Consumer Behavior towards Fast Food Consumption: A case study in Kiribathgoda Area

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ABSTRACT

Fast food plays a significant role in people’s composite lifestyle these days. Fast foods are ready to eat food and an alternative for homemade food. This concept initiated in Western countries and gradually Asians including Sri Lankans intensively adopted it. There are Unfavourable attitudes towards consumption of fast food because continuous consumption of fast food can lead to health issues and obesity. Kiribathgoda is a newly urbanized city located near Colombo and it shows rapid economic development recently. There are a significant number of fast food outlets in this area. People in Kiribathgoda area are tending to have fast food due to westernization and their busy lifestyle. The main aim of this study is to analyze consumer behaviour towards fast food consumption in Kiribathgoda area. In this research 150 samples were selected by using the simple random sampling method. Data was collected through pre tested questionnaire. The study reveals that 89.3% are consuming fast food and majority of them are women (49.3%). Youngsters (21.3%) are more interested in fast food. Majority of respondents (49%) go to fast food restaurants on special occasions. Majority of the people (51%) go to fast food outlets between 6-9 p.m. for brunch and 32% like to spend more than LKR500 for one meal.

Majority of respondents (93%) don’t consider fast food as a basic need. The first word that comes to most people’s (44%) minds when think of the word “fast-food” is Unhealthy. Majority (72%) thinks that this trend will increase. Main reasons for consuming fast food are quickness (56.6%), taste, surroundings (50.3%) and convenience (58.6%). There is association with fast food consumption and having children. Gender has no relationship to fast food consumption.

Keywords: Consumer behaviour, Fast food consumption, Kiribathgoda area.

Introduction and research problem/issue

Fast food means easily prepared processed food served in snack bars and restaurants as a quick meal or to be taken away. It plays a significant role in people’s busy life style in all over the world. Initially fast food restaurants were popularized in United States in 1950s. Then gradually it is spread throughout the world. Recently Sri Lankan people have been intensively adding fast foods to their lifestyle.

Most of the people in urbanized areas in Sri Lanka consume fast food. But there are different attitudes towards this. Some people say that fast foods are not good for health and some prefer fast food because of ease and quickness in the supply of food for their day to day life.

Leading fast food restaurants in Sri Lanka are McDonalds, KFC, and Pizza Hut, Domino’s pizza, Burger king and Subway. They are located in urbanized areas, mainly in Colombo but nowadays they are spreading throughout almost all the main cities all over the island. Not only that but they are also establishing their branches in newly
urbanized cities like Kiribathgoda, Kadawatha etc. Other than those leading restaurants there are several restaurants, bakery shops and take away shops selling fast foods.

In order to understand consumer behavior, the study of how people buy, what they buy, when they buy and why they buy (Kotler, 1994) is necessary.

Factors affecting consumer behavior are personal factors (age, occupation, gender, marital status, family size, economic situation), social factors (social class, status), cultural factors (religion, ethnicity) and psychological factors. (Perception, attitude, behavior).

The main objective of this study is to analyse the present status of consumer behaviour regarding fast food consumption in Kiribathgoda area.

**Research Methodology**

This study follows the Deductive research approach. The research strategy used here is survey. Primary data were collected through Likert scale based structured questionnaires with closed ended questions from four popular Fast Food Restaurants namely McDonalds, KFC, Domino’s Pizza and Pizza Hut. The research location was Kiribathgoda area. It is a newly urbanized city in Western province near Colombo and has a significant number of fast food outlets. Population in the Kiribathgoda area is 4291. The required sample size is 357 under 95% confident interval. But 150 sample sizes were selected due to recourse limitation. Simple random sampling is the sampling method used in this research. IBM SPSS and Microsoft excel 2010 are the major software packages used to analyse data. Descriptive statistics and chi-square analysis used analyze data.

**Results and findings**

In relation to this study, 89.3% are desired to consume fast food and 10.7% do not have desire to consume fast food. Women (49.3%) have little dominance over men (40.0%) when comparing consumption of fast food. The younger people, i.e. in the age group 19-25 are more interested in fast food as compared to people over 50 years. Married people are more interested in fast food than unmarried people. When considering the job sector people working in the public sector have higher desire to fast food than other sectors. The people who are educated up to A/Ls (38.0%) and graduates show higher interest to consume fast food. Fast food consumption is highest among families with 2-4 members.

Majority of respondents (32%) are willing to pay more than 500LKR per fast food meal. When considering the physical and behavioural factors, highest (49%) frequency of consumption is on the special occasions like get-togethers and parties. Majority of respondents (51%) like to visit fast food outlets between 6-9 p.m. Among the respondents who are willing to consume fast food 5% of them eat fast food as their lunch, 30% of consumers eat fast food as their dinner and 63% of consumers eat fast food as their snacks. A higher proportion of respondents (72%) think that the trend of consuming fast food will increase. Majority (93%) of respondents think that fast food is not a basic need for them.
Unhealthy is the first idea that comes to majority of respondents’ (44%) mind when they think of the word “fastfood”

Here are the reasons for consuming fast food, 56.6% respondents think that they’re quick (service), 48.3% respondents think that they are inexpensive, 53.8% like the taste, 60.0% think that they offer a variety, 50.3% like the environment of the outlet, 62.2% said that they are not too busy to cook and 58.6% think that they are convenient

Chi square analysis has been used to determine whether there is a connection between fast food consumption and having children. p value (0.043) is less than 0.05. H0 is rejected so there is association between fast food consumption and having children.

According to the chi square test (p value=0.692) gender has no relationship to fast food consumption

**Conclusions, implications and significance**

There is demographic variation observed towards fast food consumption. The majority (89.3%) of respondents desire to consume fast food. Women are more interested in food consumption than men. Youths between the age group of 19-25 years are more interested in fast food. People with higher education have higher interested in fast food.

Married people have more desire for fast food. Higher preference to fast food is found in the families with 2-4 members. Majority of respondents consume fast food on special occasions and visit to fast food outlets between 6-9 p.m. for snacks. 32% of respondents like to spend more than LKR500 for one meal/one person. The first idea that comes to most people mind when they think of the word “fast-food” is unhealthy. Majority thinks that this trend will increase. Main reasons for consuming fast food are quickness, taste, surrounding of the outlet and convenience

There is a connection between fast food consumption and having children. Gender has no relationship to fast food consumption

**References (Selected)**

