



Impact Of The Fast-Food Industry On Consumers During The Post Covid Period With Special Reference To Coimbatore City

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Abstract: The fast-food industry has witnessed significant shifts in consumer behavior, particularly in the post-COVID era. This study explores the factors influencing fast-food consumption patterns, with a focus on how the pandemic has reshaped dining preferences. Through a combination of exploratory and descriptive research methods, including surveys conducted in Coimbatore city, the study investigates changes in public attitudes toward fast food, the increased reliance on digital ordering platforms, and growing health concerns. Findings indicate that convenience, safety measures, and the demand for healthier options play pivotal roles in driving consumer choices. The study concludes with insights into the future trajectory of the fast-food industry, emphasizing innovation, sustainability, and evolving consumer preferences in a post-pandemic world.

KEYWORDS - Fast food industry, Consumer behavior, Post-COVID, Health concerns, Digital ordering, Convenience, Innovation.

INTRODUCTION

The fast-food industry has become a ubiquitous part of modern culture, reshaping dining habits and culinary landscapes across the globe. Rooted in the post-World War II era of the 1950s in the United States, the industry's rapid expansion can be attributed to a combination of technological advancements, changing societal norms, and aggressive marketing strategies. At its core, fast food is characterized by its quick service, standardized menu offerings, and affordability. The introduction of assembly-line production methods by pioneers like McDonald's revolutionized the way food was prepared and served, allowing for consistent quality and speed. This model paved the way for the franchising system, enabling rapid expansion and the establishment of recognizable brands in every corner of the world. Fast food's appeal lies not only in its convenience but also in its ability to cater to evolving consumer preferences. From traditional burgers and fries to a diverse array of options encompassing ethnic cuisines, salads, and healthier alternatives, fast-food chains continuously adapt their menus to attract a broad customer base. Moreover, the industry has been a catalyst for cultural exchange and globalization, introducing foreign flavours and culinary traditions to new markets while simultaneously adapting to local tastes. This adaptability has fueled the industry's resilience in the face of economic fluctuations and changing consumer behaviours. Despite facing criticism for its contribution to health issues like obesity and its environmental impact, the fast-food industry remains a dominant force in the global food market. With ongoing innovations in technology, menu diversification, and sustainability efforts, it continues to shape the way people eat and interact with food in the 21st century.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study will assess the post-COVID impact on consumer habits regarding fast food. It will explore the reasons behind changes in consumption patterns. Additionally, it will analysis the effects of increased fast-food intake on public health. The study aims to understand the preferences of consumers in the post-pandemic era. Furthermore, it will investigate any alterations in dietary behaviour and their potential outcomes. By examining these factors, the research aims to offer insights into the evolving relationship between consumers and the fastfood industry following the COVID-19 pandemic.

OBJECTIVES

To find out the factors that influence the fast-food consumption of public.

To Analysis changes in consumer behaviour towards fast food after the pandemic.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

SAMPLING DESIGN

The study is both exploratory and descriptive in nature. First stage of the research was exploratory in nature. This was done in two phases. The initial phase was to undertake a detailed review of secondary data and its perception of fast-food industry it. The second phase of review of literature helped in framing questionnaires for the study. Second stage of the study was descriptive research, which was carried out at the second stage by applying an interview schedule method. Data for the study were collected from the fast-food industry in Coimbatore city.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

- The study is conducted on the basis of the responses collected from the respondents.
- The reliability of the results of the study depends on the data were given by the respondents.
- The study area is confined to Coimbatore city only.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Martina Martina (2023) Organizational Behavior After Pandemic COVID-19 First of all, Organizational behavior is the academic study of how people interact within groups. The principles of the study of organizational behavior are applied primarily in attempts to make businesses operate more effectively There are four elements and three levels of organization. The four elements are people, structure, technology, and external environment with the development of technology in the food industry, it will help the business to keep running during the pandemic Another benefit the organization gets is the customer doesn't feel afraid to leave the table if they want to order or make payments. The pandemic COVID-19 gives some disadvantages to the fast-food industry. The organization also should make the disadvantage into an opportunity the organization can stand for a long time. **Mohit tyagi (2022)** “A comprehensive study about India Food is the basic need of life”. In ancient times people were spending a sufficient time in searching of food. With the accomplishment of fire, humans started to cook their food. This study is based on mainly secondary data. Health and nutrition has been a big issue while consuming fast food. Fast food is becoming part of lifestyle in India, but people, as well as, are becoming health conscious. Fast foods are not considered a healthy food. Driving forces for fast food consumptions in India are quite strong. **Mark Alvin V. Lazaro, (2022)** **Challenges of Fast-Food Establishments Amidst Pandemic** Many business establishments have been disappearing ever since the pandemic happened. The impact of the pandemic was surely all over the world This study help fast-food establishments to identify what challenges must be dealt with utmost urgency. The researcher distributed electronic survey questionnaires to the respondents. The researcher will target 100 respondents from different fast-food establishments in Olongapo city. when it comes to sudden change of 5 wants and demands of customer to food Greenwich, Mang Inasal, and Jollibee received an evaluation of "very low risk". Hygiene should be maintained by the food operators because the survival time of the COVID virus on the surface of the steel, plastic, etc., is very long. **Dr. p. Deivanai (2021)** "augmentation and challenges of small and medium fast-food entrepreneurs – an analysis" The main aim of this study to analyse the problems and prospects of fast-food entrepreneurs For this purpose study was conducted on 150 respondents of the fast food entrepreneurs in Madurai district. Transportation is the one of the main factors of entrepreneurs to run the fast-food business. The study concludes that the recent trend shows that innovation and joined hand is enhancing the more income of the family. **Lin Li (2021)** “Effect of COVID-19 on Quick Service Restaurant Industry in China and the US” As COVID-19 virus wreaks havoc around the world since

December 2019, countries are facing more serious problems regarding all aspects of development. The literature review aims to present and compare the information and results from different research methods to see whether the conclusion stays consistent. Back in late January 2020, Chinese government published several policies fighting the war. The most influential one was to lockdown Wuhan city to prevent the communication with other regions by asking all citizens to stay at home. No gathering is allowed. Only one person of a family could go out twice a week and must have mask on. As China outperformed many countries during COVID-19, it could be easier and take less time for China to offset the loss in this period. **Mushui Chen (2020) "Fast Food Industry in the Post-pandemic Era —A Case Study of KFC"** Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic occurred in Wuhan, China in early 2020, more than 600 million people have been infected with the disease, and so far the death toll of the world has exceeded 700,000. In addition to great threats to people's lives, the pandemic has a huge impact on the global economy. In general, based on the above analysis, the following conclusions are drawn. First, it is quite apparent that the pandemic is causing great impact on 5 the real economies, and among them, due to the special vulnerability of fast-food restaurants, great economic losses are occurred, which is quite inevitable. **Siddhi Prashant chitnis (2019) "A Study on Scenario of Fast-Food Industry in India"** This fast-food at the time of being prepared in no time it is also a pleasure to the tongue. Indian fast-food industry is widening day by day which is leading to its progress along with certain drawbacks. Also Indian government is making strict laws regarding usage of bio-degradable products, but these products being high in cost is a challenge for the fast-food industry. There is definitely growth in the business of the fast-food industry in India which is positively affecting the economy but every coin has two sides, there are certain drawbacks as well. **Makda Sakina (2019) "the food processing industry in india challenges and prospects"** The industry is estimated to grow at an annual average rate of 104%, touching \$482 billion by 2020. Therefore companies like Patanjali, ITC, Dabur, etc., are busy diversifying their business into processed food. The challenges for the food conservation, distribution and processing sectors are diverse and demanding, which need to be addressed to leverage the growth of agriculture and food processing sector. **B. Abirami (2018) "Customer Perception of Service Quality Towards Fast Food Restaurants In Coimbatore City"**, Customer expectations are assumed to be relatively consistent across customers of a given organization. The study has used primary data which is collected from 200 customers visiting the five reputed fast-food restaurants (40 from each restaurant) which includes KFC, MC Donalds, Subway, Pizza Hut and Dominos with a questionnaire in order to measure the service quality perceptions of customers. The study reveals that the perceived performance on all dimensions fell short of expectations which indicate that the service quality offered did not meet the customer's expectations on most aspects. **D.M. Rajarajeswari (2018) "A study on public preference over fast food outlet Fast food has become one of the major aspects of the food industry"**. To find out the factors that influence the fast-food consumption of public. Descriptive research is considered to be the most appropriate and for the present study the researcher has selected Coimbatore city. As the population for the study is infinite a sample of 200 respondents were selected for the study using convince sampling technique. The consumption of fast food gives only timely job, therefore the fast food can be prepared with care and more steps can be taken regarding the 6 health related aspects. The consumption of fast food gives only timely job, therefore the fast food can be prepared with care and more steps can be taken regarding the health related aspects. **Anitharaj M.S. (2018) "Global Fast-Food Retailing in India"** – A Way Ahead Economic growth is typically accompanied by improvements in a country's food supply, both quantitative and qualitative, and a gradual reduction in nutritional deficiencies. Some traditional and fundamentalist are against this transformation of food habit and number of times they provoke their counterparts to revolt against such foods. Generally, Hindus avoid all foods that are believed to inhibit physical and spiritual development. As per the study it is analyzed that 7 consumers in today's market are more fascinated to western culture. The increase in the facilities offered by fast food services is driving the growth of the industry. **Anitharaj M.S. (2018) "A Study on Buying Behaviour of Youngsters towards Fast Food Restaurants"** Economic growth is typically accompanied by improvements in a country's food supply, both quantitative and qualitative, and a gradual reduction in nutritional deficiencies. To study the consumption pattern towards fast foods particularly with respect to the frequency of visits and choice of fast-food outlets. Therefore Fast-Food providers need to focus on the quality and variety of food besides other service parameters. **Mrs.c.Pappeswari(2014)"socio-economic conditions of street food vendors-with special reference to tiruchendur area"** Street vendors are the most visible section of the informal economy. Street vending as a profession has been in existence in India since times immemorial. In area of Tiruchendur. Street vendors are those who are unable to get regular jobs in the remunerative formal sector on account of the low level of education and skills. The study is based on both the primary and secondary data. Its palatability, affordability and easy accessibility make it highly popular across all the income and age groups in society and ensure it significant place in the society. **Y Prabhavarhi(2014)"Problems and Changing Needs of Consumers in Fast Food Industry The Indian Perspective"** Fast food industry is one of the

world's fastest growing sectors in food industry. Fast food is the food item that can be prepared and served very quickly. To identify the problems in consumption of fast-food items and the services provided by the fastfood restaurants, Problems in Fast Food Consumption Consumer's Changing Need on Food related Lifestyle Demographic Profile of Sample Respondents. **Teck Ming Tan (2012) "The Common Challenges of Brand Equity Creation among Local Fast- Food Brands in Malaysia"** This study reflects on the need to examine the challenges of 7 brand equity creation among Malaysian fast- food brands. The main purpose of this study is to reflect on the common challenges of brand equity creation among Malaysian fast- food brands that had enjoyed perceived quality, brand trust and attitudinal brand loyalty. The study also extends the effect of category into the theoretical view of consumer-based brand equity, which had provided a better guidance for fast food brand management. Future research could explore the possibility of a longitudinal study through repeated observations, and invariance test across different samples should be conducted to make certain that the results remained equivalent.

HISTORY

The fast-food industry's roots trace back to the early 20th century in the United States, where the concept of quick-service restaurants began to take shape. The White Castle chain, founded in 1921 in Wichita, Kansas, is often credited as the first fast-food establishment, introducing the assembly line production system for hamburgers. However, it was the post-World War II era that saw the industry's exponential growth, marked by the emergence of iconic brands like McDonald's, Burger King, and KFC. McDonald's, 11 founded in 1940 by Richard and Maurice McDonald, revolutionized the industry with its standardized menu, efficient service, and franchising model. The 1950s and 1960s witnessed the rapid expansion of fast-food chains across the United States, fueled by suburbanization, automobile culture, and changing consumer lifestyles. With globalization, these chains expanded internationally, spreading their influence worldwide and shaping global food culture. Over the decades, the fast-food industry has evolved, introducing new menu items, embracing technological advancements, and adapting to changing consumer preferences, while also facing scrutiny for its impact on health, environment, and labour practice.

STUDY OF ANALYSIS

SIMPLE PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS

TABLE 1

PARTICLUARS	NUMBER RESPONDANCE	OF	PERCENTAGE%
Male	45		37.5
Female	75		62.5
TOTAL	120		100

Source: Primary data

The above table shows that the majority of the respondents 62.5% are female, and only 37.5 of them are male.

TABLE 2

PARTICLUARS	NUMBER RESPONDANCE	OF	PERCENTAGE%
Below 18	15		12.5
18 to 25	73		60.8
26 to 35	26		27.1
Above 35	6		6
TOTAL	120		100

Source: Primary data

The above table shows that 60.8% of the respondents belongs to age group of 18 to 25 years, followed by 27.1% of them are between 26 to 35 years. 12.5% of them are between below 26 to 35 years and 6% of them are above 35 years.

TABLE 3

PARTICLUARS	NUMBER OF RESPONDANCE	PERCENTAGE%
Visible safety measures in place	61	50.8
Visible safety measures in place	29	24.2
Familiarity with menu options	30	25
TOTAL	120	100

Source: Primary data

The above table shows that majority 50.8 % of the respondents are visible safety measures in place, followed by 24.2 % of the respondents are special promotion or discounts and 25 % of the respondents are familiarity with menu options.

TABLE 4

PARTICLUARS	NUMBER OF RESPONDANCE	PERCENTAGE%
Mobile ordering	68	50.7
Self- service	36	30
In-store touchless payment	16	13.38
TOTAL	120	100

Source: Primary data

From the above table, it is clear that majority 56.7 % of the respondents are through mobile Ordering, followed by 30% of the respondents are through self- service and 13.38% of the respondents are through In-store touchless payment.

TABLE 5

PARTICLUARS	NUMBER OF RESPONDANCE	PERCENTAGE%
Sanitization procedures	42	35
Staff hygiene practice	57	47.5
Staff hygiene practice	2	17.5
TOTAL	120	100

Source: Primary data

The above table shows that majority 47.5% of the respondents are consider staff hygiene practice, followed by 35% of the respondents are consider sanitization procedures and 17.5% of the respondents consider air quality in dining areas.

TABLE 6

PARTICLUARS	NUMBER OF RESPONDANCE	PERCENTAGE%
Offer healthier food choice	45	37.5
Use technology for easy ordering and delivery	33	27.5
Keep updating menu items	18	15
Ask customers feedback and improve based on it	24	20
TOTAL	120	100

Source: Primary data

From the above table it is clear that the majority 37.5% of the respondents are offer healthier food choice, 27.5% of the respondents are use technology for easy ordering and delivery, 20% of the respondents are ask customers and improve based on it and 15% of the respondents are keep updating menu items.

LIKERT SCALE ANALYSIS FORMULA

Likert scale = $\sum (FX) / \text{Total number of respondents}$

While,

F = Number of Respondents 10

X = Likert Scale Value

(FX) = Total Scale

MID VALUE Mid value indicates the middle most value of Likert scale.

LINKERT SCALE ANALYSIS

TABLE 1

LEVEL OF SATISFACTION	NUMBERS OF RESPONDANCE	LIKERT SCALE	PERCENTAGE%
Highly satisfied	38	5	190
Satisfied	42	4	168
Neutral	32	3	96
Dis-satisfied	6	2	12
Highly satisfied	2	1	2
TOTAL	120		468

Source: Primary data

From the above table, linkert scale value is 3.9 which is higher than 3 (mid-value), so the respondents are satisfied with the fast-food industry.

RANKING ANALYSIS

A rank analysis is any several statistics that measure an ordinal association. The relationship between ranking of different variables or different ranking of the same variable. Where a “ranking” is the assignment of the label “first”, “second”, “third” etc..., to different observations of the variable. A rank analysis measures the degree of similarity two ranking, and can be used to assess the significance of the relation between them.

TABLE 1

FACTOR	RANK 1	RANK 2	RANK 3	RANK 4	RANK 5	TOTAL	RANK
Healthiness	5(25) 125	4(30) 120	3(36) 108	2(18) 36	1(21) 21	410	2
Competition	5(24) 120	4(32) 128	3(26) 78	2(15) 30	1(23) 23	379	4
Safety	5(25) 125	4(26) 104	3(33) 99	2(24) 48	1(12) 12	388	3
Efficiency	5(25) 120	4(23) 92	3(33) 99	2(27) 54	1(13) 13	378	5
Innovation	5(27) 135	4(28) 112	3(36) 108	2(17) 34	1(12) 12	411	1

Source: primary data

From the above table it is cleared that innovation ranked as no 1, healthiness ranked as no 2, safety ranked as no 3, competition ranked as no 4 and efficiency ranked as no 5.

FINDINGS

SIMPLE PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS

- Majority of the 62.5% are female respondents.
- Majority 60.8% of the respondents belongs to age group of 18 to 25 years.
- Majority of the 50.8 % respondents are influences to return to fast-food shops.
 - Majority of the respondents 56.7% are through mobile ordering.
- Majority of the respondents 47.5% are consider staff hygiene.
- Majority of the respondents 37.5% opinion healthier food choice.

LIKERT SCALE ANALYSIS

- Likert scale value is 3.9, so the respondents are satisfied with the fast food.

RANKING ANALYSIS

- Majority of the respondents says that innovation factor influences to buy the fast-food.

SUGGESTION

- ❖ Introducing more nutritious options aligns with the preferences of a significant portion of consumers, promoting a healthier lifestyle.
- ❖ It is to suggest that investing in mobile ordering platforms and self-service kiosks can streamline the ordering process in order to enhance the convenience for customers.
- ❖ Customers are satisfied using the fresh menu option, so it is necessary to update the menu options.
- ❖ They suggest that fast-food industries will enhance product and overall experience by collecting the feedback from the customer.

CONCLUSION

During the post-COVID period, the fast-food industry has experienced shifts in consumer behaviour. With restrictions and safety concerns, there has been a surge in online ordering and contactless delivery. Consumers prioritize convenience and hygiene, leading to increased demand for drive-through and digital ordering options. Health consciousness has also risen, prompting fast food chains to offer healthier menu items and disclose nutritional information. Additionally, economic uncertainty has led some consumers to opt for more affordable fast-food options. Overall, the industry has adapted to meet changing consumer needs in the wake of the pandemic.

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