

Perception of Attitude to Fast-Food Restaurants: A Comparative Study of Male and Female Consumers

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Abstract

Fast-food restaurants are preferred by both male and female consumers for different reasons. Therefore this research aims to compare the perceptions and attitudes of males and females about fast-food restaurants in greater Cairo.

A self-administered survey questionnaire was used to collect data; 300 participants of 11yrs old or above (150 females and 150 males) were asked to complete the questionnaires.

The findings revealed that males regard the superiority of the menu as follows: menu variety, innovative food, fresh ingredients, appropriate temperature, pleasing appearance and flavor of meals but the size of portion is of no importance. On the other hand females considered that size of portion and freshness of food ingredients as good; menu variety, meals flavor and pleasing appearance as average; innovative food as poor, and appropriateness of the temperature as very poor. The study gives relevant recommends.

Key words: Gender, fast-food, perception, attitude.

INTRODUCTION

People life is changing dramatically, time is running out and they want to achieve more in less time (de Rezende& de Avelar, 2011). This rapid life caused a dramatic increase in consuming food away from home especially in fast food outlets which is responsible for 72.8% of whole food industry revenue (Perira *et al.*, 2005). Eating out also has become a fashion as customers are not only eating, but also enjoying the environment and celebrating special occasions (Warde and Martens 2000). In a similar context, Freeman (2011) found that 78% of adults agreed that going out to a restaurant allowed them an opportunity to socialize, and 40% felt that visiting restaurants makes them more productive in their day-to-day lives. Customers may eat out for convenience, enjoyment, cheaper price and speedy service.

There are external and internal factors affecting customer perceptions and attitudes towards fast food restaurants. These factors include culture and social class, family or group, environment (Bhuyan's, 2011; Mikkelsen, 2011), attractive décor and atmosphere (Alonso and O`neill, 2010), comfort and quality (Sulek and Hensley, 2004), taste of food (Soriano, 2003), quality of service (Bhuyan, 2011), persons' life style, brand image (Fischer *et al.*, 2010), quality of staff (Roberts *et al.*, 2010), price (Reyes, 2011), menu variety, gender (Beardsworth *et al.*, 2002), Age (Siudzinski, 2001), parking spaces (Bojanic, 2007), cleanliness (Henson *et al.*, 2006).

Although the subject of fast food operations gained high consideration of both academics and professionals, it seems that the effect of gender on the perception and attitude gained limited attention particularly true in Egypt. Therefore this research paper aimed to study the influence of gender on the customer's perception and attitudes of fast food operations in greater Cairo.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The sample of this study consisted of 300 customers at fast food restaurant aged ≥ 11 yrs old (150 males and 150 females). The participants were recruited from fast food operations namely of international chain restaurants -KFC and MacDonal- and national chain restaurant MO 'men in Greater Cairo.

The study used four- group administered questionnaire that covers demographic data, reasons of eating out, perception and attitude of eating out and opinions suggestions and of the participants. The questionnaire also included a group of questions concerning fast food restaurant visiting frequency and preferences.

The data were analyzed by using the SPSS (version 16)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table (1) Demography analysis

Factors		Percentages
Gender	Males	50 %
	Females	50 %
Age	11-18 years old	29 %
	19-40 years old	64 %
	40 and more	15 %
Education level	Primary	9 %
	Secondary	17 %
	Occupational	8 %
	University graduate	62 %
	Post graduate	4 %

The study sample of the current research includes 50 % female and 50% male. The higher number of the female reflects the fact that women in Egypt have become a remarkable portion of the workforce and have limited time to cook at home. This result agreed with Atkins and Bouler (2001) and French *et al* (2001) in that great changes have occurred in our society. Women being a part of Egyptian work force have no time to cook, smaller size of family and population growth. This in turn led to the change in teenage culture and what they have been raised on in terms of eating habits

The Education level considerably influenced the perception and attitude of eating out home, In this context, the results of the current study (Table 1) show that 59% of the fast food customers were university graduates. Similar results were reported by Allen *et al* (2007).

Table (2) with whom you go to eat out.

Gender	Alone	With friends	With family	With your Children
Male	2.9%	19.3%	18%	3.5%
Female	3.2%	20.6%	24.12%	7.1%

It is clear from Table (2) that 19.3% of females prefer to eat with friends and 2.9% always desire to eat alone. Regarding males, 24.12% eat with their families, but only 3.2% prefer to eat alone. It could be concluded that males and females vary in their preferences.

Table (3) Service type

Gender	at restaurant	Take away	Both
Male	20.9%	3.5%	16.7%
Female	20.8%	7.72%	23.9%

Regarding seating versus “take away”, 20.9% of female prefer eating at the resturant and 3.5% prefer “take away”; 23.9% of males prefer dining room as eating place and the same percentage like “take away” eating style, and 7.72% like take away only (table 3).

Table (4) Favorite meal

Gender	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Male	2.6%	21.5%	19.6%
Female	5.18%	25.4%	24.8%

Table (4) indicates no differences between males and females regarding favorite meal as both of them prefer lunch meal in fast food restaurants.

Table (5) Visiting frequency

Gender	Once a week	Twice a week	More
Male	26.4%	9.03%	8.6%
Female	28.9%	16.1%	10.9%

Regarding the frequency of weekly visits, no remarkable differences were found between both males (26.4%) and females (28.9%) (Table5).

Table (6) Reasons of eating out ranked in a descending order

Males	Females
1-travelling.	1-close to your home.
2-it is fast and ready.	2-price.
3-like the taste of food.	3-no time to cook.
4-famous.	4-it is fast and ready.
5-energetic atmosphere.	5-like the taste of food.
6-no time to cook.	6-It is close to shopping areas.
7-price.	7-it is a habit.
8-it is close to shopping areas.	8-famous.
9-close to your home.	9-entertainment.
10-entertainment.	10-Travelling.
11-it is a habit.	11-energetic atmosphere.

While males perceive travelling as their main or the 1st reason for eating out, it is number 10 for females; closeness to home is the principle reason for eating out by female. Eating out as a habit is number, 11 for males and number 7 for female. Price is considered the 2nd reason by females and the 7th by males. It is clear from the results presented in table (6) that there is no any similarity between males and females in the first five reasons of eating out. Energetic atmosphere of the dining out is relatively preferable by males since it appeared in the 5th rank, but at the bottom of the list for females.

Table (7) Factors affecting the food quality in order.

Males	females
1. Freshness.	1. Size of portion.
2. Appropriate temperature.	2. Fresh ingredients.
3. Menu variety.	3. Pleasing appearance.
4. Innovative food.	4. Menu variety.
5. Pleasing appearance.	5. Flavor of food.
6. Flavor of food.	6. Innovative food.
7. Size of portion.	7. Appropriate temperature.

Table (7) shows that the Size of the meal portion is considered as the first priority by females, but it is listed at the bottom of priorities by males. On the other hand freshness, menu variety and flavor of food ranked closely but not identical for males and females.

Table (8) Factors affecting the quality of service

Males	Females
1. Employees' appearance.	1. Courtesy of employees.
2. Equipment.	2. Open 24 hours.
3. Open 24 hours.	3. Equipment.
4. Courtesy of employees.	4. Employee appearance.
5. Speed of service.	5. Speed of service.

The results of Table (8) clearly indicate that the speed of service was identically perceived by males and females at the bottom of the list of the quality of service. Equipment and 24 hour opening occupy nearly the same category. Courtesy of employees was ranked first by females and fourth by males.

Regarding the menu price, it was seen reasonable by male but expensive by females. This is in accordance with the results reported by Zhu (2005), and Ozfer *etal*(2007).who mentioned that the quality/price ratio is a dominant factor for their experience.

The importance of different elements of fast food operation place is shown in table (9).

Table (9) Place

Males	Females
1. Location.	1. Location.
2. Attractiveness of dining room decoration	2. Cleanliness.
3. Parking service.	3. attractiveness of dining room decoration
4. Cleanliness.	4. Parking spaces.

Table (9) indicates that while location is ranked first by both males and females cleanliness came at the bottom of the list of males and parking spaces at the bottom of the females list.

The results of the current study indicated differences among customers perception and attitudes towards fast food restaurants according to gender, as the Standard Deviation and Standard Error of Mean values are = 0.01 for male and 0.03 for female and 0.01 for male and .01 for female respectively. This means that most participants responded differently to the questionnaire questions. Additionally, the results revealed that there is a significant difference between customers attitudes and perception according to gender (significance level for chi-Square = 0.000).

Recommendations

1. Restaurants have to emphasize on providing fresh ingredients for their customers. .
2. It is essential to handle customer complaints and respond instantly to their problems.
3. More attention should be given to the atmosphere and cleanness of the fast food outlets.
4. Fast food customers look for quicker service.
5. The temperature of food during its servicing should be improved to meet the customers' desire.
6. The authority of the fast food outlets must consider improving the appearance of the employees to motivate customers for repeating visits.
7. There is a need for clear and announced pricing policy for different items.
8. It is important to consider that fast food restaurants are dominated by females and their desire should be fulfilled.
9. Customers of fast food operations are highly educated, and this should be considered by managers in charge.
10. Fast food operations have to take into their consideration that their customers prefer eating in groups and for socializing purposes.
11. Lunch meals are the most preferable by fast food customers` and the operation must consider it their rush hours.
12. –Fast food restaurant managers should consider the size of portion as one of the limiting factors of repeating visit.

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الملخص العربي

انتشرت في العقود الثلاثة الأخيرة مطاعم الوجبات السريعة في دول العالم النامي والمتقدم على حد سواء، وأصبحت تنتشر في جميع ربوع مصر، إذ عزت مطاعم الوجبات السريعة (ذات الطابع الأمريكي) السوق المصرية منذ أكثر من عقدين حيث تزايد عدد مؤسسات وسلاسل مطاعم الوجبات السريعة وتزايد الطلب عليها خاصة من قاطني المدن والذين بدأوا في تقبل هذا النموذج الغربي من الوجبات السريعة والذي أصبح أسلوب حياة في هذا العصر. تتميز مطاعم الوجبات السريعة بنمط الخدمة السريع، والقوائم المحدودة والتي غالباً ماتوجد معلقة على الحائط، معدلات الدوران المرتفعة، الديكورات البسيطة. وقد كان لنجاح سلاسل مثل ماكдонаلد و كنتاكي سبباً في ظهور سلاسل محلية على غرار تلك السلاسل مثل مؤمن، جاد وغيرها التي تاخذ نفس الطابع الغربي. لذلك تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقدير الفروق في الآراء والاتجاهات بين عملاء مطاعم الوجبات السريعة طبقاً للنوع وذلك في القاهرة الكبرى. تضمنت الدراسة الميدانية 300 من عملاء مطاعم الوجبات السريعة والذين تبدأ أعمارهم من 11 عاماً. وكانت أداة البحث المستخدمة للحصول على البيانات هي الاستبيان. تم توزيع الاستبيان على العملاء الذين يفضلون تناول الطعام في مطاعم الوجبات السريعة. أوضحت نتائج الدراسة الميدانية وجود اختلافات في آراء واتجاهات العملاء تبعاً للنوع 19.3% من الذكور يفضلون تناول الطعام مع الأصدقاء، أما الإناث فنسبة 24.12% يفضلن تناول الطعام مع العائلة وهو مايشير إلى أن تناول الطعام في مطاعم الوجبات السريعة يمكن أن يكون نمطاً للاستمتاع أو الاحتفال أو الإندماج في المجتمع. لذلك على مدراء مطاعم الوجبات السريعة ومراعاة اختلاف الجنس (ذكور-إناث) لكي يكونوا قادرين على تلبية احتياجات العملاء وتقليل عدد الشكاوى. لذلك يوصى بالآتي: الاهتمام بجودة الطعام من حيث تقديم المكونات الطازجة ودرجة حرارة الطعام عند التقديم وكمية الطعام المقدمة في الوجبة، الاهتمام بنظافة صالة الطعام ودورات المياه، السرعة في تقديم الطعام. الاهتمام بالشكل العام للعاملين. ضرورة وضع سياسة سعرية معلنة تتناسب مع جميع الفئات؛ التعامل السريع مع جميع الشكاوى بأقصى سرعة ممكنة.