

IMPACT OF FAST FOOD CONSUMPTION ON HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

Fast food is defined as a type of food which could be processed, canned, frozen, and prepared in short time and served quickly. Fast food has gained popularity in India in the last 20 years. Buyers of this segment got attracted because of a real quick fine-looking meal with enhanced taste, for economical prices. Fast food is called as junk food too, as it does not have high nutritional value. In spite being called as junk food, the rise of national and international brands of various chains is all time high. Fast food is harmful for the health as it is loaded with fat and high calories. It has imbalance ratio of protein and sugar which leads to several cases of cancer, obesity, diabetes, indigestion etc. The research on the same issue has been going on for many years now in the United States of America and few other countries. An Indian consumer has not paid any attention to this yet, as the concept of fast food is relatively new, hence the awareness. Few states in India has realized the danger of excessive intake of fast food in all the segments but significantly high in youngsters, so the ban of such kind of food has at least ensured that school children are not having fast food while in school.

This paper aims to study the awareness of the impact of consumption of fast food on the health of consumers. The study will be focused only on the consumers who visit popular brand of fast food serving pizza, burger, rolls, fries and other beverages.

Keywords: *Fast Food, Junk Food, Indigestion, Processed Food*

INTRODUCTION

The fast food is growing in leaps and bounds from 1996. The growth has made people aware about the food which is being served by international and national brands. Fast food has changed the culture of eating out tremendously over the last few years. Fast food is now available at every mall, airport, and railway stations and on almost every street. The term 'junk food' is used to describe food that is lower nutritional value, but comparatively higher calorific value.

Fatima & Shrivastava (2017) stated a definition of Junk Food as an empty calorie food which is a high calorie or calorie rich food which lacks in micronutrients such as vitamins, minerals or amino acids and fiber but has high energy (calories). These foods do not contain the nutrients that our body needs to stay healthy. Hence these kinds of food have poor nutritional value which is considered unhealthy and may be called as junk food.

Fast food started attracting kids and youngsters who were looking for a quick meal at a cheaper price. Brands like Dominos Pizza, Pizza Hut, Smoking Joe, Subway, and KFC are the ones who started serving fast food from the west like burgers, pizza, subs etc. There are various brands like Faaso's who are serving Indian food to the customers. Hyde *et al.*, (2017) mentioned that consumer

behavior is very important for all the companies to sell the product in the market. Every customer seeks various new products in the market to try something new. The reasons behind this are the various stimuli's like advertisement, sales promotion etc. The liking for fast food has increased due to proximity of the outlet, right location, attractive packaging, and excellent offers. Many people try to avoid or limit such food in their diets, out of concern that it is not healthy, but despite the fact numerous food manufacturers are producing a range of products which could be considered junk but the number of people eating junk is still very high.

The excess consumption of fast food is inviting various diseases like hypertension, blood pressure, cancer etc. Fast food products are high in chemicals, color and excess oil/fat hence fast food is considered as junk food. Fast food brands realized that a taboo of junk food was killing their business, so the new name to the entire segment was given which is Quick Service Restaurants.

Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution Government of India, New Delhi published a report on Effect of Junk Food on the Health of the School Children in Delhi in the year 2016 which was an eye opener for all the schools and parent of school going children. The important

findings were, children consume fast food in schools and at home. It was found that only 24% of students read the labels on the packets of food that they were buying. It is also said that the students were aware that junk food has an ill effect on the body and positively 80% of children were planning to reduce the intake (Centre for Consumer studies, Indian Institute of Public Administration, 2016).

Objectives

1. To learn the perception of the fast food for consumers.
2. To study the possibility of diseases due to consumption of fast food.
3. To understand the awareness of nutritional label on the fast food packaging.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Fatima & Srivastava (2017) studied that the fast food has a very severe kind of impact on the Digestive and cardiovascular systems as fast food is high in trans fat and sugar which is harmful for the system. It also has a negative effect on Respiratory system, Central nervous system and skin and bones, thus it becomes necessary to avoid junk food by encouraging eating of healthy snacks, high fiber food, calcium and iron rich food.

Song (2016) concluded that factors like the taste of the products, their freshness and consistency, the physical environment and contact employees have a great impact on customers when they buy fast food. Fast food restaurants have smartly adopted the strategy of identifying and targeting the need and expectations of customers. The pleasant atmosphere, cheap products, affordable pricing, right location, home delivery service has a major hand in success of the kind of food sold in these outlets.

Al-Saad (2016) stated that fast food contains a high percentage of materials and colors chemical which are harmful for the health and can lead to cancer. Monosodium Glutamate is a chemical which is used as a taste reinforcer and can make food very tasty which is sold at a cheaper price in the market. Poor health supervision in many countries is leading customer to have more and more fast food. Fast food contains high percentage of fat which is harmful for the health. People who consume fast food in a daily basis suffer from obesity, heart diseases, high blood pressure and many other diseases.

Centre for Consumer studies - Indian Institute of Public Administration (2016) recommended in the report that

government should reduce and control the promotion which is happening around the children by enforcing strict law. Health messages are to be made compulsory for all the brands. It also suggested that schools need to introduce and conduct awareness workshops for the children. Development in the canteen with good choices of healthy meal option is also mandatory. Easier access to the nutritional meal and strict enforcement of all the rules should be done too.

Jiao *et al.*, (2015) concluded that the proximity of the outlet is not an important factor for people to eat fast food, but the consumption of fast food twice in a week is associated to the ill health.

Arora & Tanwar (2014) studied that many customers have started taking fast food as an alternative for their breakfast as well which was not the case few years back when the fast food was first introduced. Almost 50% of the respondents were not aware about the nutritional value label which was on the package of the food. 24% of the respondents said that they are not aware about the harmful effects the body has due to the fast food that they consume. Maximum number i.e., 76% said that the fast food is unhealthy.

Ashakiran (2012) listed few measures which can be taken to control the consumption of the junk food are:

- School administration along with the parents should take the initiative to educate children about avoiding junk foods.
- By keeping good food nearby and having meals right on time may help in eliminating the temptation of having junk foods.
- Creating awareness about fitness, health and exercise, which will help to understand the ill effects of fast food. The study also explained that complete 'NO' for fast food is not suggested but overdoing and over intake of fast food will defiantly reduce the stamina of a body.

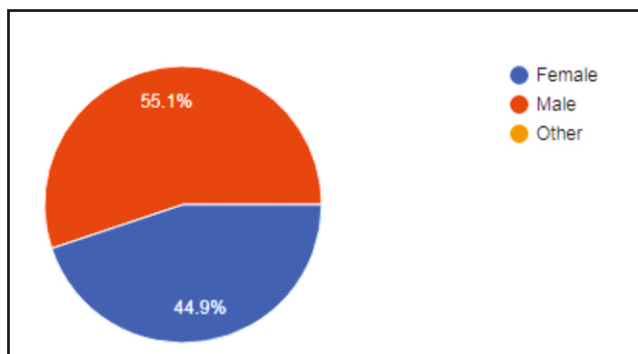
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Collection of Data

The questionnaire was sent to respondents in the Google Doc format. The questionnaire had open and close ended questions which helped to meet the objectives of the paper. In total 78 questionnaires were collected.

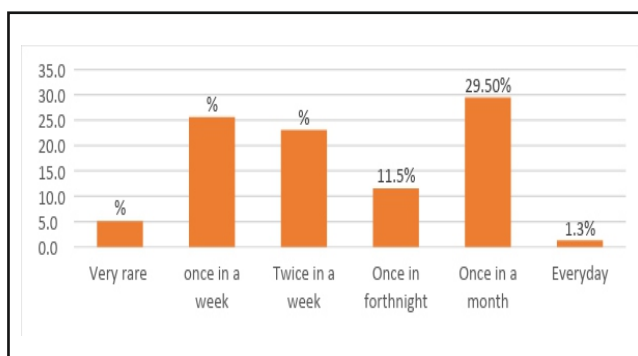
The secondary data was collected by using various research sites and referring few books related to food and beverages.

Figure 1: Gender Findings



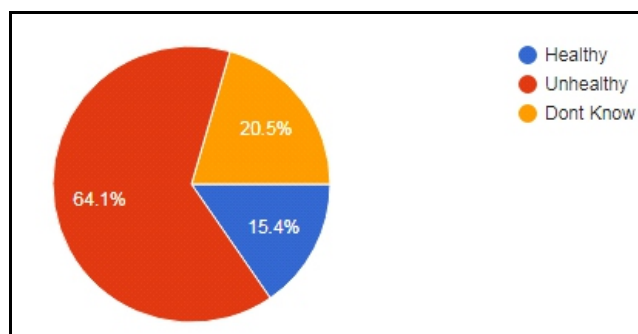
The questionnaire was answered by an even number of respondents from both the gender have answered the questionnaire (See fig. 1).

Figure 2: Frequency of Visit



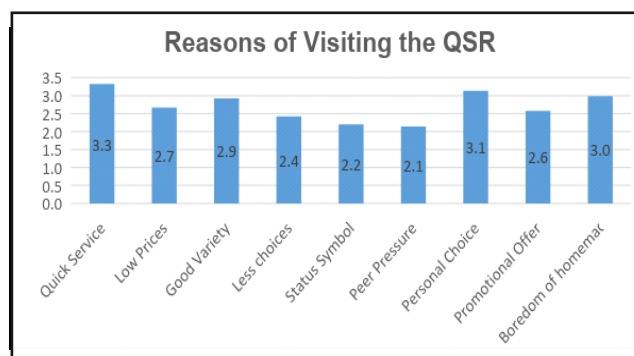
Maximum number of respondents consume fast food once in a month, followed by which consumer having fast food once in a week and twice in a week. Only 5% of the respondents believed on having it rarely (refer to fig. 2).

Figure 3: Perception of Fast Food



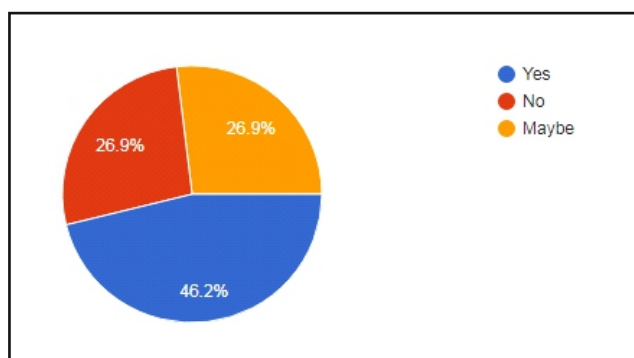
The respondents answered that maximum customers perceived fast food as unhealthy, yet the maximum respondents urge is to eat this food once in a month (See fig. 3).

Figure 4: Reasons for visiting of QSR



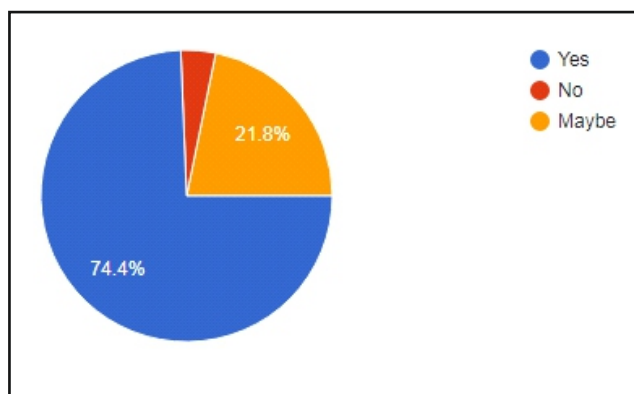
People prefer fast food as it is served quickly as compared to any other types of meals (refer to fig. 4). It is also something related to the personal choice as a part of their lifestyle.

Figure 5: Has the intake increased?



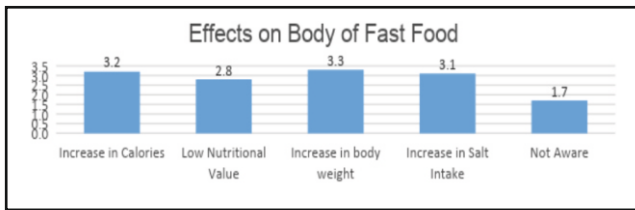
46% respondents said that the intake of fast food has increased in their diet, followed by 27% of respondents said that the intake is as it was earlier (refer to fig. 5).

Figure 6: Does fast food have an impact on health?



74% customers feel that fast food has an impact on the health only 3% of respondents feel that fast food has absolutely no impact on their health (see fig. 6).

Figure 7: Effects of fast food on body



Customers are aware that fast food has a negative impact on the body like increase in intake of calories, high intake of salt which leads in increase in weight (see fig. 7).

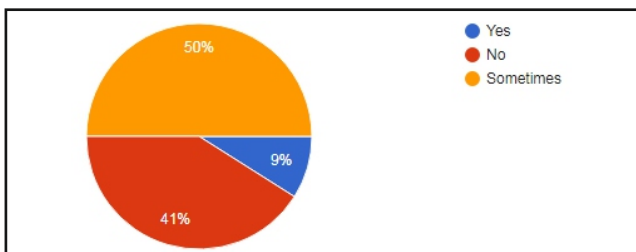
The kind of diseases which can be developed are due to consumption of fast food are as below (refer to table 1):

Table 1: Possibility of Diseases

	Highly Possible	Moderately Possible	Possible	Not Possible	Not Aware
Mental Illness	12.80%	29.50%	30.80%	14.10%	12.80%
Weight Gain	62.80%	24.40%	6.40%	1.30%	5.10%
Cancer	25.60%	16.70%	30.80%	10.30%	16.70%
Diabetes	29.50%	35.90%	21.80%	3.80%	9%
Obesity	61.50%	19.20%	16.70%	0%	2.60%
Hypertension	34.60%	23.10%	33.30%	2.60%	6.40%
Weak Memory	12.80%	23.10%	39.70%	9%	15.45
Heart Diseases	33.30%	30.80%	25.60%	2.60%	7.70%

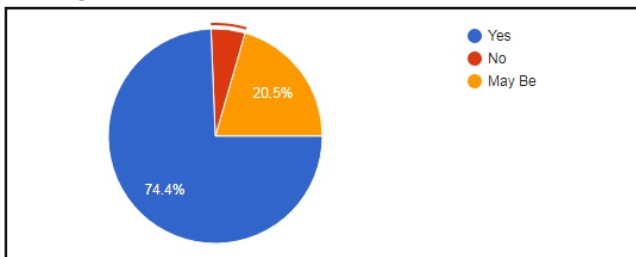
The analysis shows that weight gain and obesity are the top most diseases which are highly possible due to intake of fast food followed by hypertension.

Figure 8: Awareness of Nutritional Label



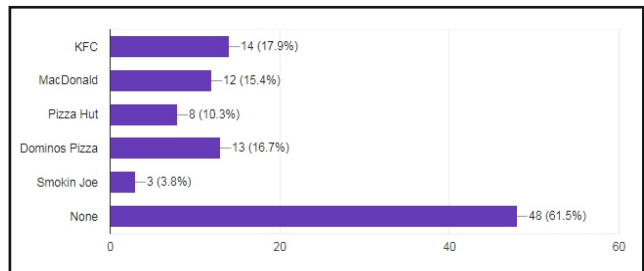
Awareness about nutritional level is only among the 9% of respondents followed by 41% of respondents said they are not aware of any such information printed on the label (refer to fig. 8).

Figure 9: Has the fast food intake increased?



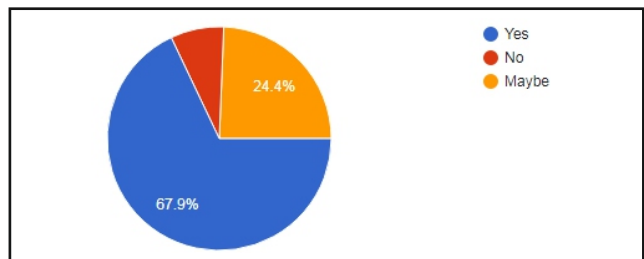
4% of respondents said that they are going to reduce the intake of fast food in near future (see fig. 9).

Figure 10: Any brand offering healthy meal option?



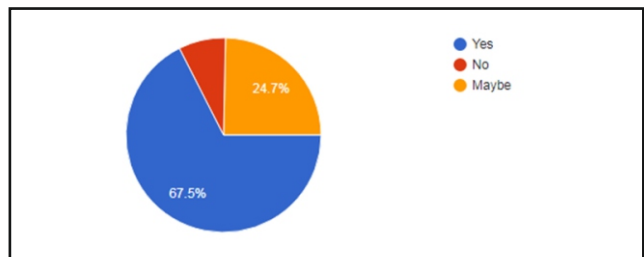
More than 50% respondents said that no brand is offering a healthy meal option (see fig. 10).

Figure 11: Planning to move away from fast food?



A positive outcome from the survey is more than half respondents intend to move towards reducing the fast food intake in future (see fig. 11).

Figure 12: Should printing of statutory warning made compulsory?



Apart from all the knowledge people have, many people do not consider checking nutritional label on the package which gives information about the preservative which are added with the fat percentage mentioned on the label, but they also feel that the statutory warning must be made compulsory on all the packaging for all the brands (see fig. 12).

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the temptation towards fast food is making people ignorant towards the ill effects. A clear and an informative display needs to be published by the government health department and Fast food companies must have a very clear and a direct label which will give information about the percentage of a fat, additive used, total calories and any other health

related warning.

SUGGESTION

- The author suggests a very strong action against the outlets which are selling fast food close to colleges and schools to create the awareness among the youngsters and prevent them to have excessive intake of such products.
- The market needs to have quicker served healthy meal options which will keep people away from the fast food.
- Lady of the house should be targeted to create and spear information about harmful effects of food which will make a family alert.
- Consciousness program should be conducted with the help of experts at every level in school and college to discuss about the various diseases which can be caused by the intake of fast food.
- It should also reach to all the fast food brands that the product they are selling is not doing well to people, hence more healthy options should be introduced in the outlets.

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