

A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE Z-GENERATION MALES AND FEMALES SELECTION OF FAST FOOD OUTLETS IN PUNJAB

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ABSTRACT

India is regarded as one of the largest consumer of fast food. Thus, the present paper is focussing on the factors influencing Z-generation male and female consumers selection of fast food outlets in Punjab. Structured questionnaire was prepared and distributed to respondents in the month of February, 2022 and responses were collected using online platform Google Form. The findings of the present research concludes that while selecting fast food outlets in Punjab, Z-generation males gives more preference to food taste, location of the fast food outlet, friendliness of service personnel and food presentation whereas Z-generation females gives more preference to cleanliness of the outlet, variety in dishes in menu, pricing of the dishes and friendliness of service personnel while selecting fast food outlets.

KEYWORDS: Z-Generation, Fast Food Outlets, Males, Females, Selection, Punjab.

Introduction

Fast food is a common choice and is known to be convenient for customers, delicious and reasonably priced (Xiao et al., 2019). In modern times, fast food is known for its cheap price, efficiency, and taste. In addition, advertisers of fast food restaurants usually portray fast food in a healthy way, which can easily shake customers (Chou et al., 2008). Goyal and Singh (2007) state that fast food is the fastest growing food category in the world. A possible explanation for this is that fast food may include a quick reorder as well as a minimal service registration to a restaurant or takeaway facility. Foods that can be served and cooked quickly are considered fast food. The main reason customers prefer simple meals to home-cooked meals is the busy lifestyle of part-time families, especially with children (Atkins and Bowler, 2001). "Fast food" mainly defines foods from domestic / multinational fast food chains (McDonald's, Domino's Pizza, Subway, Burger King, Pizza Hat, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Taco Bell, etc.) (3-5), (Bauer et al., 2012). Gen Z (Gen Z), also known as Post Millennials, are people born after 1995 (Priporas et al., 2017). According to Tabassum and Rahman (2012) customers selection of a particular fast food outlet depends on numerous factors which include variation quality, price, location, and environment. While, other reserachers identified other important factors which include nutritional value (Goyal & Singh, 2007); ambience (Thakkar & Thatte, 2014); and hygiene (Alam & Iqbal, 2007) as influencers. Generation Z refers to people born in the 1990s and nurtured in the 2000s during the century's most fundamental developments, who live in a world with the internet, smart phones, laptops, freely available networks, and digital media (Bascha, 2011). Generations Z is raised with the social web, they are digital centric and technology is their identity. They are also referred as Gen Tech, Generation I, Gen Wii, Digital natives, etc. (Singh & Dangmei, 2016). A person's life can be deemed to be turned around at a young age. People go through considerable changes at this period, which have an impact on their subsequent life stages. At a young age, an individual's knowledge and skills in the consumption of numerous items begin to take shape.

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Fast food is often defined as ultra-processed, high-energy cuisine that can be cooked quickly and readily, and is typically served in or carried out as a quick meal from restaurants or snack shops (Lin & Frazao, 1997). Despite the fact that fast food is getting more popular among people of all ages, young adults continue to be the primary consumers of fast food worldwide (Mathur & Patodiya, 2016). Furthermore, it has become popular for young adults to eat more outside of the home, which contributes to greater consumption of fast food (Janssen et al., 2018). India is one of the world's newest consumer marketplaces. The youth market is predicted to have a spending power of \$100 billion USD. According to Solomon (2002), young people spend a lot of money on things that make them feel happy. According to Goyal and Singh (2007), among these feel-good items and services, fast food is growing popularity among Indian young and is becoming a part of their daily lives. At the global level, research on fast food consumption has primarily focused on describing the characteristics of fast food consumers, the nutritional content of meals served, obesity and diseases caused by fast food consumption, marketing strategies, and corporate social responsibility initiatives from fast food companies (Islam & Ullah, 2010; Anand, 2011; De Rezende & De Avelar, 2012). The present research is focussing on young generation consumers purchase decision towards fast food outlets and the findings of the present research will differentiate Z-generation males and females decision making towards fast food outlets in the state of Punjab.

Review of Literature

- **Concept of Fast Food**

In their research report, Story et al. (2002) stated that fast food refers to food that is made rapidly and is high in saturated fat, and that it can be purchased at fast food outlets using pre-cooked food items and served in a packaged form. Fast food can be classified as a food or snack item, according to Bellisle et al. (2003), and the term fast food can be used interchangeably with snack food, junk food, or takeaway. A meal differs from a snack in that meals are larger, have more variety, and are more substantial, but snacks often have lower portion sizes and can be taken in tiny parts in between two meals. In terms of weight and energy, meals are often twice as large as snacks. Meals have a higher nutritional value than snacks, and snacks often contain more carbohydrates and less protein. Fast foods, according to Hossain and Islam (2020) in their research paper, are any food products that can be offered in a restaurant with a short cooking time and handed over to customers for takeout.

- **Z-Generation Consumers**

Individuals born after 1995 are known as Generation Z, Digital Generation, Children of the Internet, Media Generation, Digital Natives, .com Generation, Instant Online, or iGen, according to Levickaite (2010). In their study, Fehér and Hornyák (2011) suggested that the term "online generation" be used instead of "digital natives" or "net generation" to describe the Z-generation. Their research revealed the following important findings: young people aged 10 to 25 spend a lot of time on computers, mostly on social networking sites or utilising chat. People in this age group have a low level of ICT literacy and a high level of self-ICT language production with its own grammar, owing to the increase in online communication. According to Berkup (2014), the most distinguishing characteristics of Generation Z are independence, reliance, addiction to technology, individualism, and speed. In terms of technology usage, generation Z and their parents, generation X, are vastly different.

- **Factors Influencing Consumers Selection of Fast Food Outlets**

According to Prabhavathi et al. (2014), the cheap pricing of the menu and the influence of friends, service quality and healthy menu, taste and closeness to the restaurant, and restaurant ambience were more essential in the choosing of fast food outlets. Consumers value brand reputation of the food item the most, followed by proximity to receive and accessibility, similarity of taste with previous experience, cost and quality of the food, discount and taste, cleanliness and hygiene, salesmanship and decoration, fat and cholesterol level, and self-service factors, according to Islam and Ullah (2010). According to Ashraf et al. (2014), six elements are theorised to influence consumer satisfaction in fast food marketing, including meal quality, service quality, variety of food, outlet environment, food price, and location convenience. The data show that all parameters, with the exception of food price, have a significant impact on consumer satisfaction. Khan et al., (2013) conducted research and discovered that service quality and brand are the most important elements in determining customer satisfaction in the fast food business in Peshawar, Pakistan. However, there is a strong link between customer happiness and promotions, service quality, customer expectations, brand, physical environment, price, and product

taste. Environmental cleanliness and attentive service are two major areas where Chinese restaurateurs can improve, according to **Liu and Jang's (2009)** study on ethnic restaurants in emotional influence to environmental dimensions. Furthermore, the quality of the food and the consistency of the service appear to be essential factors for the success of Chinese restaurants. Overall, the study found that meal quality, service reliability, and ambient cleanliness were the three most important factors in generating happy customers and favourable post-dining behavioural intentions.

- **Males and Females Selection of Fast Food Outlets**

There is a noticeable distinction between men and women when it comes to eating preferences and behaviours. In general, females are believed to participate in significantly more health-promoting behaviours and have healthier lifestyle patterns than males (**Arganini et al., 2012**). After the implementation of a regulation requiring chain restaurants' menus to provide details of the energy content of all menu items, Dumanovsky and colleagues discovered that women were more likely to report using calorie information in fast food restaurants (**Dumanovsky et al., 2011**). Meat (especially red meat), alcohol, and large portion sizes are related with masculinity in studies conducted in modern western countries, whereas vegetables, fruit, fish, and sour dairy products are connected with femininity in studies conducted in modern western societies (**Arganini et al., 2012**). In the current study, female college students were more likely than male college students to say that nutritional information influenced their fast-food restaurant menu choices. College students' diet choices have been reported to be influenced by product labelling (**Marietta et al., 1999**).

Objectives of the Study

- To analyse the factors influencing z-generation males selection of fast food outlets.
- To analyse the factors influencing z-generation females selection of fast food outlets.
- To compare the z-generation males and females selection of fast food outlets

Research Methodology

- **Sampling and Data Collection**

The data for the present research were collected from the consumers of fast food in the state of Punjab. The data was specifically gathered from Z-generation consumers in the month of February, 2022 using Google Forms. Respondents were asked closed-ended questions related to their demographic profile, and factors influencing Z-generation consumers selection of fast food outlets in Punjab. There were two sections in the structured questionnaire. The first section included questions on demographic profile of respondents. The second section consisted closed ended questions on factors influencing consumers selection of fast food outlets on a likert scale of 1 to 5 where 1 not at all influential, 2 slightly influential, 3 indicates moderately influential, 4 indicates very influential and 5 indicates extremely influential. The primary sources of data collection was structured questionnaire and secondary sources of information were Government reports, national and international journals, published research articles, theses, books, websites, magazines, newspapers, etc.

Analysis and Findings

- **Demographic Profile of the Respondents**

Questionnaire was distributed to 150 respondents, out of which 110 had filled the form and out 110 filled forms, 102 responses were found valid. Table 1 is indicating demographic profile of Z-generation consumers of Indian State of Punjab in percentage.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables		(%)
Gender	Male	60.8
	Female	39.2
Age	10-14 years	--
	14-18 years	19.6
	18-22 years	66.7
	22-25 years	13.7
Ares of Residence	Rural	23.5
	Urban	76.5

Educational Qualifications	Middle School	--
	High School	45.1
	Graduate	35.3
	Post Graduate	9.8
	Others	9.8
Occupation	Students	82.4
	Government Job	2
	Private Job	11.8
	Others	4
Annual Income	Not earning	80.4
	Up to 3 Lakhs	2
	3-6 Lakhs	13.7
	6-10 Lakhs	3.9
	More than 10 Lakhs	--

- **Profile of Respondents Related to their Fast Food Outlets Visit**

9.8% of the respondents prefer to visit McDonald's, 37.3% of the respondents prefers to visit Domino's, 13.7% of the respondents prefers to visit Pizza Hut, 29.4% of the respondents prefers to visit Burger King and 9.8% of the respondents prefers to visit Subway. 64.7% of the respondents visit fast food outlets 1-2 times per week, 31.4% of the respondents visits 3-4 times per week, 2% of the respondents visit 5-6 times and 2% of the respondents mentioned that they visit 7 times or more fast food outlet in a week. 60.8% of the respondents mentioned that they spend up to 1 thousand on fast food per month, 23.5% of the respondents mentioned that they spend 1-3 thousand per week month on fast food, 9.8% mentioned that they spend 3-6 thousand per month, 3.9% of respondents spends 6-10 thousand per month on fast food and 2% of the respondents mentioned that they spend more than 10 thousand per month on fast food.

- **Factors Influencing Z-Generation Males Selection of Fast Food Outlets in Punjab**

The first objective of the study was to analyse the factors influencing z-generation males selection of fast food outlets. Central tendency technique was used to analyse the various factors of fast food outlet selection. Ranking was given based on the weighted mean score. Factor with highest weighted mean score was considered as most influential factor for Z-generation male consumers selection of fast food outlet in Punjab. From table no. 2, it has been revealed that food taste has the highest weighted mean score, thus it can be concluded that food taste is the most important factor for fast food outlet selection for Z-generation male consumers. Second rank has been given to location of the hotel. Friendliness of service personnel and food presentation has jointly received the third rank. Ambiance of the restaurant has got 4th rank and prompt services provided by the employees has received 5th rank. Variety in dishes in menu and cleanliness and hygiene of service personnel has jointly got 6th rank. Portion size of the food served has got 7th rank, pricing of the dishes and cleanliness of the kitchen has jointly got 8th rank and cleanliness of the outlet has got 9th rank.

- **Factors Influencing Z-Generation Females Selection of Fast Food Outlets in Punjab**

The second objective of the study was to analyse the factors influencing z-generation females selection of fast food outlets. Findings from table no. 3 revealed that cleanliness of the outlet and variety in the dishes of menu has jointly received 1st rank i.e. cleanliness of the outlet and variety in dishes of menu influence the most Z-generation female consumers selection of fast food outlets. Pricing of the dishes has received 2nd rank and friendliness of the service personnel has received 3rd rank. Food presentation has got 4th rank. Location of the hotel and portion size of the food served has jointly received 5th rank. Cleanliness and hygiene of service personnel, prompt services provided by service personnel, ambiance of the restaurant and food presentation has received 6th rank. Cleanliness of the kitchen has got 7th rank.

Table 2: Ranking of factors influencing Z-Generation male consumers selection of fast food outlets

Factors	Not at all Influential (1)	Slightly Influential (2)	Moderately Influential (3)	Very Influential (4)	Extremely Influential (5)	Total	Weighted Total	Weighted Mean	Rank
Cleanliness of outlet	10	10	8	12	22	62	212	3.41935	9
Cleanliness and hygiene of service personnel	2	14	14	12	20	62	220	3.57895	6
Cleanliness of the kitchen	4	10	18	14	16	62	214	3.55263	8
Variety in dishes in menu	4	10	16	12	20	62	220	3.52632	6
Pricing of dishes	6	10	8	26	12	62	214	3.52632	8
Friendliness of service personnel	4	6	14	14	24	62	234	3.84211	3
Prompt services provided by employees	4	10	8	22	18	62	226	3.65789	5
Ambiance of the restaurant	2	12	14	8	26	62	230	3.71053	4
Location of the outlet	2	6	12	22	20	62	238	3.73684	2
Food taste	2	10	8	6	36	62	250	3.97368	1
Food presentation	4	6	12	18	22	62	234	3.76316	3
Portion size of the food served	4	12	12	16	18	62	218	3.55263	7

Table 3: Ranking of factors influencing Z-Generation female consumers selection of fast food outlets

Factors	Not at all Influential (1)	Slightly Influential (2)	Moderately Influential (3)	Very Influential (4)	Extremely Influential (5)	Total	Weighted Total	Weighted Mean	Rank
Cleanliness of outlet	4	4	2	4	26	40	164	4.1	1
Cleanliness and hygiene of service personnel	2	6	6	16	10	40	146	3.65	6
Cleanliness of the kitchen	0	6	16	6	12	40	144	3.6	7
Variety in dishes in menu	2	2	6	10	20	40	164	4.1	1
Pricing of dishes	0	6	6	8	20	40	162	4.05	2
Friendliness of service personnel	0	6	8	12	14	40	154	3.85	3
Prompt services provided by employees	4	4	6	14	12	40	146	3.65	6
Ambiance of the restaurant	2	8	6	10	14	40	146	3.65	6
Location of the outlet	4	4	8	8	16	40	148	3.7	5
Food taste	2	4	10	8	16	40	152	3.8	4
Food presentation	0	6	12	12	10	40	146	3.65	6
Portion size of the food served	2	6	6	14	12	40	148	3.7	5

• **Comparison of Z-Generation Males And Females Selection of Fast Food Outlets**

The third objective of the study was to compare the factors influencing Z-generation males and females selection of fast food outlets in Punjab. Findings from table no. 2 and 3 suggests that while selecting fast food outlets in Punjab, Z-generation males gives more preference to food taste, location of the fast food outlet, friendliness of service personnel and food presentation whereas Z-generation females gives more preference to cleanliness of the outlet, variety in dishes in menu, pricing of the dishes and friendliness of service personnel while selecting fast food outlets. Pricing of the dishes, cleanliness of the outlet and kitchen does not influence much to Z-generation male consumers in the selection of fast food outlets and cleanliness and hygiene of service personnel, prompt services provided by employees, food presentation, ambiance of the outlet and cleanliness of the kitchen does not influence much Z-generation female consumers in the selection of fast food outlets in Punjab.

Conclusion

The present research concludes that while selecting fast food outlets in Punjab, Z-generation males gives more preference to food taste, location of the fast food outlet, friendliness of service personnel and food presentation whereas Z-generation females gives more preference to cleanliness of the outlet, variety in dishes in menu, pricing of the dishes and friendliness of service personnel while selecting fast food outlets.

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