



Asian Journal of Clinical Nutrition

ISSN 1992-1470

science
alert

ANSI*net*
an open access publisher
<http://ansinet.com>

Study of Consumption, Behavior and Awareness of Fast Food among University Hostlers

¹Harsh Kumar, ²Rajdeep Palaha and ³Amandeep Kaur

¹Department of Biotechnology, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara-144402, Punjab, India

²Department of Health, Civil Hospital, Sangrur-148001, Punjab, India

³Department of Management, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara-144402, Punjab, India

Corresponding Author: Harsh Kumar, Faculty of Biotechnology and Biosciences, Department of Biotechnology, Block No. 28, Room No. 202, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara-144402, Punjab, India Tel: +91-9464372188

ABSTRACT

The aim of this research was to study the fast food habits of the hostlers in relation to their consumption and awareness and to study the role of their parents and advertisement. Food is considered an important representation of all ethnic groups. Although, the trend change and its impact exists on whole society, whether it belongs to lower middle class and/or elite class. But beside this thing till today there is no proper definition of the fast food. Hostel life is entirely different from the in-home especially in terms of eating habit. So, by keeping this view in mind the study was conducted in Lovely Professional University hostels to know about the consumption and awareness of the hostlers about the fast food eating pattern. The study emphasizes on the ambiguity in the knowledge, awareness and prudent consumption behavior amongst the university hostlers. It provides converging evidence of a direct causal link between food advertising, parent's role and behavioral pattern of the hostlers about the fast food consumption. The study was conducted during the October-November 2011 in the Lovely Professional University hostels. At present 18,000 students residing in the university hostels as information obtained from the university authority from which 10.06% of the total samples i.e., 1811 were targeted and non-parametric test (chi-square) was applied to check the goodness of fit, at 95% level of significance. The survey provides converging evidence of a direct causal link between food advertising, parent's role and behavioral pattern of the hostlers about the fast food consumption. Understanding hostlers eating attitude and behavior is important in terms of their health which clearly demarks that the adoption of fast food culture among university hostlers in Lovely Professional University is common. The study signifies the direct ambiguity in the knowledge, awareness and prudent consumption behavior amongst the university hostlers.

Key words: Fast food, hostlers, eating behaviour, parents, advertisements

INTRODUCTION

Fast food culture is a vigorously uprising trend among the youngsters (Kaushik *et al.*, 2011). Although, its impact exists on whole society, whether belong to lower middle class and/or elite class. But beside this thing till today there is no proper definition of the fast food. According to leading

websites, fast food is the term given to food that can be prepared and served very quickly while Habib *et al.* (2011) described fast food as quickly prepared, reasonably priced and readily available alternatives to home cooked food.

We can find the imprints of its existence at restaurants, stadiums, airports, zoos, schools and universities, on cruise ships, trains and aero planes, at supermarkets, petrol stations and even hospitals (Schlosser, 2002). Fast food industry has helped to transform not only our diet, but also economy and culture as well. Fast food has now become a regular part of American diet and on an average of almost one third of youths from 14-19 years consumes fast food on a typical day (Bowman *et al.*, 2004; Guthrie *et al.*, 2002). According to TIF (2011), India has seen a massive rise in the consumption of fast food over the recent few years. Various factors have influenced Indian market to lean towards fast food culture involving improved living standard, rapid citification and westernization of Indian culture leading to the vigorous growth. Other factors include increasing economy and appetite for western food from customers throughout the country will hike the industry's growth to reach a CAGR of around 34% during 2011-2014. According to the research, the consumption of fast food on a regular basis leads to excess energy intake leading to an increased risk of overweight and obesity (French *et al.*, 2000; French *et al.*, 2001; Paeratakul *et al.*, 2003). Calorie content consumed by the children of out-of-home meals was 55% higher than of in-home meals (Zoumas-Morse *et al.*, 2001). According to WHO (2003), frequent fast food consumption is also a health concern because most fast foods are rich in saturated fats, trans fats, simple carbohydrates and sodium-all of which are nutrients associated with hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and type 2 diabetes. The early stages in the juvenility of teens represent a crucial stage in the later stages of a human life as the former stage is the one where a particular's lifestyles are formed and become established (Al-Hazzaa *et al.*, 2011). But this is the factor which is associated with every country's generation. The most important thing is staying away from the parent's home that means at hostels, because this life is completely independent and has an increased access to food choices apart from those available at home. It is also the time when a boy or girl increases their social interactions with peers of similar age and develop different eating habits.

Hence, the present study was undertaken with the objectives to study (1) the fast food habits of the hostlers in relation to their consumption and awareness and (2) the role of their parents and advertisement.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted during the October-November 2011 in the Lovely Professional University hostels. At present 18,000 students residing in the university hostels as information obtained from the university authority. The size of the study sample was of 1811 students which is 10.06% of the total strength of 18,000 residing in the hostel.

Ethical approval was obtained from the university before implementing this research. Random sampling was done, in which a structured questionnaire was administered to the hostlers. Questions on inquiry were based on demographics (gender, age and educational status) shown in the Table 1. Questions which were based on their fast food consumption, behavior and awareness were shown in Table 1. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program version 16. Chi-square which was a non-parametric test was used to analyze the point of parity and difference for the goodness of fit for the experimented value to the theoretical value at

Table 1: Demographics of hostlers in Lovely Professional University

| Parameter | Frequency (n = 1811) | |
|---------------------------|----------------------|------|
| | No. | % |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 878 | 48.5 |
| Female | 933 | 51.5 |
| Age (years) | | |
| 18-20 | 813 | 44.9 |
| 21-23 | 865 | 47.8 |
| Above 23 | 133 | 7.3 |
| Edncational status | | |
| Undergraduate | 1268 | 70.1 |
| Graduate | 542 | 29.9 |

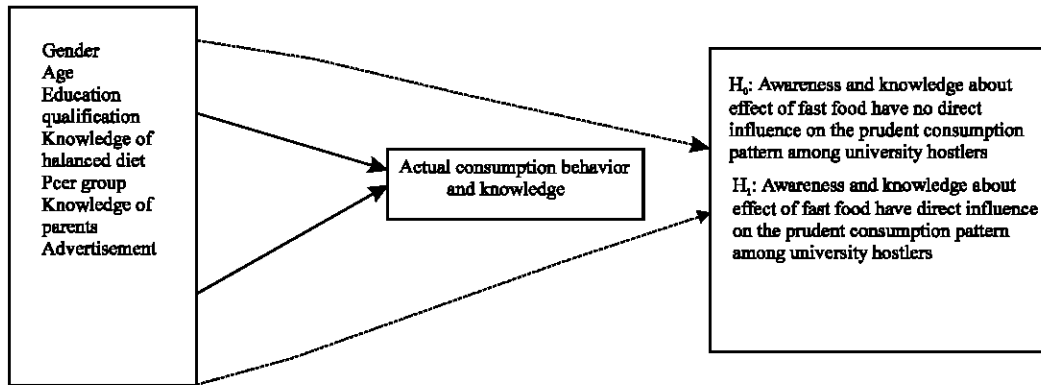


Fig. 1: Variables conceptualizing their influence on the hypothesis

95% significance level. Figure 1 indicates the identified independent variables which show direct influence on actual consumption behavior and knowledge of fast food among the university hostlers.

RESULTS

There were 1811 hostlers that took part in the survey having girls (51.5%) and boys (48.5%). Majority of the hostlers belonging to the age group 21-23 years (47.8%) and were undergraduate (70.1%). Most of the hostlers preferred fast food just to satisfy their craving for different tastes (76.7%) in contrast to those (12.0%) that ate it as a normal meal. At least every student skips its one time hostel meal every day (63.8%), preferably lunch (50.5%) and with intention (58.4%). Maximum hostlers agreed that their fast food habit increased after they left their parent's home (65.5%) and this habit going to increase day by day (42.4%). On an average majority of the hostlers spent Rs. 21-40, daily on fast food purchase (38.7%) and maximum hostlers parent's know about their fast food eating habit (56.7%). Most of the hostlers preferred to eat fast food in group (60.1%), whereas other preferred to eat with opposite gender (22.6%) but only few to prefer to eat when they were alone (12.2%). Maximum numbers of hostlers aware that obesity, heart diseases are associated with fast food consumption (61.8, 73.3%) and believed that advertisement influence their fast food eating behavior that changes their attitude towards normal meal (72.5, 52.0%). The calculated and tabulated value statistics of chi-square are also presented in Table 2. The tabulated

Table 2: Fast food consumption, behavior and awareness among University hostlers

| Questionnaires | Frequency (No.) | Response (%) | χ^{2**} |
|--|-----------------|--------------|--------------|
| Are you aware about balanced diet?* | | | |
| Yes | 1429 | 79.0 | 608.292 |
| No | 380 | 21.0 | |
| Why do you prefer fast food? | | | |
| Statns symbol | 204 | 11.3 | 1532.668 |
| Just for taste | 1389 | 76.7 | |
| As a normal meal | 218 | 12.0 | |
| In a day how many meals you replace with fast food?* | | | |
| One | 1153 | 63.8 | 784.083 |
| Two | 423 | 23.4 | |
| More than two | 232 | 12.8 | |
| Do you think your fast food consumption habit have increased after you left home?* | | | |
| Yes | 1185 | 65.5 | 1151.729 |
| No | 616 | 34.1 | |
| Can't say | 7 | 0.4 | |
| Do you feel your fast food habit is increasing day by day?* | | | |
| Yes | 767 | 42.4 | 144.704 |
| No | 675 | 37.3 | |
| Can't say | 368 | 20.3 | |
| What is the average amount of money you spend on fast food daily?* | | | |
| Below Rs. 20 | 341 | 18.8 | 187.445 |
| Rs. 21-40 | 701 | 38.7 | |
| Rs. 41 -60 | 409 | 22.6 | |
| above Rs. 60 | 359 | 19.8 | |
| Are your parents aware about your diet behavior (in terms that you have to eat fast food frequently)?* | | | |
| Yes | 1029 | 56.9 | 893.307 |
| No | 755 | 41.7 | |
| Can't say | 25 | 1.4 | |
| You eat fast food more frequently when you are | | | |
| In group | 1089 | 60.1 | 593.249 |
| Alone | 312 | 17.2 | |
| With opposite gender | 410 | 22.6 | |
| At which time you prefer to eat fast food? | | | |
| Morning | 196 | 10.8 | 536.836 |
| Noon | 687 | 37.9 | |
| Evening | 711 | 39.3 | |
| All | 217 | 12.0 | |
| Which meal you nsually have to skip from hostel?* | | | |
| Breakfast | 507 | 28.0 | 822.861 |
| Lunch | 913 | 50.5 | |
| Diuner | 304 | 16.8 | |
| More than two | 85 | 4.7 | |
| Why do you usually skip normal meal?* | | | |
| Waking up late | 749 | 41.6 | 50.977 |
| Intentionally | 1052 | 58.4 | |
| Do you feel fast food can be a good alternative to healthy food?* | | | |
| Yes | 315 | 17.4 | 587.493 |
| No | 1086 | 60.0 | |
| Can't say | 408 | 22.6 | |

Table 2: Continue

| Questionnaires | Frequency (No.) | Response (%) | χ^2 ** |
|---|-----------------|--------------|-------------|
| Do you think that instead of eating fast food, fruits could be a better option for good health? | | | |
| Yes | 1396 | 77.1 | 531.398 |
| No | 415 | 22.9 | |
| Does fast food eating makes a person overweight?* | | | 661.145 |
| Yes | 1118 | 61.8 | |
| No | 318 | 17.6 | |
| Can't say | 374 | 20.7 | |
| Do you know various types of heart diseases are associated with fast food consumption?* | | | |
| Yes | 1325 | 73.3 | 392.126 |
| No | 483 | 26.7 | |
| Do you feel fast food eating habit changes ones attitude towards normal balanced diet?* | | | |
| Yes | 940 | 52.0 | 289.682 |
| No | 388 | 21.4 | |
| Can't say | 481 | 26.6 | |
| Do you think advertisements attract and influence your fast food eating behavior? | | | |
| Yes | 1313 | 72.5 | 366.773 |
| No | 498 | 27.5 | |

*Missing value existing, **At 95% level of significance the above mentioned calculated values indicate- awareness and knowledge about effects of fast food have direct influence on the prudent consumption patteru among university hostlers

values of all except (gender and age) are less than the experimented values. Hence, rejecting the null hypothesis and supporting the alternate hypothesis.

DISCUSSION

The survey provides converging evidence of a direct causal link between food advertising, parent's role and behavioral pattern of the hostlers about the fast food consumption. Understanding hostlers eating attitude and behavior is important in terms of their health. Several studies have shown that a child's eating behavior is strongly influenced by the family environment (Scaglioni *et al.*, 2008). The family eating environment includes parent's own eating behavior and child feeding practice. Parents shape the development of children's eating behavior, but also their own eating style (Cutting *et al.*, 1999). Likewise, the children of parents who consume large amount of fast food may also do the same (Grier *et al.*, 2007). Research on intergenerational influence demonstrates how information, beliefs and resources are transmitted from one generation to the next and implies a particular mechanism by which parent's attitudes and beliefs related to fast food affect children fast food consumption (Moore *et al.*, 2002).

Fast food promotions, especially advertising is important component of fast food marketing among young generation. Advertising for fast food and beverages communicates potentially powerful food consumption cues, including the images of the attractive models eating and positive emotions linked to fast food consumption (Folta *et al.*, 2006; Harrison and Marske, 2005). Television has been labeled as a powerful variable in the early change of the eating behavior. Through, television, advertisers can reach and manipulate the minds of the consumers. Even the different websites provide the corners for advertising the fast food on their websites by this way or that way. Fast food restaurants are active social networkers as well, maintaining dedicated pages on the most popular social media websites: Moviesnacks, Crickinfo, Yahoo, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Variety of foods available has an important effect on food consumption; the more the available foods are varied, the more of them people will eat.

Furthermore, the societal factors such as eating in groups are another factor which affects the diet behavior, because when we eat in group, at that time persons are busy in gossiping. People are more attentive in gossiping instead of what they eat or how much they eat and that directly affects their eating pattern. On the contrary, the person who eats fast food frequently with the opposite gender, are more inclined towards attracting the opposite gender by their eating habits. Even in the olden times, there are sufficient evidences which showed that human males sharing food in cooperative exchange relationships in mating contexts. Men who can provision better are more likely to be chosen by women as mating partners (Bliege *et al.*, 2002; Gurven, 2004; Moore, 1984).

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the adoption of fast food culture among university hostlers in Lovely Professional University is common. One of the factors which come into existence is the parent's role because fast food chains are gaining popularity with the nuclear families as working parents have less time for meal preparation at home. This practice directly affects their eating habits. As study indicated that most of the hostlers agreed that their parents are aware about their fast food eating habit, although they know about the university mess providing them the food during their stay in hostels. On the other side some hostlers accepted that their parents are not familiar with their eating behavior, so directly and indirectly parent's role is associated with the eating behavior. Lunch skipping is highly prevalent among hostlers in the university, whereas, most of the research carried out on the school children's in America, Europe and Arab countries indicates; breakfast skipping is most prevalent among them (Rampersaud *et al.*, 2005; Abalkhail and Shawky, 2002; Mikki *et al.*, 2010). They know very well about the importance of fruits but beside this thing they prefer to eat fast food daily instead of fruits. The study clearly signifies the direct ambiguity in the knowledge, awareness and prudent consumption behavior amongst the university hostlers.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank the university authority as well as the students for their involvement and cooperation in this research.

REFERENCES

- Abalkhail, B. and S. Shawky, 2002. Prevalence of daily breakfast intake, iron deficiency anemia and awareness of being anemic among Saudi school students. *Int. J. Food Sci. Nutr.*, 53: 519-528.
- Al-Hazzaa, H.M., N.A. Abahussain, H.I. Al- Sobayel, D.M. Qahwaji and A.O. Musaiger, 2011. Physical activity, sedentary behaviors and dietary habits among Saudi adolescents relative to age, gender and region. *Int. J. Behav. Nutr. Phys. Act.*, Vol 8. 10.1186/1479-5868-8-140
- Bliege, B.R., D.A. Bird, E.A. Smith and G.C. Kushnick, 2002. Risk and reciprocity in Meriam food sharing. *Evolu. Hum. Behav.*, 23: 297-321.
- Bowman, S.A., S.L. Gortmaker, M.A. Pereira and D.S. Ludwig, 2004. Effects of fast-food consumption on energy intake and diet quality among children in a national household survey. *Pediatrics*, 113: 112-118.
- Cutting, T.M., J.O. Fisher, T.K. Grimm and L.L. Birch, 1999. Like mother, like daughter: Familial patterns of overweight are mediated by mother's dietary disinhibition. *Am. J. Clin. Nutr.*, 69: 608-613.

- Folta, S.C., J.P. Goldberg, C. Economos, R. Bell and R. Meltzer, 2006. Food advertising targeted at school-age children: A content analysis. *J. Nutr. Educ. Behav.*, 38: 244-248.
- French, S.A., L. Harnack and R.W. Jeffery, 2000. Fast food restaurant use among women in the pound of prevention study: Dietary, behavioral and demographic correlates. *Int. J. Obesity.*, 24: 1353-1359.
- French, S.A., M. Story, D. Neumark-Sztainer, J.A. Fulkerson and P. Hannan, 2001. Fast food restaurant use among adolescents: Associations with nutrient intake, food choices and behavioral and psychosocial variables. *Int. J. Obesity*, 25: 1823-1833.
- Grier, A.S., J. Mensinger, S.H. Huang, S.K. Kumanyika and N. Stettler, 2007. Fast food marketing and children's fast-food consumption: Exploring parents influences in an ethnically diverse sample. *J. Publ. Policy Market.*, 26: 221-235.
- Gurven, M., 2004. To give and to give not: The behavioral ecology of human food transfers. *Behav. Brain Sci.*, 27: 543-559.
- Guthrie, J., B.H. Lin and E. Frazao, 2002. Role of food prepared away from home in American diet, 1977-78 versus 1994-96: Changes and consequences. *J. Nutr. Educ. Behav.*, 34: 140-150.
- Habib, Q.F., R.A. Dardak and S. Zakaria, 2011. Consumer's preference and consumption towards fast food: Evidences from Malaysia. *Bus. Manage. Q. Rev.*, 2: 14-27.
- Harrison, K. and A.L. Marske, 2005. Nutritional content of foods advertised during the television programs children watch most. *Am. J. Public Health*, 95: 1568-1574.
- Kaushik, J.S., M. Narang and A. Parakh, 2011. Fast food consumption in children. *Indian Pediatrics*, 48: 97-101.
- Mikki, N., H.F. Abdul- Rahim, Z. Shi and G. Holmboe-Ottesen, 2010. Dietary habits of Palestinian adolescents and associated sociodemographic characteristics in Ramallah, Nablus and Hebron governorates. *Public Health Nutr.*, 13: 1419-1429.
- Moore, E.S, W. L. Wilkie and R.J. Lutz, 2002. Passing the Torch: Intergenerational influences as a source of brand equity. *J. Market.*, 66: 17-37.
- Moore, J., 1984. The evolution of reciprocal sharing. *Ethol. Sociobiol.*, 5: 5-14.
- Paeratakul, S, D.P. Ferdinand, C.M. Champagne, D.H. Ryan and G.A. Bray, 2003. Fast food consumption among U. S. adults and children: Dietary and nutrient intake profile. *J. Am. Dietetic Assoc.*, 103: 1332-1338.
- Rampersaud, G.C., M.A. Pereira, B.L. Girard, J. Adams and J.D. Metztl, 2005. Breakfast habits, nutritional status, body weight and academic performance in children and adolescents. *J. Am. Diet. Assoc.*, 105: 743-760.
- Scaglioni, S., M. Salvioni and C. Galimberti, 2008. Influence of parental attitudes in the development of children eating behaviour. *Br. J. Nutr.*, 99: S22-S25.
- Schlosser, E., 2002. Fast food nation. The Bitter Truth about Fast Food, <http://www.spiritouch.com/en/pdfs/fastfoodnation.pdf>
- TIF, 2011. Indian fast food market showcasing high growth potential. Think India Foundation, <http://www.thinkindia.net.in/2011/08/indian-fast-food-market-showcasing-high-growth-potential.html>
- WHO, 2003. Diet, nutrition and prevention of chronic diseases. Report of a Joint WHO/FAO Expert Consultation, Technical Report Series 916, Geneva, Switzerland.
- Zoumas-Morse, C., C.L. Rock, E.J. Sobo and M.L. Neuhouser, 2001. Children's patterns of macronutrient intake and associations with restaurant and home eating. *J. Am. Dietetic Assoc.*, 101: 923-925.