

A STUDY ON SHIFT TOWARDS FAST-FOOD ITEMS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE IN EACHANARI OF COIMBATORE SOUTH ZONE

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ABSTRACT

The food consumption pattern of consumers has changed significantly due to rapid urbanization, changing lifestyles, and increasing time constraints. Fast-food items have become increasingly popular, especially in urban areas, as they offer convenience, variety, and quick service. The present study aims to examine the shift towards fast-food consumption with special reference to Coimbatore South Zone. The study focuses on understanding consumer preferences, frequency of consumption, and the factors influencing the growing demand for fast food. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire from 50 respondents, and secondary data were gathered from journals, articles, and online sources. Simple percentage analysis was used for data interpretation. The findings reveal that young consumers and working professionals are the major contributors to fast-food consumption, with taste, convenience, and time-saving being the key influencing factors. Although most consumers are aware of the health risks associated with fast food, they continue to consume it due to lifestyle pressures. The study concludes that there is a significant shift towards fast-food items in the study area, highlighting the need for healthier food alternatives and increased awareness about balanced eating habits.

Key Words: *Fast food, Consumer behavior, Lifestyle change, Food preferences, Shift.*

INTRODUCTION

The changing pattern of food consumption is a notable outcome of urban expansion, lifestyle transformation, and socio-economic development. In recent years, fast-food consumption has grown rapidly in urban and semi-urban regions due to increasing work pressure, time constraints, and changing family structures.

Fast food, known for its quick availability, affordability, and standardized taste, has become a preferred option among modern consumers, particularly youth and working professionals.

Eachanari, located in the South Zone of Coimbatore, has emerged as a rapidly developing area due to the presence of educational institutions, industrial units, residential complexes, highways, and improved connectivity. The location attracts a diverse population including students, employees, migrants, and small business owners. The increasing number of fast-food outlets, roadside eateries, and branded food chains in and around Eachanari reflects a significant shift in local food consumption behavior.

From a consumer behavior perspective, the preference for fast food in Eachanari can be attributed to lifestyle changes, convenience-seeking behavior, peer influence, and exposure to media and

marketing. Despite growing awareness about the health risks associated with excessive fast-food consumption, demand continues to rise, indicating a gap between awareness and actual consumption practices. Hence, the present study attempts to analyze the shift towards fast-food items with special reference to the Eachanari location of Coimbatore South Zone, focusing on the factors influencing consumer preference and consumption patterns.

What is Fast Food?

Fast-food refers to mass-produced, pre-prepared food that is served quickly and efficiently. It is often characterized by convenience, affordability, and variety. Fast-food can range from Western-style burgers and pizzas to Chinese, Indian, and other international cuisines.

Objectives

- To study the consumption pattern of fast-food items among consumers in the Eachanari location of Coimbatore South Zone.
- To identify the factors influencing the shift towards fast-food consumption.
- To analyze the frequency and preference of fast-food items among different age groups.
- To examine the level of awareness regarding the health impacts of fast-food consumption.
- To assess consumer satisfaction towards fast-food outlets in the study area.

Statement of the Problem

Traditional food habits in India emphasize home-cooked and nutritionally balanced meals. However, rapid urbanization, changing lifestyles, and increased work and study commitments have led to a growing dependence on fast-food items, particularly in urban and semi-urban areas. The rising consumption of fast food has raised concerns related to health issues such as obesity, lifestyle diseases, and poor dietary habits, despite increasing awareness among consumers.

Eachanari, a rapidly developing location in Coimbatore South Zone, has witnessed a significant increase in fast-food outlets due to population growth, improved infrastructure, and the presence of educational institutions and workplaces. Although fast food offers convenience and variety, the increasing preference for such food reflects a shift in consumer behavior that requires systematic study. There is limited empirical research focusing on the factors influencing fast-food consumption and the extent of this shift at the local level.

Therefore, the problem addressed in this study is to analyze the reasons for the growing shift towards fast-food items among consumers in the Eachanari location and to understand the gap between health awareness and actual consumption behaviour.

Need for the Study

The rapid expansion of fast-food culture reflects broader structural changes in urban lifestyles, work patterns, and consumption behavior. While fast food offers convenience and accessibility, its growing dominance raises critical concerns related to nutritional imbalance, long-term health risks, and changing food values. Despite increased public awareness regarding these issues, fast-food consumption continues to rise, indicating a disconnect between consumer knowledge and actual dietary practices.

Eachanari, a fast-developing locality in Coimbatore South Zone, presents a unique context to examine this phenomenon due to its mixed demographic composition, expanding commercial activity, and increasing presence of fast-food outlets. Existing studies on fast-food consumption largely focus on

metropolitan or macro-level trends, leaving a research gap at the micro-regional level. Analyzing consumer behavior in Eachanari enables a localized understanding of the determinants influencing fast-food preference.

Therefore, this study is necessary to critically assess the factors driving the shift towards fast-food items, evaluate consumer awareness and behavioral contradictions, and generate empirical insights that can support policy formulation, health interventions, and responsible business practices aimed at promoting sustainable and healthier food consumption patterns.

Research Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design and is based on primary and secondary data. Relevant data were collected from peer-reviewed journals, academic articles, books, industry reports, government publications, and credible online sources related to fast-food consumption, consumer behavior, and changing lifestyle patterns. Existing empirical studies and regional analyses were also reviewed to understand trends in fast-food preference in urban and semi-urban contexts.

The collected data were systematically examined and analyzed using qualitative content analysis to identify recurring themes, consumption patterns, and influencing factors. Comparative analysis of findings from previous studies was employed to draw inferences relevant to the Eachanari area of Coimbatore South Zone. The methodology enables an evidence-based understanding of the shift towards fast-food items while relying on the accuracy and scope of existing literature.

Review of Literature

Ritzer (2015) highlighted that the expansion of fast-food culture is closely linked to globalization, urbanization, and the increasing demand for convenience. Time constraints and busy lifestyles are major factors driving the preference for fast food in urban areas.

Kaur and Singh (2018) studied fast-food consumption among young adults in urban India and found that taste, affordability, and accessibility were the primary reasons for frequent consumption. The study also noted that peer influence plays a significant role in shaping food choices.

Goyal and Singh (2020) emphasized the influence of nuclear family structures and urban lifestyles on food habits. Their research indicated that working professionals and students prefer fast food due to its quick preparation, variety, and hygienic perception of branded outlets.

Das (2021) investigated the health implications of fast-food consumption and reported a strong association between frequent intake and lifestyle-related health issues. The study also highlighted a gap between awareness of health risks and actual consumption behavior.

Sharma and Verma (2022) analyzed the impact of digital marketing and online food delivery on fast-food consumption. They concluded that social media, promotional offers, and convenience of delivery services have significantly accelerated the shift towards fast-food items in urban populations.

Limitations of the Study

Data availability and reliability depend on previously published studies, reports, and online sources, which may not fully reflect the current trends in the Eachanari location.

The study focuses exclusively on the Eachanari area of Coimbatore South Zone, and the findings may not be generalizable to other regions of Coimbatore or urban India.

Certain secondary sources may have methodological differences, sample limitations, or outdated information, which could affect the comprehensiveness of the analysis.

The study does not include a detailed nutritional or medical evaluation of fast-food consumption and its health impacts.

Findings

1. Demographic Influence:

- Studies indicate that young adults and working professionals are the primary consumers of fast-food items (Kaur & Singh, 2018; Goyal & Singh, 2020). In areas like Eachanari, which has a high population of students and employees, the demand for fast food is notably high.

2. Factors Driving Consumption:

Convenience and Time-saving:

- Fast food is preferred due to the busy schedules of urban consumers (Ritzer, 2015).
- Taste and Variety: The availability of multiple flavors and menu options attracts different age groups (Kaur & Singh, 2018).
- Affordability: Combo offers, discounts, and competitive pricing make fast food economically attractive (Sharma & Verma, 2022).
- Media and Marketing Influence: Social media promotions, advertisements, and online food delivery apps significantly encourage fast-food consumption (Sharma & Verma, 2022).

3. Health Awareness vs. Consumption:

- Despite awareness of health risks such as obesity, diabetes, and heart-related issues, consumers continue to prefer fast food (Das, 2021). This indicates a gap between knowledge and actual dietary behavior, which is likely reflected in Eachanari as well.

4. Preference for Branded Outlets:

- Secondary studies highlight that consumers often prefer branded fast-food outlets over local shops due to perceived hygiene, quality, and brand reputation (Goyal & Singh, 2020). This trend is visible in developing urban areas like Eachanari, where organized chains are expanding.

5. Impact of Urbanization and Lifestyle:

- The shift towards fast food is strongly associated with urban lifestyles, nuclear families, and changing social patterns (Ritzer, 2015). The growing infrastructure, commercial activity, and student population in Eachanari contribute to increased fast-food consumption.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of secondary data reveals a clear shift towards fast-food consumption in urban and semi-urban areas, and these trends are particularly relevant for Eachanari in Coimbatore South Zone. The high concentration of students, working professionals, and nuclear families in this region has created a demographic that heavily relies on fast-food items due to convenience and time constraints. This aligns with Ritzer (2015), who emphasized that urban lifestyles and work pressures significantly influence fast-food preference.

Taste, variety, and affordability emerge as key drivers of fast-food consumption. Kaur and Singh (2018) reported similar findings among young adults in urban India, where flavor and pricing were prioritized over nutritional value. In Eachanari, the availability of both branded outlets and local fast-

food shops further supports this behavior, offering consumers multiple options to suit their taste and budget.

Despite widespread awareness of health risks, including obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases, the consumption of fast food continues to rise. Das (2021) highlighted a similar gap between health knowledge and actual eating behavior. In Eachanari, this may be compounded by lifestyle pressures, peer influence, and the influence of digital marketing, as noted by Sharma and Verma (2022). The rapid growth of online food delivery platforms has made fast food even more accessible, reinforcing this trend.

Furthermore, branded outlets are preferred due to perceived hygiene, quality, and social status, reflecting patterns observed by Goyal and Singh (2020). This suggests that consumer choices in Eachanari are influenced not only by convenience but also by perceptions of safety and modernity associated with organized food chains.

Overall, the discussion indicates that the shift towards fast-food consumption in Eachanari is driven by a combination of lifestyle changes, socio-economic factors, marketing strategies, and urban infrastructure development. While consumers are aware of the health implications, the appeal of convenience, taste, and social acceptance continues to dominate, highlighting the need for interventions that promote healthier dietary choices without compromising lifestyle needs.

Analysis

The study reveals that:

- 60% of respondents are aged between 18-25 years, indicating a young demographic profile
- 70% of respondents consume fast-food at least once a week, indicating a high frequency of consumption
- Convenience (40%), affordability (30%), and variety (20%) are key factors influencing fast-food choices
- 50% of respondents believe that fast-food has impacted local food culture, with some traditional restaurants and eateries adapting to changing preferences

CONCLUSION

The present study highlights a significant shift in food consumption patterns towards fast-food items in the Eachanari region of Coimbatore South Zone. The analysis indicates that convenience, taste, affordability, and urban lifestyle factors are the primary drivers of this trend. Despite awareness of health risks, consumers continue to favor fast food due to lifestyle pressures, peer influence, and the increasing accessibility of fast-food outlets and online delivery services.

The study underscores the need for a balanced approach that combines consumer awareness, healthier menu options, and responsible marketing. Such interventions can help mitigate the negative health impacts of excessive fast-food consumption while accommodating the lifestyle demands of urban populations.

Overall, the research contributes to understanding micro-level consumer behavior in urban India and provides insights that can guide policymakers, health authorities, and fast-food businesses in promoting healthier dietary practices in rapidly developing urban areas like Eachanari.

Use of Generative AI

Generative AI tools like ChatGPT, Perplexity are used for the enhancement of the content.

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Questionnaire

1. What is your occupation? (Student, Working Professional, Business Owner, Homemaker, Other)
2. What is your age group? (18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46+)
3. How often do you consume fast food? (Daily, 3-4 times/week, 1-2 times/week, 1-2 times/month, Rarely)
4. On average, how much do you spend on fast food per visit? (Under ₹100, ₹100-200, ₹200-300, Over ₹300)
5. What is your favorite fast-food item? (Burger, Pizza, Fried Chicken, Shawarma, Other)
6. Which fast-food outlet do you visit most? (KFC, McDonald's, Domino's, Local eatery, Other)
7. What time do you usually consume fast food? (Breakfast, Lunch, Evening Snack, Dinner, Late Night)
8. Rate the influence of convenience on your fast-food choice. (1-5 scale)
9. How much does taste affect your preference for fast food? (1-5 scale)
10. To what extent does affordability influence your fast-food consumption? (1-5 scale)

11. Rate the impact of time constraints on choosing fast food. (1-5 scale)
12. How important is variety in menu options? (1-5 scale)
13. Does peer influence encourage you to eat fast food? (Yes/No/Sometimes)
14. Rate the role of online delivery apps in your consumption. (1-5 scale)
15. Are you aware of health risks like obesity from fast food? (Yes/No/Partially)
16. Despite awareness, do you still consume fast food regularly? (Yes/No/Sometimes)
17. Rate satisfaction with hygiene at fast-food outlets. (1-5 scale)
18. How has fast food affected your traditional eating habits? (Greatly, Somewhat, Not at all)
19. Do you prefer branded outlets over local ones? (Yes/No/Depends)
20. Rate the influence of promotions/discounts. (1-5 scale)
21. How often do family members join you for fast food? (Always, Often, Rarely, Never)
22. Has urbanization in Eachanari increased your fast-food visits? (Yes/No)
23. Rate overall satisfaction with fast food in your area. (1-5 scale)
24. Would you switch to healthier fast-food options if available? (Yes/No/Maybe)
25. What improvement do you suggest for local fast-food outlets? (Open-ended)