



IMPACT OF VARIOUS FACTORS ON CHILDREN'S FAST FOOD CONSUMPTION IN GOA

Ms Radhamani Divakar* Prof. Guntur Anjana Raju**

* Asst. Prof. in Commerce, Govt. College of Arts, Science & Commerce, Khandola- Marcela, Goa.

**Head of the Department, Department of Commerce, Goa University, Taleigao- Plateau, Taleigao-Goa.

Abstract

The objective of this study is to examine the impact of various factors on consumption of fast food among children in the age group of 6-12 years. The sample size was 1000 children from various schools in urban and rural areas in the State of Goa. From the study it was found that the influence of various factors was higher in rural areas as compared to urban areas. It was found that product characteristics and convenience are the main factors that influence children towards fast food followed by casual attitude for homemade food.

Keywords: Children, Fast Food, Pocket Money, Product Characteristics, Convenience.

Introduction

While multiple factors influence eating behaviours and food choices of youth, one potent force is food advertising (Story, Neumark & French, 2002). The heavy marketing directed towards youth, especially young children appears to be driven largely by the desire to develop and build brand awareness, brand preference and brand loyalty. Marketers know that toddlers and preschool children have considerable purchase influence and can successfully negotiate purchases through what marketers term as the 'nag factor' or 'pester power' (McNeal, 1999). Isler et al, examined the location, types and frequency of products that children aged 3-11 requested of their mothers over 30 days. Food accounted for over half (50%) of the total requests made by children and included snacks/dessert foods (24%) candy (17%) cereal (7%) fast food (4%) and fruits and vegetables (3%) (Isler, Popper & Ward, 1987).

Literature Review

Majority of the kids start buying confectionary products below 5 years of age. They are not concerned about international brands of confectionary products. National brands are patronized and wafers are most liked by kids. Free gifts have become the most effective sales promotion tool for marketers. Taste and shape of confectionary products are the most and least preferred by respondents in their buying decisions. (Singh & Ram, 2010).

The growth of fast food industry has led to increased consumption of food prepared away from home that is high in saturated fat and sodium and low in dietary fibre, calcium and iron. Data from western countries have shown a positive association between frequency of fast food and weight gain. As western companies are expanding in developing countries such as India, there is considerable concern that such countries are in danger of yielding to obesity trends. (Alio, Gasevic et al. 2013)

Objective: This research was conducted to find out the impact of various factors on consumption of fast food in Goa

To achieve the above objective the following hypothesis were framed:

Hypothesis

H01: There is no significant impact of various factors on consumption of fast food in urban and rural areas of Goa.

H02: There is a significant impact of various factors on consumption of fast food in urban and rural areas of Goa.

Research Methodology: The number of respondents surveyed were 1000 (500 from urban area and 500 from rural area). The questionnaire adapted likert scale method to ask children which are their preferred factors that motivate them to buy advertised products. The Likert scale used for the study is strongly disagree- 1, disagree- 2, neutral-3, agree-3, agree-4, strongly-5. The sampling technique used was random sampling. The study was conducted from October 2014 to March 2015 in Goa.

Tools for the analysis: Mean, Standard deviation, Median and Mannwhitney test .

Demographic profile of respondents

Out of 1000 respondents, 500 were from urban and 500 were from rural area. Male respondents were 563 (56.3%) and female were 437 (43.7%). 134 (13.4%) respondents were from age group of 6-7 years, 388 (38.8%) were in the age group of 8-9 years and 478 (47.8%) respondents were from the age group of 10-12 years. In terms of parents income, the average family



income ranged from Rs.1,20,000 to 10 lakhs .Pocket money obtained by children ranged from less than Rs.100 to more than Rs. 400.

Table 1: Area wise distribution of factors influencing consumption of fast food.

Particulars	Area	Mean	Standard Deviation	Median (IQR)	Mannwhitney test z value	P value
Working parents	Urban	2.0965	.81128	2	1.00	.318
	Rural	2.1182	.73476	2		
Taste	Urban	2.8051	.81694	2.75	1.11	.268
	Rural	2.8642	.80034	2.75		
Product characteristics	Urban	3.0908	1.01362	3.33	3.34	.001
	Rural	3.2912	.93127	3.33		
Pocket money	Urban	2.1202	.77061	2	.73	.466
	Rural	2.1433	.73352	2		
Convenience	Urban	3.0494	.80508	3	3.04	.002
	Rural	3.2064	.78808	3.3		
Outing with parents	Urban	2.7555	1.25804	2	.50	.619
	Rural	2.7194	1.29931	2		
Availability near school	Urban	2.9649	1.07559	3	.94	.346
	Rural	2.9048	1.13163	3		
Casual attitude for home-made food	Urban	2.3798	.72469	2.25	2.30	.021
	Rural	2.4955	.79554	2.25		
Cheapness of fast food	Urban	2.7305	.91835	3	1.46	.143
	Rural	2.6543	.86500	2.5		
Attractive promotion	Urban	2.9953	.87185	3	.36	.717
	Rural	3.0187	.85474	3		
Preference for branded products	Urban	3.2365	.90469	3.5	.51	.610
	Rural	3.2184	.90202	3		
Overall impact of factors	Urban	2.7824	.50724	2.7	1.04	.300
	Rural	2.8208	.51833			

Source: Primary data
Significant at 0.05 level.

Result and Discussion

The classified and cross tabulated data is given in table 1. Based on cross tabulation it can be observed that: Working parents have become an integral part of all society. With both parents working and less time to cook children have developed liking for fast food. From the table it can be seen that the impact of working parents is more in rural areas as mean value is 2.11 compared to urban areas where it is 2.09. This shows that the numbers of working parents have increased in rural areas too and children here are also getting used to fast food. The Mannwhitney test has been applied and the p value was found to be .318 which is greater than 0.05 at 5% level of significance which shows that there is no significant association between impact of working parents and area.

Most children like to consume fast food due to its taste. The sweet, salty, spicy, delicious taste attracts children towards it. From the table 1 it can be seen that the mean value is 2.86 for rural and 2.80 in urban areas which shows that there is a higher impact in rural areas as compared to urban areas. In other words children in rural areas are more attracted to new taste and thereby purchase fast food. The p value is .268 which is greater than 0.05 at 5% level of significance which shows that there is no significant association between impact of taste and area.



Children love advertised products with free offers, cartoon characters, favourite hero and attractive package. From table 1 it can be seen that product characteristics have a high impact on urban and rural areas. The impact is more in rural areas as mean value is 3.29 and lower in urban area with mean value 3.09 which shows that children in rural areas are more influenced by product characteristics. Mannwhitney test was applied and the p value was found to be .001 which is less than 0.01 at 5% level of significance which shows that there is a significantly high association between impact of product characteristics and area.

As both parents start working income in the family increases. Parents compensate for lack of time by buying whatever children demand. They also give pocket money to their children so that they can purchase whatever they want. From the table 1 it can be seen that pocket money has more impact in rural than urban area as mean value is 2.14 in rural areas and 2.12 in urban area. The p value is .466 which is greater than 0.05 at 5% level of significance which shows that there is no significant association between impact of pocket money and area.

Convenience in buying fast food is the main element that attracts children to purchase it. Soft drinks are available in smaller pet bottles and chips, biscuits and chocolates are available in smaller packs. All this attracts children to buy them. The above table shows a very high impact of convenience on rural and urban areas. The mean value in rural area is 3.20 while in urban area it is 3.04 which show that the impact is higher in rural areas. Mannwhitney test result shows p value to be .002 which is less than 0.01 at 5% level of significance which shows that there is a significantly high association between impact of convenience and area.

With families becoming nuclear and both parents working the income and standard of living has slowly increased. Children go for outings with their parents where they consume a lot of fast food. The trend was more in urban areas but is now slowly moving to rural areas too. Table 1 shows the impact to be more in urban areas with mean value 2.75 as compared to rural area with mean value 2.71. The p value is .619 which is greater than 0.05 at 5% level of significance which shows that there is no significant association between impact of outing with parents and area.

With shops selling several fast food items near school premises, children are tempted to buy various advertised products. Table 1 shows this impact to be more in urban areas with mean value 2.96 as compared to rural area with mean value 2.90. Mannwhitney test shows p value to be .346 which is greater than 0.05 at 5% level of significance which shows that there is no significant association between impact of availability of fast food near school and area.

Children are influenced by their friends, peers and advertising towards consumption of fast food. Since fast food is easily available in their own homes they prefer it to eat them and avoid home-made food. Their attitude is to eat junk food at the cost of nutritious home-made food. Table 1 shows that today rural children also have developed this trend of consuming fast food more than urban children as mean value is 2.49 in rural areas and 2.37 in urban areas. The p value is .021 which is less than 0.05 at 5% level of significance which shows that there is a significant association between impact of casual attitude for home made food and area.

One of the main factors that influence children towards fast food is its price. Fast food and beverages are found to be cheaper. They are available in small packs/ bottles worth Rs. 5/- on wards which make it affordable to children from urban and rural areas. From table 1 it can be seen that the impact is more in urban areas with mean value 2.73 as compared to rural areas with mean value 2.65. The p value is .143 which is greater than 0.05 at 5% level of significance which shows that there is no significant association between impact of cheapness of fast food and area.

Advertising also plays a major role in children's preference for fast food. The attractive presentation, music, slogan and presence of their favourite celebrity influence children in purchasing fast food. From the table it can be seen that children in rural areas are more influenced by advertising as mean value is 3.01 as compared to urban area where mean value is 2.99. This shows that children in rural areas are attracted more towards promotion. The p value is .717 which is greater than 0.05 at 5% level of significance which shows that there is no significant association between impact of attractive promotion and area. Children today have become brand conscious. They like to eat and drink branded products advertised on TV. This is evident from table 1. It can be seen that children in urban areas prefer more of branded products as mean value is 3.23 as compared to rural areas where mean value is 3.21. Mannwhitney test results show p value to be .610 which is greater than 0.05 at 5% level of significance which shows that there is no significant association between impact of preference for branded products and area.

Lastly an analysis of the overall impact of factors shows that children in rural areas were more influenced by the various factors as mean value is 2.82 while in urban areas it is 2.78. The p value was found to be .300 which is greater than 0.05 at 5%



level of significance which shows that there is no significant association between the various factors and area.

Conclusion

This paper tries to find out the impact of various factors in children's consumption of fast food. From the analysis it is quite evident that the impact is higher in rural areas as compared to urban areas. There is only a thin line of difference between urban and rural areas as most products are easily and widely available in urban and rural areas simultaneously. Both parents have started working even in rural areas as a result of which standard of living has increased. People can afford to buy all types of products. They can also give sufficient amount of pocket money to their children which has increased their spending capacity.

The earlier concept that people in urban areas have a higher standard of living as compared to rural areas is dying out. People in urban and rural areas can equally spend. This finding supports that of Crockett & Sims (1995) who states that dual career families and the employment status of the mother are key factors affecting family lifestyle and food intake.

Children play a major role as consumers. While undertaking purchase they do not care whether the products are healthy for them or not. The first thing that comes to their mind is to purchase the advertised product. Advertising plays a key role in influencing purchases. This finding supports that of Maithili Singh & Tika Ram (2010) that as far as confectionery products are concerned they do not care about the price but buy what they see in the advertisements.

Product characteristics, convenience and casual attitude for homemade food yielded strongest association with fast food consumption in urban and rural areas. This is consistent with Wilson, Crawford & Dobbins (2009) observation that convenience and value for money yielded strongest association with fast food consumption in boys while upscale meals were most strongly associated with girls.

Taste has been a major factor that influences consumption of fast food, more so in rural areas than urban areas. It has been found that it is taste that attracts children to buy fast food again and again. This is consistent with the findings of Goyal & Singh (2007) that young Indian consumers have passion for visiting fast food outlets for fun and change and have highest value for taste and quality. Similar conclusion has been drawn by Thakkar & Thatte (2014) about 2 fast food franchises i.e. McDonalds and KFC. It was found that taste and quality of food items were the most important factors that influence consumers.

Hence we can conclude that although the 3 factors namely product characteristics, convenience and casual attitude for homemade food show a significant association between them and area, the overall impact of factors show no significant association between the remaining factors and area. As a result it can be concluded that H01 is accepted and H02 is rejected.

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