Food Items- A Study on Sylhet City of Bangladesh

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Abstract:

Fast food industry is one of the fastest growing sectors in food industry. Consumption of fast food by young adolescents is no longer confined to the developed countries; it has spread to the developing countries like Bangladesh as well. Over a period of time, with the growth of economic sectors, globalization and increasing per capita income fast food culture has gained prominence in Sylhet city of Bangladesh. The study reveals the interest issues of fast food consumers and their expectations. One hundred fast food consumers are taken as sample from Sylhet city of Bangladesh. Cluster sampling method as well as random sampling method was used in selection of respondents. For measuring their interest level, a 5 point Likert scale has been used. The study reveals that consumers' interest on fast food items depends on some factors (taste, hygienic food, clean environment, less time consuming, secure payment method etc.) It has been found from the study that most of the consumers are young & they are satisfied with fast food consumption and also their interest on this food is increasing day by day. The fast food restaurant owners can attract the consumers by fulfilling consumers' expectations and providing greater services.

Keywords: *Fast food, consumers' interest, Sylhet, Bangladesh.*

1. Introduction

Fast food is a type of food that is prepared and served very quickly (Webster Dictionary, 1951), while any meal with low preparation time can be considered as fast food. It was first popularized in the 1950s in the United States. Typically, the term 'Fast food' refers to food sold in a restaurant or store with preheated or precooked ingredients and served to the customer in a packaged form for take-out/take-away (Encyclopedia Wikipedia). Because of commercial emphasis on speed, uniformity and low cost, fast food products are often made with ingredients formulated to achieve a certain flavor or consistency and to preserve freshness. Fast food restaurants are traditionally distinguished by their ability to serve food via a drive-through. Arguably, the first fast food restaurants originated in the United States with A&W in 1919 and White Castle in 1921. Today, American-founded fast food chains such as McDonald's and KFC are multinational corporations with outlets across the globe. People want food that is cheap, convenient, filling & tasty-that's exactly what fast food is. In early 2000, Bangladesh experienced the entry of the first international brand of fast food franchise in the country through pizza hut and KFC.

Consumption of fast food continues to increase in society and is particularly widespread among the young people. Most of the consumers are students, service holders. As fast food is prepared quickly, delicious in taste and can be got in reasonable price its consumers are increasing day by day.

In recent years' fast food industry has grown up rapidly in Sylhet city of Bangladesh. This paper tries to identify consumers' interest in fast food items and also their expectations.

2. Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of the study is to know & analyze the reasons of consumers' preference in fast food items. The specific objectives are-

- i. To find out the group of fast food consumers.
- ii. To know consumers' influential matters while selecting fast food items.
- iii. To give suggestions to the owners of fast food restaurants.

3. Limitation of the Study

The major limitations of the study are as follows-

- i. Sometimes respondents did not cooperate to answer the questions.
- ii. The study has been conducted in Sylhet city, which may not reflect the overall scenario of fast food consumers of Bangladesh.

4. Research Methodology

The study has been conducted in Sylhet city of Bangladesh. The main purpose of the study is to know the reasons behind consumer's interest in fast food items. For this purpose, a survey has been conducted which is based on questionnaire. 100 respondents participated in the survey who like fast food items. Although the study is mainly based on primary data but both primary and secondary data are used here. There were two sections on the questionnaire- demographic section and analytic section. Demographic section includes information about respondents' age, sex, educational qualification, profession, and their income level, marital status, for how long they are having fast food, their favorite fast food items and all other information related with fast food consumption. Analytic section covers the questions related to consumers' preferences of having fast food items and satisfaction level of having fast food. This section also covers their opinion related to the service of fast food restaurants. They also gave suggestions and their expectations about fast food items. For measuring fast food consumers' satisfaction and their interest, a 5 point Likert scale has been used ranging from strongly disagree=1 to strongly agree=5. The sample size was 100 consumers of fast food items from Sylhet city. There are many fast food consumers in Sylhet city. Cluster sampling method as well as random sampling method was used in selection of the respondents. Secondary data has been collected from different web portals, articles etc. For analyzing the data different statistical tools like Mean, Standard Deviation has been used.

5. Fast food industry in Sylhet

Sylhet is a major city that lies on the banks of Surma River in north-east Bangladesh. As of the 2011 census, the city has a population of 479,837. It is surrounded by tea estates, sub-tropical hills, rain forests and river valleys. In recent years, so many fast food restaurants have been established here. Fast food restaurants take many initiatives to attract consumers. People's interest in fast food items are increasing day by day. Students, service holders, businessmen and housewives like to have fast food almost every day.

6. Findings & Analysis

6.1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents of Fast Food Consumers

For the purpose of the study some demographic characteristics of the respondents are considered here. The sample size was 100 respondents. Among them 55% are male & 45% are female. Data has been collected from different age groups. Among 100 respondents the majority people (62%) belong to age group 21-30. 21 % respondents belong to age group up to 20 years, 7 % from 31-40 years, 4 % from 41- 50 years and 6% from age group above 50 years. Here educational qualifications of respondents are considered also. Majority of fast food consumers' educational qualification is graduate 35%. Among 100 respondents 5% consumers' educational qualification are below SSC, 13% are SSC, 11% are HSC, undergraduate are 21% and 15% consumers' educational qualification are post-graduation. Among 100 respondents, 25 consumers are married, 72 consumers are unmarried, divorced are only 2 and 1 respondents is widowed.

The analysis of the demographic characteristics is given below-

Basic Information		No. of respondents	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Gender	Male	55	55	55
	Female	45	45	100
Total		100	100	
Age	Up to 20 years	21	21	21
	21-30 years	62	62	83
	31-40 years	07	07	90
	41-50 years	04	04	94
	Above 50 years	06	06	100
Total		100	100	
Educational qualification	Below SSC	05	05	05
	SSC	13	13	18
	HSC	11	11	29
	Under graduate	21	21	50
	Graduate	35	35	85
	Post graduate	15	15	100
Total		100	100	
Marital status	Married	25	25	25
	Unmarried	72	72	97
	Divorced	02	02	99
	Widowed	01	01	100
Total		100	100	

Table 1: Gender, age, educational qualification & marital status of the respondents

Source: Data collected from survey

6.2. Profession & Income Group of Fast Food Consumers

The professions of respondents and the income groups they belong to are analyzed for the study. From the study it has been found that majority of the fast food consumers are students and their number is 67 out of 100. Among the consumers 18% are service holders, 7% are businessmen and 8% are housewives. Fast food consumers' income levels are taken into consideration also. Majority of the respondents' (50%) income level is up to BDT 5000, (It can be expressed as pocket money for students), 29% consumers' income level is BDT 5001-15000, 4% respondents belong to income level group BDT 15001-25000, 8% respondents earn BDT 25001-35000 and 9% consumers are from income group BDT 35001 & above. So, the majority of the consumers are students and they spend from their pocket money. The overall scenario of this can be plotted into next table-

Basic information		No. of respondents	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Profession	Student	67	67	67
	Service	18	18	85
	Business	07	07	92
	Housewife	08	08	100
Total		100	100	
Income group	Up to 5000	50	50	50
	5001-15000	29	29	79
	15001-25000	04	04	83
	25001-35000	08	08	91
	35001 & above	09	09	100
Total		100	100	

Table 2: Respondents' profession & income level per month (in BDT)

Source: Data collected from survey

6.3. Respondents' Favorite Fast Food Items, Duration & Frequency of Having Those

For conducting the study consumers' favorite fast food items have been identified. The following table shows most of the respondents (36%) like chicken fries 28% like burgers, 4% consumers' favorite fast food item is hotdog, French fries are favorite to 8%, 12% like sandwiches 4% like pizzas and the rest 8% consumers' favorite items are steak, grilled chicken etc. Consumers are being asked for how long they are having fast food and what is the frequency of having it per month. The study shows that 37% of respondents are having it from 6-10 years 24% consumers' duration is more than 15 years, 18% respondents' duration is 1-5 years 14% from 11-15 years and 7% consumers are having fast food from less than 1 year. 49% consumers have fast food 1-3 times per month, 25% have it 4-6 times, 11% have it 7-9 times and 15% of consumers have fast food 10 or more than 10 times per month.

Basic information		No. of respondents	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Favorite fast food items	Burger	28	28	28
	Chicken fry	36	36	64
	Hotdog	04	04	68
	French Fries	08	08	76
	Sandwiches	12	12	88
	Pizzas	04	04	92
	Others	08	08	100
Total		100	100	
Duration of having fast food	Less than 1 year	07	07	07
	1-5 years	18	18	25
	6-10 years	37	37	62
	11-15 years	14	14	76
	More than 15 years	24	24	100
Total		100	100	
Frequency of having fast food per month	1-3 times	49	49	49
	4-6 times	25	25	74
	7-9 times	11	11	85
	10 or 10+ times	15	15	100
Total		100	100	

Table 3: Name of fast food items, duration & frequency of having those items in a month by the respondents.

Source: Data collected from the survey

6.4. Respondents' Visit to Fast Food Restaurants:

For conducting the study respondents are being asked about some criteria. The fast food consumers are being asked about with whom they want to have the food and also when was their last visit to a restaurant. It has been found that most of the consumers (53%) like to have fast food with their friends, 38% respondents like to have it with family, 4% prefer colleagues and 5% consumers like to have fast food alone.

It has been shown that most of the consumers visit fast food restaurants on a regular basis. While conducting the survey, 56% of respondents visited restaurant during that week, 20% visited 7-13 days ago, 9% 14-20 days ago, 2% respondents 21-27 days ago and 13% of respondents visited fast food restaurant a month or more ago. The table shows the details-

Basic information		No. of respondents	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
With whom want to have fast food	Alone	05	05	05
	Friends	53	53	58
	Family	38	38	96
	Colleagues	04	04	100
	Total	100	100	
Last visit to a fast food restaurant	This week	56	56	56
	7-13 days ago	20	20	76
	14-20 days ago	09	09	85
	21-27 days ago	02	02	87
	A month or more ago	13	13	100
	Total	100	100	

Table 4: Respondents' visit to fast food restaurant.

Source: Data collected from survey

6.5. Consumers' Interest in Fast Food Items

There are different types of consumers of fast food items. Their tastes differ from one item to another item and also their preference level differs according to their own choice. Fast food consumers' opinions towards different factors in Likert scale are given below-

Statements	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	Mean*	SD*
1. Fast food items are too delicious.	02	07	11	35	45	4.15	1.00
2. Fast food restaurants offer their items with reasonable price.	04	29	33	29	05	3.05	0.99
3. Take away opportunity is available while purchasing fast food.	0	04	12	62	22	4.06	0.68
4. Fast food restaurants provide food on time.	04	26	27	39	04	3.14	0.96
5. Fast food items are always found fresh and hygienic.	07	36	37	16	04	2.7	0.93
6. The food items are presented in attractive ways.	0	03	22	60	15	3.91	0.68
7. Restaurant environment is also a factor while having fast food.	0	0	04	42	54	4.52	0.54
8. Food portion of fast food items satisfy hunger.	02	17	24	44	13	3.52	0.97
9. It can be substitute of main course food.	23	36	15	24	02	2.48	1.20
10. Fast food restaurants are available & easy to find.	0	07	21	58	14	3.84	0.73
11. Fast food items' payment method is secure and easy.	0	04	30	56	10	3.71	0.69
12. Taking fast food is less time consuming in busy life.	0	05	11	57	27	4.05	0.72

Table 5: Consumers' interest factor in fast food items.

Source: Data collected from survey

Table 5 shows different statements about fast food and consumers' opinion regarding those factors. In response to the first statement 'Fast food items are too delicious'- 45% of respondents strongly agree with the statement, 35% agree with it, 11% of respondent

become neutral, 7% disagree and the rest of 2 % of respondents strongly disagree with the statement. Here the mean value is 4.15 & Standard Deviation is 1.00. It indicates that most of the consumers think fast food items are delicious. So, they like to have it.

33% of respondents neither agree nor disagree with the statement 'Fast food restaurants offer their items with reasonable price'. They think sometimes restaurant offer food with reasonable price and sometimes not. 29 respondents agree with it; another 29 respondents disagree with it. Here the mean value is 3.05 and standard deviation is 0.99. It indicates most of the restaurants provide food in reasonable price but not all. So, price should be reasonable.

A large number of respondents or consumers (62%) agree with the statement that 'Take away opportunity is available while purchasing fast food'. 22 respondents strongly agree with the statements and only 4 respondents disagree with it. The mean value is 4.06 and standard deviation is 0.68. It means consumers are very much satisfied with the take away opportunity of fast food.

'Fast food restaurants provide food on time'. 39% of respondents agree with this statement while 26% disagree with it. 27 respondents neither agree nor disagree with the statement. Here the mean value of 3.14 and standard deviation of 0.96 indicates that most of the restaurants provide fast food on time.

Few numbers of respondents (16) agree with the statements that 'Fast food items are always found fresh and hygienic'. 37% of respondents neither agree nor disagree with the statement and 36 % disagree with it. 7 respondents strongly disagree with the statement. Here mean is 2.7 and standard deviation is 0.93. It clearly indicates that the consumers are not satisfied with hygiene factor of fast food. This study found that fast food items are not always fresh and hygienic.

A large number of respondents (60) agree with the statement 'The food items are presented in attractive ways'. 15% strongly agree with it and only 3 % disagree with it. The mean (3.91) & standard deviation (0.68) indicates the consumers are very much satisfied with the decoration of fast food items. So, they like it.

'Restaurant environment is also a factor while having fast food' - a very large number of respondent (54) strongly agree with it and 42% agree with the statement. Here the mean is 4.52 and standard deviation is 0.54. The study found that environment of fast food restaurant effect on consumption. Consumers always want clean and sound environment while having their food.

Regarding the statement 'Food portion of fast food items satisfy hunger' 17% disagree, 2% strongly disagree with it. But 44 respondents agree and 13% strongly agree with the statement. Mean is 3.52 and standard deviation is 0.97. This calculation indicates most of the fast food consumers' hunger can be satisfied by having fast food.

While it is a matter of substitution of main course food a huge number of respondents oppose to it. 36% disagree, 23% strongly disagree with the statement "It can be substitute of main course food". Only 24% agree with the statement. Here the mean is 2.48 and standard deviation is 1.20. It indicates consumers don't want to replace the main course food by fast food. They like fast food but it can't be the main course food for most of the consumers.

'Fast food restaurants are available & easy to find' - 58% of respondents agree with the statement while 21% neither agree nor disagree and 7 respondents disagree with it. Mean (3.84) & standard deviation (.73) indicate sufficient availability of fast food restaurants & consumers easily find those.

Regarding the statement 'Fast food items' payments method is secure & easy' 56% agree with it, 30 % neither agree nor disagree & 4 % disagree with the statements. Mean is 3.71 & standard deviation is .69. The study found fast food consumers are satisfied with the payment procedure.

57% of respondents agree & 27% strongly agree with the statement that "Taking fast food is less time consuming in busy life'. Only 5% disagree with the statement. Here the mean is 4.05 & standard deviation is 0.72. It indicates fast food consumers have it in their busy life and they are very much satisfied with it.

7. Conclusion

Fast food industry is a high growing sector in Bangladesh. It is concerned with the tastes and habits of the people. The food-taking habit especially in fast food segment has been changing very fast over last decade among the people of Sylhet. Young people are habituated with fast food very much. In busy life people take fast food as it is delicious and less time consuming. People's interest in fast food items increase very rapidly because of public awareness, good quality of food, growth of education etc. The aim of the study is to know the interest factors of consumers' regarding fast food items. Affordable price of the menu, service quality and restaurant ambience are important factors which make the young consumers to prefer fast food. Fast food restaurant's owners should take steps to improve the quality of the food more & more, payment procedures should be easier & should offer food with more reasonable price. So that, they can get more customers and the interest of consumers will also increase. Thus both the owners and the consumers will be benefitted. Based on the information collected from the fast food consumers the following strategies are recommended-

- Fast food restaurants should provide items with reasonable price. By this they will increase their consumers.
- Consumers prefer quick delivery of food. So, while providing food time should be taken into consideration. It is very much necessary to attract consumers.
- As the young generation visit fast food restaurants frequently so, the authority should introduce reward schemes for them. Thus their interest will increase more.
- Fast food chains may develop product based segmentations of consumers like burger eaters, pizza lovers etc. Restaurants should customize fast foods for different age groups.
- As the young consumers expect healthier lifestyle, fast food chains may introduce variety of healthy food items to attract and retain the young consumers.
- Payment method should be secure enough. Food should always be found fresh and hygienic. Restaurants should ensure clean environment to attract consumers.

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