Demographic Profile and Consumption Patterns of Fast Foods among College Students in Lunglei Town, Mizoram

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Abstract: *Fast foods are the foods which can be prepared and served quickly. Fast foods are gaining popularity across India due to globalisation, busy work schedules, hectic lifestyle and so on. The younger generation consume fast foods more than the older people. The demographic factors of the customers play an important role in buying and spending decisions of fast foods. This article is aimed at understanding the demographic profile and consumption patterns of fast foods among college students in Lunglei town in Mizoram, a small state in North East India. The data were collected by administering a structured questionnaire from the sample of 150 college students. The sample was drawn equally from three colleges in Lunglei town. This study reveals that around 40% of male respondents and around 60% of female respondents belonged to urban area. Over 45% of the respondents' parents were government servants, followed by cultivation (18%), and 17.33% of the respondents' parents were businessmen and self-employed. Most of the respondents belonged to middle class families. Nearly 88% of the respondents have larger families with five or more number of family members. In this context, the prospective researchers may go for research into different areas of buying behaviour in respect of fast foods which would be relevant from the view point of the marketers, the health authorities and the sociologists.*
Keywords: *College students, Demographic profile, Fast foods, Junk foods, Instant foods.*

I. Introduction

Food is one of the three basic needs of human life which gives the energy and nutrients to grow and develop, be healthy and active, to move, work, play, think and learn. Fast foods are the foods which can be prepared and served quickly. Harrison and Marske (2005) and Pereira et al. (2005) defined fast food as a pre-packed meal, ready to eat food/ convenience food. Fast food have been defined by Bender and Bender (1995) as a general term used for a limited menu of foods that lend themselves to production line techniques; suppliers tend to specialize in products such as hamburgers, pizzas, chicken, or sandwiches. Some other researchers have used the terms fast food and junk food interchangeably (Kaushik et al, 2011). However, most of the junk foods are fast foods as they are prepared and served fast but not all fast foods are junk food, especially when they prepared with nutritious contents. The concept of fast foods has different meanings depending on the context, situation and culture. It has many definitions in the literature.Fast foods have become very popular today due to easy accessibility, low price, taste, variety of items, busy working schedules, convenience, rising number of women working and so on. Due to busier consumer lifestyles and dual-working families with children, emphasis is increasingly being placed on quick meal solutions (Athkins and Bowler, 2001). Fast foods are popular among young generation due to modernization and globalization. Ahmed et al. (2008) reported that consuming fast foods has become a recent trend among upper society, teenagers and youth and the fast food has won the palate of those groups.

Fast foods are gaining popularity across India due to globalisation, busy work schedules, hectic lifestyle and so on. Priyadharsini S. (2014) found the marketing strategies McDonalds adopted in India and the reasons why Indian consumers were attracted towards the fast foods and revealed that because of trend of nuclear family, raise in income level, raise in employment level of women and advertising were the strategies which leads Indian consumers to get attracted towards fast foods. Mizoram is one of the states in North East India where the lifestyles of the people are influenced by modernization and westernization. Fast foods have become popular in the state. The Mizos are in the habit of consuming fast foods especially during the noon time. Global players such as KFC and Subway have started their operations in Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram.

The demographic factors of the customers play an important role in buying and spending decisions of fast foods. A variety of social, cultural and economic factors contribute to the development, maintenance and change of dietary patterns. Intra-individual determinants such as physiological and psychological factors, acquired food preferences and knowledge, can be distinguished from interpersonal or social factors such as family and group influences (Glanz et al, 1998). Zafar et al (2002) conducted a study in Faislabad city, Pakistan and emphasized that socioeconomic (age of the respondents, education, profession, household income per month, family size) characteristics play a very crucial role while selecting the fast foods.Marketers have often relied on intuition and demographic information such as age, sex, income level and occupation for identifying potential areas (Dash PK and Sarangi M, 2008). Many studies (e.g. Lastovicka, 1982; Westbrook and Black, 1985; Sproles and Sproles, 1990; Stone, 1954) show that consumer profiles are crucial as it deals with the mental orientation of customers in making decisions. The important effects of demographic, socioeconomic and regional factors have been demonstrated by various studies in customer's choice of foreign and domestic products (Sharma, 1995 and Klien, 1998).

II.   Literature Review

Some important studies concerning demographic profile and consumption patterns of fast foods are reviewed here as under to highlight their findings.

Shi et al. (2005) conducted a study on socio-economic differences in food habits and preferences of school adolescents in Jiangsu Province, China. The study revealed thathigh socio-economic status (SES) and urban residence was positively associated with intake of high-energy foods, such as foods of animal origin, Western style foods and dairy products.

Akbay et al. (2007) conducted a study on consumer characteristics influencing fast food consumption in Turkey. The study highlighted that age, income, education, household size, presence of children and other factors, such as consumer attitude towards the price of fast food, health concerns and child preference, significantly influence the frequency of fast food consumption.

Mohr et al. (2007) conducted a survey to identify the key predictors of fast-food consumption from a range of demographic, attitudinal, personality and lifestyle variables. The results indicated that predictors of more frequent consumption of fast food at take away (and, to a lesser extent, eat in) included lower age – especially under 45 years, relative indifference to health consequences of behaviour, greater household income, more exposure to advertising, greater receptiveness to advertising, lesser allocation of time for eating, and greater allocation of time to home entertainment. There were no effects for occupational status or education level.

Van Zyl (2010) conducted a study to determine fast food consumption patterns, socio-economic characteristics and other factors that influence the fast food intake of young adults from different socio-economic areas in Johannesburg, South Africa. The study revealed thatAlmost half (42%, n = 102) of the employed participants earned less than R5 000 per month, but spent more than R200 on fast food per month. Twenty-one per cent of all participants had fast food at least once a week, while 27.6% had it two to three times a week. Socio-economic group (SEG) and gender were significantly related to fast food intake (p < 0.01), with a larger proportion of participants (65%, n = 76) in the lower socio-economic group (LSEG) showing more frequent use. Males consumed fast food more frequently than females.

Steyn et al. (2011) attempted to understand the use of street foods and fast foods purchased by South Africans living in different provinces and geographic areas and revealed that the highest intake of street food was in the medium socio-economic category (14.7%) while the highest intake of fast foods was in the high socio-economic category (13.2%). Consumption of fast foods and street foods were influenced by a number of socio-demographic factors including ownership of major home appliances.

III. Objective And Methodology

The main purpose of this article is to study the demographic profile and consumption patterns of fast foods among college students in Lunglei town in Mizoram. Mizoram is a small state in India's North East region. The demographic factors include-age, religion, marital status, main occupation of the family, annual income of the family, and the size of the respondent' family.The hypotheses framed based on the study are as follows:

H_1: There is a significant correlation between the family income of the respondents and frequency of consuming fast foods in a week.

H_2: There is a significant correlation between the family income of the respondents and frequency of consuming junk foods in a week.

H_3: There is a significant correlation between the family income of the respondents and frequency of consuming instant foods in a week.

H4: There is a significant correlation between the family income of the respondents and the amount spent on fast foods in a week.

H5: There is a significant correlation between the family income of the respondents and the amount spent on junk foods in a week.

H6: There is a significant correlation between the family income of the respondents and the amount spent on instant foods in a week.

For the purpose of the study, primary data were collected by administering a structured questionnaire among the sample students of the three colleges in Lunglei town, in Mizoram. The survey was conducted during July – August, 2016 which was confined to the college students in Lunglei town who consume fast foods at least four times in a week. For the purpose of the study, fast foods include fast foods available from college canteen and other restaurants, junk foods and instant foods. The sample consisted of a total of 150 college students. The sample was drawn equally from three colleges in Lunglei town, by selecting 50 students from each of the colleges. The equal number of male (25) and female (25) respondents were selected from each of the colleges by using the quota sampling method. Quota sampling was used to give equal representation to each gender from each of the colleges. The questionnaires were administered to the respondents in the college campus. The data collected were analysed by using simple percentage and Spearman rank correlation. Secondary data were collected from journals, newspapers, books, and websites.

IV. Results And Discussion

Age of the respondents

The lives of teenagers and children are influenced by the trend towards individualization; young people today are described as making their own choices and shaping their own biographies (Lynne-Chisholm and Bois Reymond, 1993). There are certain studies (e.g. Zafar et al. 2002) in Pakistan that have examined the consumer behaviour towards fast food. These studies found that the majority of the respondents were young, well-educated and economically well off.

Table 1: Age of the respondents

Age in years	Frequency	Per cent
15 – 18	48	32.00
19 - 22	96	64.00
Above 22	6	4.0
Total	150	100.0

Source: Field study.

Table 2.1 gives the age distribution of the respondents. 64% of the respondents belonged to the age group of 19 - 22 years. 32% of the respondents belonged to 15 - 18 years of age group. The modal age group of the respondents was 19 - 22 years, with 96 respondents (64%) falling into the group.

Marital Status of the Respondents

All the respondents except one were unmarried. This is due to the fact that the college students were young and dependent on their parents.

Area of Living

Table 3 indicates the living area of the respondents.

Table 3: Living area of the respondents

Gender	Area of living			Total
	Urban	Semi-urban	Rural	
Male	33 (40.74)	13 (76.47)	29 (55.77)	75 (100)
Female	48 (59.25)	4 (23.53)	23 (44.23)	75 (100)
Total	81 (54.00)	17 (11.33)	52 (34.67)	150 (100)

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages.
Source: Field study.

Out of 75 male respondents, over 76% belonged to semi-urban area, over 55% belonged to rural area, and over 40% belonged to urban area. Out of 75 female respondents, nearly 60% belonged to urban area, over 44% belonged to rural area, and over 23% belonged to semi-urban area. Overall, 54% of the respondents belong

to urban areas, over 34% of the respondents belong to rural areas, and only over 11% of the respondents belong to semi-urban areas.

Annual Income of the Family

Income is one of the important determinants which has a strong positive influence on the ownership of durables (Bijaya KP and Siba PP, 2008) and even the preference pattern of non-durable products largely depend upon the income distribution of the households (Prashanta KD and Minaketan S, 2008). Further, several studies show that income, as a demographic factor, has a significant impact on purchasing styles (Ratchford et al., 2001 and Wood, 2002). Consumer preferences on fast food are very strong in some societies. This is because of the parallel changes in working and social life and habits of dining out. In social context, gradually the numbers of working families are increasing worldwide (Stamoulis et al., 2004).

Table 2: Annual income of the respondents' family

Annual Income (in Rs.)	Area of living			Total
	Urban	Semi-Urban	Rural	
Upto Rs. 100000	21 (25.93)	5 (29.41)	18 (34.62)	44 (29.33)
Rs. 100001 – 200000	35 (43.21)	8 (47.06)	20 (38.46)	63 (42)
Rs. 200001 - 300000	18 (22.22)	3 (17.65)	9 (17.31)	30 (20)
Rs. 300001 - 400000	2 (2.47)	-	1 (1.92)	3 (2)
Above Rs. 400000	5 (6.17)	1 (5.89)	4 (7.69)	10 (6.67)
Total	81	17	52	150

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages.
Source: Field study.

Table 2 reveals the annual income of the respondents' family. 42% of the respondents' family earn Rs. 1,00,001-2,00,000 as their family income. 29% of the respondents belonged to the annual income of up to Rs. 1,00,000, and 20% of the respondents belonged to the income group of Rs. 2,00,001- 3,00,000.

The table further displays that 43.21% of urban respondents, 47.06% of semi-urban respondents, and 38.46% of rural respondents belonged to the same income group, which is Rs. 1,00,001-2,00,000. It can also be observed that over 25% of urban respondents, 29% of semi-urban respondents, and 34% of rural respondents have annual income up to Rs. 1,00,000.

Main Occupation of the respondent's family

Table 4 shows the main occupation of the respondent's family. Over 45% of the respondents' parents were government servants, followed by cultivation (18%), and 17.33% of the respondents' parents were businessmen and self-employed.

Table 4: Main occupation of the respondent's family

Area of living	Government Service	Business/Self Employed	Cultivation	Employed in Private Sector	Pension	Total
Urban	44 (54.32)	16 (19.75)	8 (9.88)	7 (8.64)	6 (7.41)	81
Semi Urban	9 (52.94)	3 (17.65)	1 (5.9)	2 (11.76)	2 (11.76)	17
Rural	15 (28.85)	7 (13.46)	18 (34.62)	6 (11.54)	6 (11.54)	52
Total	68 (45.33)	26 (17.33)	27 (18.00)	15 (10.00)	14 (9.33)	150

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages.
Source: Field study.

From urban background, over 54% of the respondents' family were engaged in government service, followed by over 19% engaged in business or self-employed and over 9% engaged in cultivation. From semi-urban background, over 52% of the respondents' family were engaged in government jobs, which is followed by over 17% engaged in business or self-employed and over 11% of the respondents' parents were employed in private sector and pensioners each. From rural background, over 34% of the respondents' family occupation was cultivation. Over 28% of the respondents' parents were government servants, and over 13% were engaged in business or self-employed.

Family Size

Family may be regarded as one of the influences of consumer behaviour, its size being the significant determinant (Khan, 2006). As the core unit of defining culture, family has a very prominent effect on attitude formation in various facets of marketing (Burke, 2002; Wood, 2002).

Table 5: No. of members in the family

No. of members in the family	Area of living			Total
	Urban	Semi-Urban	Rural	
Up to 4	9 (11.11)	3 (17.64)	7 (13.46)	19 (12.67)
5 to 6	47 (58.02)	11 (64.71)	31 (59.62)	89 (59.33)
7 to 8	19 (23.46)	2 (11.76)	10 (19.23)	31 (20.67)
9 to 10	5 (6.17)	1 (5.88)	4 (7.69)	10 (6.67)
More than 10	1 (1.23)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (0.67)
Total	81	17	52	150

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages.
Source: Field study.

Table 5 indicates the family size of the respondents. Nearly 60% of the respondents' family belonged to the family size of 5-6 members. Over 20% of the respondents' family belonged to the family size of 7-8 members, and over 12% of the respondents have a small family, i.e., up to 4 members.In terms of area-wise background, over 58% of the urban respondents' family belonged to the family size of 5-6 members, followed by the family size of 6-8 members (23%). Nearly 12% belonged to a small family size of up to 4 members. Among the students belonging to semi-urban areas, over 64% of the respondents have 5-6 members in their family, followed by over 17% have up to 4 members, and over 11% have 7-8 members in their family.
From the students belonging to rural areas, nearly 60% of the respondents belonged to the family size of 5-6 members. Nearly 20% of the respondents have 7-8 members, and 14% have a small family size, i.e., up to 4 members.

Hypotheses Testing
Testing of H_1, H_2, and H_3

As noted above, Spearman rank correlation was used to test the hypotheses framed (H_1, H_2 and H_3). The calculation is shown in Table 6

Table 6: Testing of H_1, H_2, and H_3 (Frequency of consumption)

		Fast foods	Junk foods	Instant foods
Family income of the respondents	Correlation	.222**	.196**	.116**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.016	.158
	N	150	150	149

As per the calculation shown in the table, H_1 is accepted and hence it may be concluded that there is a significant correlation between the family income of the respondents and frequency of consuming fast foods ($p<0.05$). Similarly, H_2 is also accepted and and accordingly it may be concluded that there is a significant correlation between the family income of the respondents and frequency of consuming junk foods ($p<0.05$). On the contrary, H_3 is rejected based on the calculation in the table and there is no significant correlation between the family income of the respondents and frequency of consuming instant foods ($p>0.05$).

Testing of H_4, H_5, and H_6

As indicated, Spearman rank correlation was used to test the hypotheses framed (H_4, H_5, and H_6). The calculation is shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Testing of H_4, H_5, and H_6 (Amount spent for consumption)

		Restaurant fast foods	Junk foods	Instant foods
Family income of the respondents	Correlation	.336**	.217**	.217**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.008	.008
	N	149	149	149

As per the calculation shown in the table, it may be concluded that there is a significant correlation between the family income of the respondents and amount spent on restaurant fast foods in a week (H_4 is accepted, $p<0.05$). Similarly, based on the calculation in the table, H_5 and H_6 are also accepted and there is a significant correlation between the family income of the respondents and amount spent on junk foods and instant foods in a week ($p<0.05$).

V. Conclusion

Mizoram, though a hilly terrain located in a remote corner of North East India, is known for the most urbanised with 51.5% urban population in the country (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Gov't of India, 2018). Around 40% of male respondents and around 60% of female respondents belonged to urban area. This is reflected the findings of the study. Around 76% of male respondents and around 23% of female respondents belonged to semi-urban area. Around 55% of male respondents and 44% of female respondents belonged to rural area. Over 54% of the respondent's parents in urban area, over 52% of the respondent's parents in semi-urban area and over 28% of the respondent's parents in rural area were government servants. Over 43% of urban respondents, over 47% of semi-urban respondents, and over 38% of rural respondents belonged to the same income group, which is Rs. 1,00,001-2,00,000. Over 58% of urban respondent's family, over 64% of semi-urban respondent's family, and over 59% of rural respondent's family belonged to the family size of 5 to 6 members. Overall, most of the respondents belonged to middle class families. Nearly 88% of the respondents have larger families with five or more number of family members. The main occupation for nearly 55% of the respondent's family is either government service or pension. Only 18% of the respondents depend on cultivation as the main source of their family income. In this context, the prospective researchers may go for research into different areas of buying behaviour in respect of fast foods which would be relevant from the view point of the marketers, the health authorities and the sociologists.

The government of India had laid down the rules and regulations for enterprises involving the production of package food items for the safety of consumers. It is observed that the marketers of food products and the entrepreneurs running the restaurants need to focus on nutritional value provided by their products rather than overemphasising the taste elements. In case of many branded and unbranded food products, it is not possible for the customers in Mizoram to understand the product information as such information given in a foreign language other than English.

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