

Empirical Study on Factors Related Attitudes on Fast-Food Consumption among University Students in Malaysia

Lu Man Hong^{1*}

¹Faculty of Business and Entrepreneurship, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan,
Malaysia
vicklumanhong@gmail.com

Kang Yee Ming²

²Faculty of Hospitality, Tourism, and Wellness, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan,
Malaysia
yeeming.h19a0173@siswa.umk.edu.my

Abstract

Fast food is a type of cuisine that may be swiftly made and offered to customers at a low cost. Time by time, changes in client demand, such as taste and lifestyle, may be detected, leading to the launch of several new menus by fast food companies to meet customer desire. This has an impact on the attitudes of university students on fast food eating during the period. The purpose of this study is to look at the link between flavour, time savings, and promotion attractiveness, towards university students' attitude about fast food intake. A study comprising 384 respondents from Malaysian colleges was done utilising online questionnaires using Google Form. All data was proceeded by SPSS software 26.0. The findings revealed that the three independent variables are significantly related to dependent variable. This study can help researchers to find out more about fast food and the information provided can be used as reference material in the future.

Keywords: Attitudes, Fast Food, Flavour, Promotion Attractiveness, Time Savings

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Email Co-Author : vicklumanhong@gmail.com



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Introduction

Fast food is defined as food that is rapidly available, has a variety of options, is tasty, and is fairly priced (Lee, Hyun, & Lee, 2022; Saha, Al Mamun, & Kabir, 2022). In Malaysia, fast-food consumption is increasing among all demographic groups especially among young university students (Mokhtar, Yusoff, & Muhamad Murad, 2020; Tunde et al., 2023) besides the impact of western culture has led to burgers, French fries, pizza, and fried chicken becoming a fad among Malaysians (Tunde et al., 2023). Thus, a student's life is challenging since they have a tight schedule of classes and must catch up before the deadline for their assignments. To add to the difficulties, students now have to deal with entirely online classes, which will have an impact on university students' opinions about fast-food meals. In result, fast food consumption among university students is high (Mokhtar et al., 2020). Moreover, the main draw is the impact of fast-food companies' innovative marketing methods. Indeed, marketing strategy has mostly relied on the use of technology to meet client demand. As the Internet becomes more popular, shopping apps such as online delivery for ordering fast food meals allow users to browse menus and get a discount before making a decision. Typically, fast-food restaurant marketing frequently portrays fast food as healthful, leading to consumer acceptance (Radzak et al., 2022).

Hence, the purpose of this study is to look at the factors that influence university students' attitudes about fast food consumption in Malaysia by focus on the opinions of university students concerning fast food consumption by consider the factors of food flavour, time savings, and promotion attractiveness. Since this study offers researchers to gain a better knowledge of the factors influence university students' fast-food intake since it might be argued that fast food has become the favoured diet of university students due to its ease and quickness of preparation (Noor, Hong, Nasharuddin, Hong, & Aziz, 2018). Furthermore, this study also gives fresh information, knowledge, and the most recent resources on students' attitudes on fast food consumption which might be useful for further research on fast-food industry. As a consequence of this study, future researchers able to discover what factors influence students' impressions of the fast-food industry and directly help researchers collaborate with the fast-food industry to meet student demand for fast-food items and produce new fast-food products that can help the fast-food sector maintain its profitability.

Literature Review

University Students' Attitudes on Fast Food Consumption in Malaysia

According to research conducted by Botchwey et al. (2020), the Covid-19 pandemic has brought about changes in fast-food consumption patterns and purchasing attitudes. Fast food refers to uncomplicated meals rooted in American cuisine, characterized by reasonable pricing, quick service, and utilization of social media for advertising purposes. Examples include hamburgers, pizza, sandwiches, and French fries (Lee et al., 2022; Mokhtar et al., 2020; Tunde et al., 2023). The demand for fast food among young individuals, particularly university students, is steadily rising due to several factors impacting their inclination to buy fast food items. These factors encompass factors like taste, affordability, speedy service, and

convenience (Tunde et al., 2023). The time constraints they face lead them to opt for budget-friendly and easily consumable food choices. Mokhtar et al. (2020) noted that in Malaysia, 84.5% of university students opt for fast food, whereas 15.5% prefer home-cooked meals due to health and financial considerations. Another study by (Lee et al., 2022) indicated that students, especially those living away from their families, rely on fast food as a primary food source. (Manggabarani et al., 2020) suggests that Malaysian fast-food consumers have become more focused on factors like product cleanliness, taste, ambiance, and freshness before making a purchase decision. These considerations significantly shape their attitudes as fast-food consumers.

Food Taste

Fast food flavour is defined by a number of characteristics that contribute to its specific flavour profile and the taste by determinants of flavour enhancers and seasonings, food texture, cultural adaptation, and individuals' familiarity, as well as food taste consistency (Ariffin, Ng, & Mohsin, 2021). In the basis of food, food the younger generation such as university students mainly prefers enjoy sampling new dishes especially chose food rely on the basis of flavour which include fast-food. This is due to the flavour of the meal itself is a crucial influence in young people's choice of fast food which linked to the fact that fast food may be cooked in a short amount of time with superb flavour according to (Ariffin et al., 2021). Thus, food taste on this study defined as the increment of fast-food taste due to the impact of contents, texture, and presentation.

Menus provided by food manufacturing businesses impact meal selection in addition to taste preferences. In general, fruits and other moderately nutritional items can help this group consume less high-calorie fast food. However, their demand for high-calorie goods drives their need for fast food, as the bulk of these quick dishes are pleasant and should appeal to university students (Ghai & Jha, 2019). According to Pourabassi et al. (2019), the level of taste of fast-food items has the most influence on students' views and is the key determinant in increasing fast-food consumption due to the student want to taste and enjoy the flavour of the meal especially when students are stressed which prefer eat something tasty for relaxation. Thus, the hypothesis formed as:

H1: Food taste significantly related to university students' attitude towards fast-food consumption.

Time Saving

Individuals were mandated to engage in remote work or study, with leaving their residences restricted solely to medical necessities, essential employment, grocery shopping, or emergencies (Yau et al., 2020). This substantial shift in daily life led to potential adverse effects on lifestyle aspects, such as dietary patterns. Research conducted by (Ghosh, 2020) indicated that university students underwent significant and typically unfavorable modifications in their eating preferences. These changes were primarily instigated by variations in food availability. The consumption of fast food has emerged as a widespread practice globally. People invest more energy and considerably less time in preparing meals at home. Consequently, the rapid expansion of the fast-food sector has given rise to a notable trend, particularly among young adults and college students, owing to its prompt

service, convenience, and affordability (Mokhtar et al., 2020). Consequently, the desire to save time stands out as a key factor driving students toward fast food, as it is perceived as more convenient and time-efficient. Apart from economic considerations, students opt for fast food due to their demanding schedules and time constraints, even if they reside off-campus. Unlike conventional restaurants, where patrons must queue for waitstaff to take their orders, this type of establishment eliminates such waiting times. With swift meal preparation taking mere minutes, students can relish their meals without unnecessary time wastage. With align above, the hypothesis formed as:

H2: Time saving significantly related to university students' attitude towards fast-food consumption.

Promotion Attractiveness

As stated by Liew, Razali, Ng, Boon, and Sui (2021), promotion attractiveness stands as a method employed by marketers to capture the interest of potential and existing customers, serving both acquisition and retention purposes. In the fast-food industry, advertising prevails as the dominant form of marketing, aiming to sway individuals into buying products or services through compelling marketing messages. Fast-food enterprises commonly deploy tactics to promote their offerings and draw in a larger customer base. Furthermore, the concept of price promotion has grown into a pivotal marketing strategy with the potential to shape consumer behavior significantly (Liew et al., 2021). It receives a substantial portion of the budget in the swiftly expanding sectors, as it can swiftly boost sales and help customers establish brand familiarity across diverse media platforms (Noor et al., 2018). Established items are often maintained at accessible prices, while newer or less popular products receive discounts. The product range has evolved over time to align with customer expectations. The effectiveness of introducing new products or services hinges on the appeal of the promotion, prompting companies to employ various marketing approaches to stimulate customer demand (Liew et al., 2021). Typically, the fast-food industry employs promotional tactics to enhance consumer purchasing intent and amplify sales volume (Noor et al., 2018). Students are particularly susceptible to advertising's allure and influence, given their frequent and extensive exposure to it. With align above, the hypothesis formed as:

H3: Promotion Attractiveness significantly related to university students' attitude towards fast-food consumption.

Methodology

The primary objective of this study is to assess the factors related to the perceptions of university students regarding fast food consumption in Malaysia. To achieve this, the researchers gather quantitative primary data. This approach will enable a deeper investigation into the impact of various variables on university students' attitudes toward fast food consumption. Furthermore, this methodology provided an overview of the eating habits of Malaysian university students during this recovery phase. Thus, data collection involves the acquisition, measurement, and evaluation of pertinent information for research purposes, utilizing established and accepted methodologies. It is typically the first and most pivotal step in the research process, across various subject areas. The method of data collection can vary based on the type of information needed. In this study, data was gathered

through online questionnaires. 400 Malaysian university students were randomly selected to participate in an online survey via platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Telegram, using Google Forms. This approach is highly advantageous for data collection, enabling swift distribution and retrieval of questionnaire responses. The questionnaire outlined the study's objectives, goals, and the participants' consent to the confidentiality of the provided information. Respondents can conveniently complete the survey using their smartphones or computers, making it easier for them to respond from any location and at any time. However, 6 responses were deleted due to straight lining answer responses as Hair, Page, and Brunsveld (2019) stated these responses highly affected the outcome of the data finding result.

Sampling involves selecting a representative number of cases from a larger population (Hair et. al., 2019). For this study, the researcher was chosen subjects based on various demographic criteria. The two main types of sampling methods are probability sampling and non-probability sampling, each with distinct approaches for determining the sample size and composition. Probability sampling involves random selection, where specific protocols are followed to ensure equal chances of selection for all units in the population. Non-probability sampling, on the other hand, doesn't guarantee known probabilities of selection. For this study, a probability sampling approach employed to gain a deeper understanding of the subject. A sample was drawn from the specific demographic of university students who engaged in fast food consumption.

Data analysis entails the process of collecting, evaluating, and transforming data into valuable information. It serves as a critical component of implementing a quality management system. The data analysis methodology for this study includes descriptive analysis and Pearson correlation analysis. These techniques were helpful in comprehensively interpreting the data collected and uncovering potential relationships and trends among the variables under investigation by SPSS 26.0 version.

Result and Discussion

Finding

Frequency Analysis

A total of 384 university students from Malaysia responses were proceeded in data finding process after data filter process. Among the participants, male respondents constituted 47.3% (n=183), while female respondents accounted for 52.8% (n=211), signifying a higher percentage of male students. In terms of age distribution, the highest proportion was in the 22 – 25 years old category, comprising 76.5% (n=300) of the participants. The age group of 18 – 21 years old constituted 20.0% (n=80), and the lowest percentage was observed among those aged 26 years old and above. Specifically, 3.5% (n=14) belonged to this category. Examining the participants' academic year, the majority were in Year 3, constituting 47.0% (n=188), followed by Year 4 at 26.8% (n=101). Year 2 accounted for 13.5% (n=54), and the lowest representation was among Year 1 students at 12.8% (n=51). Examining the ethnic background of the respondents, the data revealed that "others" races had the highest representation, accounting for 44.5% (n=172). Malays constituted 31.8% (n=127), Chinese students made up 16.0% (n=64), and Indian students represented 7.8% (n=31) of the participants. Regarding educational levels,

the majority held bachelor's degrees, making up 94.5% (n=372), while the lowest representation was observed among individuals with a Ph.D. degree, constituting 1.8% (n=7). Lastly, considering marital status, the vast majority of respondents were single, accounting for 96.0% (n=384), whereas those who were married comprised 4.0% (n=10) of the total participants.

Table 1 Frequency Analysis

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	183	47.3
Female	211	52.8
Age		
18 – 21 years old	80	20.0
22 – 25 years old	300	76.5
26 years old and above	14	3.5
Year		
Year 1	51	12.8
Year 2	54	13.5
Year 3	188	47.0
Year 4	101	26.8
Race		
Malays	127	31.8
Chinese	64	16.0
Indian	31	7.8
Others	172	44.5
Education Level		
Bachelor	372	94.5
Master	15	3.8
PHD	7	1.8
Marital Status		
Single	384	96.0
Married	10	4.0

Pearson Correlation Analysis

Table 2 Pearson Correlation Analysis

	Hypothesis	Beta Value	P-Value	Result
H ₁	Food Taste > Attitude	0.790	0.000	Significant
H ₂	Time Saving > Attitude	0.721	0.000	Significant
H ₃	Promotion Attractiveness > Attitude	0.652	0.000	Significant

According to the data presented in Table 2, the Pearson correlation analysis indicates that there is a significant positive correlation between food taste ($r = 0.790$, $p = 0.00$), time-saving ($r = 0.721$, $p = 0.00$), and promotion attractiveness ($r = 0.652$, $p = 0.00$), all of which contribute to the favorable attitudes of university students towards fast food consumption in Malaysia.

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the factors contributing to positive attitudes among university students towards fast food consumption in Malaysia during the Covid-19 recovery phase. The findings of this study indicated that taste, time-saving, and promotion attractiveness significantly impact university students' attitudes toward fast food consumption during this recovery period. These results suggest that university students have a preference for consuming fast food due to its favorable effects on their academic pursuits. Drawing from the study's findings, several recommendations can be made for future researchers to enhance the depth and appeal of their investigations. Firstly, expanding the range of languages used for the questionnaire is suggested. While the questionnaire was available in Bahasa Malaysia and English, including languages like Chinese and Tamil could promote broader comprehension and inclusivity.

Moreover, broadening the study's scope beyond university students to encompass the general public of all ages and backgrounds is advised. This is because not only young individuals but also older people have an affinity for fast food. Recognizing that fast food consumption can have positive effects, such as inducing happiness and stress reduction, could provide a more comprehensive perspective. Furthermore, it is advisable for future researchers to continue employing quantitative methodologies for studies related to this topic. The quantitative approach offers quicker and more efficient data analysis compared to qualitative methods, and it allows for broader population studies. Nonetheless, future researchers can utilize this study's insights as a foundation for more sophisticated and captivating investigations. In addition, the research findings have practical implications for the fast food industry. It's recommended that the industry consider offering special discounts or meal packages tailored to students. This would not only help students save money but also contribute to their satisfaction and well-being, thereby bolstering the industry's revenue.

Conclusion

In summary, this study has shed light on the factors influencing university students' attitudes toward fast food consumption in Malaysia during the Covid-19 recovery phase. The research underscores the significance of taste, time-saving, and promotion attractiveness as key determinants of students' preference for fast food. By revealing these insights, this study contributes to a deeper comprehension of the drivers behind food choices during the Covid-19 recovery period.

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