

Consumption Behaviors and Awareness of fast food among the Young Generation

An Empirical Study on Hostel Living Students in Kathmandu Valley

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Abstract

This research aims to study the fast-food habits of the young generation, who are staying in hostels. It intends to study the role of parents and advertisement regarding on consumption behaviours and awareness of fast food. Food is considered as an important representation of all social groups. Although the trend has changed, its impacts exist on the whole society, whether it belongs to the lower middle class or elite class. Fast food is considered as easy to make and ready to eat, so in present days, the young generation is attracted to fast food outlets as hanging places with friends in search of new tastes and places. Hostel life is entirely different and independent from the in-home, especially in terms of food eating. Keeping this view in mind, this research was conducted in two hostels in Kathmandu metropolitan city. This is qualitative research. Based on my research I argue that there is a link between food, parents' roles, behaviors pattern of hostellers, and advertising.

Keywords: Fast food, hostellers, eating habits, behaviors, parents' role advertisement.

Introduction

Fast food culture is a vigorous uprising trend among youngsters (Kaushik et al., 2011). Its impact exists on the whole society whether belonging lower middle class and/or elite class. In general, fast foods are easy to cook and ready to eat. Besides these, there is no proper definition of fast food. According to leading websites, fast food is the term given to food that can be easy to prepare and ready to eat. (Habib et al., 2011) described fast food as quickly prepared, reasonably priced, and readily available alternatives to home-cooked food. Because of time convenience, and away from home young generation is attracted to this easy availability and readymade food in this modern age.

In the Nepalese context, families have shifted from agriculture and cultivation of

nutritious foods to quick ready-to-eat meals, resulting in poor eating habits, especially among young people. There is ever-going popularity and demand for fast food, particularly among youngsters. It has led to the recent mushrooming of quick-service restaurants in the metropolitan city. Many vendors in the street provide colorful fast foods, especially focusing on the young generation. The craze for fast food is not only found in every corner of the city but also in the smaller cities and towns. The present-day youth is willing to spend a lot of money on hanging out and having fun. A study (Sapkota & Neupane, 2017) of junk food consumption among secondary-level students reveals an alarming situation. All students consumed junk food regularly. Among them, 90.1% of the students preferred junk food for its taste, while only 54.21% of students were aware of the harmful effect of eating junk food regularly.

We found the imprints of its existence at restaurants, stadiums, airports, schools, Universities, and even in hospital evenings every corner of the street there are street food stations with colorful fast foods. The food industry has helped to transform not only our diet but also the economy and culture as well. Fast food has now become a regular part of the diet in the capital city among people in general and youngsters in particular. In Nepal consumption of fast food is rising over the recent few years. Mark Liechty (2008) argues that because of the modernization and easy availability of food, the eating behaviors of the young generation are changing in urban areas. When we relate this research with the argument of Liechty, increasing living standards, rapid citification, and westernization of Nepalese culture led to the vigorous growth of consumption patterns of people in recent times.

According to the research, the consumption of fast food on a regular basis led to excess energy intake leading to an increased risk of overweight and obesity. According to WHO (2013), frequent fast-food consumption is also a health concern because most fast foods are rich in saturated fats, trans fat, simple carbohydrate, and sodium, as a result, it increased the risk of hypertension and diabetes. The early stages of the juvenility of teens represent a crucial stage in the later stages of human life. As the former stage is the one where particular lifestyle are formed and become established. The most crucial thing is staying away from the parent's home which meant at hostels, it is also the time when boys and girls increase their social interactions with people of similar age and develop different eating habits. Restaurants especially fast-food café are the juncture point for youngsters for dating and meeting friends in urban areas. In our country, little attention has been paid to

such a serious issue of the eating habits of the young generation. considering this research gap, this study was undertaken with the objective of the fast-food habits of hostellers, awareness, and the role of their parents and advertisements.

Materials and methods

This study was conducted, during November-December 2021 in the two leading hostels of Kathmandu at Baneshwor area. The size of the study samples was 40 and selected by random sampling methods. Structured questionnaires were given to respondents to find out their perception, consumption, and awareness. Kuragraphy which is generally used in Anthropology in qualitative research was used to discuss direct questions is not possible to get answers. I frequently visited the fast-food café in the Baneshwor area to get reliable qualitative data at the same time I was visiting the hostellers at the hostel also. Ethical approval was obtained from the hostel in charge before implementing this research.

Demographic status of Respondents

Parameters	No. of students
Boys	20
Girls	20
Age(years)	
18-20	15
21-23	16
Above 23	9
Educational status	
Undergraduate	22
Graduate	18

Source: Field Survey 2021

Result

There were 250 hostellers in two hostels, 20 students were selected randomly from each hostel. The majority of the hostellers belonged to the age group 18-23 years and

undergraduates 22 and graduates 18. Most of the hostelers preferred fast food just to satisfy their craving for different tastes. When I asked one undergraduate hosteler in the café, he told me “The food provided in a hostel is not tasty and repeated one curry many times and the rice are not so good so, we come here for good food regularly, every week”

At least all students skip their one-time hostel meal every day when they go to college. Maximum hostelers agreed that their fast-food habits are going to increase day by day (42) after they left their parent’s home. Muskan who came here to Kathmandu and stayed in the hostel told me that- “Hostels meal, as well as a snack (khaja in common Nepali word), is not tasty, not healthy just monotonous so we frequently eat fast food with our friends when we go out from the hostel, and even sometimes we ordered our favorite food from café”, there is no difference between hostel staying girls’ and boys’ consumption when I asked them about their choice. On average majority of the hostelers spent 50-200, daily on fast food purchases (35), and maximum the hostelers’ parents did not know about their fast-food eating habits (60). Most of the hostellers (80) were in a group.

Saswat, an Engineering student told me “We mostly go to restaurants for fast food in groups, order different foods of our choice, and share with friends, it is more fun and we can taste different food on sharing basis”, whereas others preferred to eat with the opposite gender (20) but only a few preferred to eat when they were alone (10), Maximum numbers of hostelers were aware that fast food is not suited well for health, obesity, heart disease, gastric, stomach problems are associated with fast food consumption (81) and believed that advertisement influences their fast food eating behaviors, when I asked a question about their interests on fast food many of the hostelers replied that’ there are many offers in weekend and other festivals and special days which attracts us more and it also changes their attitudes towards normal meal when they are out of parents home.

Discussion

This qualitative research provides that fast food is a daily choice of young people especially those who live in the hostel. There is a direct causal link between fast food advertising, parents’ role, and behaviors pattern of hostelers regarding fast food consumption. Several children’s eating behaviors are influenced by family environments, the family eating environments include parents’ own eating behaviors and child feeding practices, Bourdieu (1990) argues that the taste of food is the strongest and most inedible mark of infant learning. Children from the lower of the hierarchy are predicted to choose heavy and fattening foods. In the long term, it develops as a habitus and is embodied in individuals, this is applicable

in the case of food choice. The children of parents who consume a large amount of fast food may also do the same (Grier et al., 2007) In the Nepalese context, especially in the urban area, home-based food habits of people are changing because of restaurant culture and easy availability of a different kind of food and even home delivery make easy to search the favorite food from out in these days. Hostellers come from different parts of the country for different reasons, in such case peers group, advertisements and the monotonous menu of the hostel are also responsible for fast food, one of my respondents who was from a remote area of the western region said to me, “I rarely taste different foods when I was with my parents when I came here for higher education, I taste my foods with my friends, sometimes I told to my parents about the food which I eat”

So, the reasons are different. This frequency of fast-food eating is different in different classes and gender. Research on intergenerational influences how information, beliefs, and resources are transmitted from one generation to the next and imply a particular mechanism by which parent’s attitudes and beliefs related to fast-food affect children fast food consumption (Moore et al., 2002)

In the present context, this research identified that especially advertisement is an important component of fast-food marketing among the young generation. Advertising for fast food and beverages potentially powerful food consumption cues, including the images of attractive models eating and positive emotions linked to fast food consumption (Folta et al., 2006). In recent years young generation is diverted to social media so Facebook, Instagram, and different food-related websites are also equally responsible to attract young people towards fast food. They manipulate the mind of consumers even though different websites provide the corners for advertising the fast food they provide by this way and that way. Fast food restaurants are active on social networks as well as maintaining delicates pages with special offers on the most popular social media websites. They provide hot and tasty food of consumer choice 24 hours a day, this is also the main reason for fast food consumption. One of my respondents Susmita said,

“Sometimes I ordered the food of my choice at midnight when I am tired with my study, they bring us food after a while how funny is this sister”.

Furthermore, societal factors such as eating in groups with fun and pleasure are also another factor which affects eating behaviors, when they eat in a group, they are more attentive in gossiping and especially the young generation feels free, they do not think what they eat or how much they eat how this food directly affects their health. On the

contrary, people who eat fast food frequently with the opposite gender are inclined towards attracting the opposite gender through their eating habits. Even in the past times, there were sufficient pieces of evidence that show that human males share food in cooperative exchange relationships in the mating context. Men who can provision better are more likely to be chosen by women as mating partners (Gurven 2004)

Conclusion

This study concludes that the adaptation of fast food among hostelers is common in these days. In the present days, working mother has less time to prepare snacks which is called khaja in Nepali. The regular meal is changing. Noodles, biscuits, bhujia, and other junk foods are common in the early phase of children, this early phase of eating habits directly affects their eating behaviors. This study indicates that most of the hostelers agreed that their parents are aware of their fast-food eating habits, they know about the hostel mess providing them the food during their stay in hostels. On the other side, some hostelers accepted that their parents are not familiar with their eating behaviors, directly and indirectly, the parents' role is associated with the eating behavior. In many countries breakfast skipping is most prevalent among the student (Rmpersaud et al., 2005). Hostelers know very well about the importance of fruits but besides this they prefer to eat fast food daily instead of fruits. The study clearly signifies the direct ambiguity in the knowledge, awareness, and prudent consumption behavior amongst the hostelers.

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