

Consumer Preferences among College Students towards Junk Food: A Study of District Fatehgarh Sahib, Punjab

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Abstract

Junk foods contain high level of fats, calories and salt. An increased consumption of such kind of food items lead to multiple kinds of health issues. The main objective of this study was to know junk food habits among the students and their impact on their health. College students preferred major fast-food types such as sandwiches, pizzas and burgers with spicy flavors. The survey was conducted in a college of Punjab state to understand their preference about Junk Food. For the analysis Simple Percentage Method is used. The findings of the study reveal that 88% of respondents spending 100-500 Rs. approximately and 12% of respondents spending more than 1000 Rs. weekly on Junk Food. 30% of the respondents are completely aware about the safety level of junk food, 58% of respondents are partially aware about the safety level and 12% are unaware about safety level of junk food.

Keywords: *Junk food, Fast Food, Consumer Preference, Unhealthy food, Harmful effects*

1. Introduction

Junk foods have high quantity of fats, calories and salt in it. Over Consumption of junk food may cause health issues. Main aim of this study was to know junk food impact on the health of students.

Junk food are ready to eat foods which contains harmful ingredients on high level like saturated fats, sugar, salt, no fruits vegetables or dietary fibers and these are considered to give low or no health benefits. Most commonly consumable junk foods are Chips, Candy gum, Pizza, Mostly sweet deserts, fried food, Beverages etc.

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1.1 Unhealthy ingredients of Junk Foods

- a. Artificial Sweeteners: Sweet'N Low (Saccharin), Equal (aspartame) and Splenda (sucralose) are few examples of artificial Sweeteners which are added in junk food and harder on our metabolic system as compared to plain sugar.
- b. Palm Oil: Palm Oils are trans fats which are anti-nutrients and helps packed foods to remain "fresh".
- c. Artificial food Coloring: artificial coloring is used to improve the appearance of junk food and brighten the food appearance.
- d. BHA (Butylated Hydroxyanisole): BHA is Cancer Causing preservative.
- e. Potassium Benzoate: This is added to soda and it may cause serious thyroid damage.

1.2 Fast Food industry in India

Ever since the fast food industry set its footprints in India, it has transformed the food culture and habits of the people. These changes have become prominent and significant after independence. Earlier eating with families at home used to be the tradition of Indian families. But after coming in of nuclear families, improved economic growth and increased per capita income and integration with world economies, fast food culture gained importance. Children have been most vulnerable and they have quickly resorted to fast food as they got tempted to the global urban culture and cuisines from the west. Other than the easy accessibility, cost savings are an added advantage with fast foods as they are cheaper than traditional meals, starting from an appetizer and ending with the dessert. After liberalization and opening of the Indian economy in 1992, many multiple fast food giants across the globe entered the Indian markets like Burger King, Pizza Hut, Domino's Pizza, McDonald's and KFC outlets. They have a huge market coverage and are functioning in shopping malls and other public areas. The factors that have contributed to an exponential increase in fast food industry in India are changes in consumer behavior and favorable demographics.

2. Review of Literature

Firdause Abdullah (2011) has explained that there are some dimensions like price reasonability, pricing offers, discount, special price for routine customers, pricing for new items and their influences for preference of junk food. This study reveals that brand name, seating arrangements, parking space, variety of items and interior designs also have great influence in attracting customers.

Oyedunni S. Arulegun and Modupe(2011) explains in spite of high level awareness about the harmful components of fast food and risk involved in consumption of fast food results future diseases but respondents are still consuming fast foods.

Vinay Gopal J and his colleagues (2012) defined the role of advertisement for attracting more and more college students towards junk foods. Majority of students admitted they are addicted towards junk food this study reveals that young generation needs to understand the chemicals additives and low nutrients involved in junk foods.

Gauba Vaishali (2015) explored the chances of growth of Junk Food industry in India

Park et al.(2016) The study shows about the detrimental effect of frequent consumption of energy drinks amongst the Korean adolescents with the focus on whether the intake of such drinks along with fast foods aggravates those effects or not. The data was collected through a self-reported online survey by KYRBS. The outcome of the study showed that individuals who consumed the energy drinks frequently (more than 5 times a week) had stress and sleep deprivation which further resulted in lethargy, depression, suicidal tendencies and poor academic performances as compared to others.

Goel.S et al (2013) The Research paper discusses the reason for increase in the number of overweight adolescent girls. The sample size included 80 overweight girls, between the age of 16-18 from 2 schools from Kurukshetra district, while looking at the dietary habits it was found most of the participants were consuming food rich in fats proteins and carbs but highly deficient in other micro nutrients. The outcome of the research stated that skipping meals in morning followed by consumption of junk food on daily basis along with sedentary lifestyle were the main causes of obesity in the participants. The results suggest the need of educating adolescents about harmful effects of junk food and promote healthy dietary habits.

Kaushik.J et al. (2011) The paper disseminates information regarding the rampant consumption of fast food in Children. It enumerates factors such as attractive advertising, busy working schedule of parents and easy availability to such foods in school cafeterias as primary reasons for the issue. The research also suggests government intervention to regulate fast food advertising in the country, mandatory nutritional labeling of fast foods in restaurants and regulation of marketing as the possible solutions to curb the problem.

It has been elucidated by Naheed Vaida (2013) in his study that the consumption of fast food was witnessed to be higher before lunch periods. It lures the maximum number of consumers, most of whom prefer “branded fast food” and spend approx. Rs. 25-50 on a daily average. The consumers have acknowledged the fact that consumption of fast food manifests their status among the higher class. The study also reveals that girls tend to consume more fast

food than boys and that urbanization of society has had a tremendous impact on the changing habits of the students.

Purushothaman, S et al (2015) The study is an assessment of consumption of junk food among 15-year-old children. The research shows that all the students were conscious of the fact that junk food contained chemicals, 58% of the students were aware of the disease caused by it, all the participants stated that their parents have knowledge about their junk food habits and easy access to junk food and its presence in the school and at home has influenced them to consume it more frequently.

Col, L., Antony, M., & Bhatti, R. (2013) The aim of the study was to analyze the junk food habits of teenagers and to find out whether the students are aware of their adverse effects. The outcome of the research showed that out 66.8% who consumed junk food, almost 50% of the participants used to consume junk food frequently i.e around 3-5 times a week. The study also stated that 46.15% teenagers had average/good knowledge about its ill effects but still did not make any efforts to change their dietary habits. The research suggests in order to reduce obesity in adults, there is a need to induce good dietary habits while they are kids.

Jennifer L. Harris, Samantha K. Graff. (2012) The study aims to elaborate on the topic of commercial speech doctrine and its contradicting nature with fast food advertisements leading to obesity crisis amongst the youth. A detailed study of the First Amendment will help understand the nature of regulations made to protect children and adolescents from the enticing advertisements of the food and beverage companies which specifically targets them

Yarimoglu, E et al (2019) The study basically aims to scrutinize the intentions of parents for not allowing their children to consume junk food. It has also included the theory of planned behavior with the help of two external components, which have not been examined in conjunction prior to this study.

John R. Rossiter (2019) This paper is a detailed critique of a latest Australian study by some public health researchers on junk food advertisement and its effects on children. The study conveniently left out some essential points and thus proved to be unreliable. Hence, the author attempts to elucidate the issues relating to such reckless studies by researchers and brings to light certain problems which needs to be circumvented in experimental research on consumer behavior.

Icek Ajzen (2015) The present paper conducts a comparative analysis between the subjective expected utility (SEU) model and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). The approach of TPB is quite different from the SEU model which is quite popular in consumer behaviour based research projects and such distinction will be further elaborated in length in the paper.

Carolie, F et al. (2013) The study explored the pros and cons of imposing a tax on junk food in order to intervene in the growing concern of obesity in North America. On one hand, a small amount of excise tax will lead to a considerable revenue without affecting the obesity rates and on the other hand, a large amount will directly affect the obesity rates but won't be politically stable.

Athavale, P et al. (2020) This study has highlighted about how globalisation has caused the risk factors for early childhood caries (ECC) which leads to undernutrition in children. Hassled family life, inadequate oral care and junk food atmosphere have contributed significantly to ECC. The author in this study suggests the importance of restraining junk food marketing and including oral health facilities.

Gupta, A et al (2018) This study aims at how consumption of junk food has led to obesity and diet related complications in young children. Study showed high frequency in intake of junk food in rural school children. The author suggests that by promoting healthy diet and by making children aware about the harmful effects of junk food its consumption can be lowered.

Goyal, A., & Singh, N. P. (2007) This study aims to determine the significance of different factors influencing young Indian consumers' preference of fast-food outlets. The findings show that young Indian consumers are excited about visiting fast food joints for enjoyment and change, but their first preference is home food. In addition, customers believe that fast food outlets need to provide more knowledge on healthy values and hygiene conditions.

Joseph, N. et al. (2015) This research was conducted to determine the perception of health risks, the consumption behaviour of fast foods, and to find out how high school students are correlated with overweight. In order to reduce intake, knowledge of the health risks of fast foods needs to be taught in schools. Through not consuming fast foods and enhancing home food to encourage discouragement of fast foods, parents have to set an example themselves. To a greater degree, this will reduce life-style disorders among children.

Sardana, G. D., Thatchenkery, T., & Anand, R. (2011) The goal of this case study is to look for the factors that has an impact on the preference of fast food for consumers in India. This case study focuses on current trends towards organic food and green consumerism in view of increased health problems with fast food consumption from the countries in West and much less in India despite obesity being an epidemic. Fashion to eat out with friends, socialising,

ambience and convenience for families where both the partners are earning in nuclear families in urban India are the key determinants influencing consumer food choice.

3. Need for Study

It has various impacts on society and the need for study is:

- a. It has so many short term impacts like reduced energy level, reduced concentration among youngsters
- b. It has also many long term impacts like Heart disease, High Cholesterol and other serious disease.
- c. Junk food companies target children to increase their sale and this cause children unhealthy from their childhood.

4. Objectives of the Study

- a. To identify the college student's preference towards junk food.
- b. To identify the relationship among nutritional information over decision making.

5. Scope of the study

Junk food is available all over the world so it covers the whole world. These foods are mostly like by college students but this study is limited to a specific part the area of study is District Fatehgarh Sahib Punjab.

6. Research Methodology

Research is a detailed process involving multitude of steps beginning from data collection, organizations, interpretation, and analysis and drawing meaningful conclusions.

The Stratified Sampling Method was used to collect the information. A probability sampling procedure in which simple random sub-samples are drawn from within different strata that are, more or less equal on some characteristics.

The survey was conducted in Fatehgarh Sahib, Punjab India. The sample includes students from different colleges of Fatehgarh sahib, Punjab. The total number of 50 individuals was chosen for the study. The questionnaires were distributed among the students. All the participants were between the age group from 17-25 years. Data was collected in the month

of January 2020. A single page questionnaire contains 15 multiple choice questions. The brief overview about junk food and their effects on health was given to all the respondents.

6.1 Tools and Techniques

Simple Percentage Method: Simple percentage method is used to compare the relationship between two or more items. For calculation of the simple percentage following formula was used:

$$\text{Percentage analysis} = \frac{\text{No. of respondents}}{\text{Total respondents}} \times 100$$

7. Analysis and Interpretation

Table No. 1: Classification on the basis of Age and gender

Age	Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Below 20	Male	26	52%
20-25	Female	24	48%
Total	Total	50	100%

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: The above table shows that 52% of respondents are Below 20 years and male, 48% of respondents are between the age 20-25 and females.

Table No. 2: Weekly pocket money of respondent

Pocket money	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Below 100	03	06%
100-200	16	32%
200-500	15	30%
More than 500	16	32%
Total	50	100%

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: This table reveals that there are 6% of the respondent are have below Rs.100 and 32% of the respondent are between 100 to Rs.200 and 30% of the respondents are between 200-500 and 32% of the respondents are above Rs.500 having weekly pocket money.

Table No. 3: Is Junk food healthy or not

Opinion	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	05	10%
No	45	90%
Total	50	100%

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: This table reveals that there 10% of respondents say junk food is healthy and 90% of respondents says junk food is not healthy.

Table No. 4: Reasons for choosing fast food

Factors	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Time	01	2%
Taste	42	84%
Changing Lifestyles	06	12%
Induce of Advertising	01	2%
Total	50	100%

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: The above table shows that 2% of the respondents choose fast food for time, 84% choose fast food because of its taste and 12% prefers it because of changing lifestyle and 2% influenced by advertisement.

Table No. 5: Favorite Junk Food

Junk Food	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Fast Food	22	44%
Snacks	15	30%
Soft Drinks	11	22%
Candies	02	4%
Total	50	100%

Source: Primary data

Interpretation: The above table shows that 44% of the total respondents choose fast food as their preferred junk food, 30% chooses snacks, 22% choose soft drinks and remaining 4% choose candies.

Table No. 6: Fast Food Outlet preferences of respondents

Junk Food Outlets	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Food joints	26	52%
Canteen	19	38%
Roadside stands	05	10%
Total	50	100%

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: The above table represents that 52% of the total respondents prefers dining at the food joints, 38% prefers Canteen and remaining 10% prefers road side stands.

Table No. 7: Weekly consumption

Average weekly consumption	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Once	16	32%
Twice	22	44%
Thrice	04	8%
More than Three times	08	16%
Total	50	100%

Source: Primary data

Interpretation: From above table, only 32% respondents consume junk food only at once in a week, 44% consume twice in a week, 8% consumes thrice in a week and remaining 16% consume more than three times in a week.

Table No. 8: Weekly spending on junk food

Spending (RS.)	No. of Respondents	Percentage
100-500	44	88%
500-1000	06	12%
Total	50	100%

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: From the above table, 88% of respondents spending 100-500 Rs. approximately and 12% of respondents spending more than 1000 Rs. weekly.

Table No. 9: Concerned about the nutrient fact label on junk food and addictiveness

Option	Junk food addictive or not	Concerned about Nutrient Facts
Yes	68%	26%
No	32%	54%
Sometimes/Maybe	---	20%
Total	50	100%

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: In above table 68% of respondents consider junk food addictive and concerned about nutrient facts on label and 32% of respondents consider junk food is not addictive and not aware about the nutrient facts on label.

Table No. 10: Awareness about the safety level of Junk foods

Safety Level	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Completely Aware	15	30%
Partially Aware	29	58%
Unaware	06	12%
Total	50	100%

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation: From the above table, 30% of the respondents are completely aware about the safety level of junk food, 58% of respondents are partially aware about the safety level and 12% are unaware about safety level of junk food.

Table No. 11: Impact of Nutritional information on buying decision

Buying Decisions	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Always	09	18%
Sometimes	37	74%
Never	08	16%
Total	50	100%

Source: Primary data

Interpretation: In above table, 18% of the respondents are always influenced by the nutritional information, 74% of respondents are sometimes influenced and 16% of the respondents are not influenced by nutritional information.

8. Suggestions

“Health is wealth” so in the junk food, most of the respondents are said, have some obesity problems and depression. So, the respondents have to avoid the consumption of junk food. Now a day many youngsters adopting the consumption of the junk food as they feel it are fantasy. The health consciousness has been reduced among the respondents. To regain the health, they have to espouse with consumption of natural food.

Majority of the respondents are feel the junk food was good taste & quality. But the tasty food always gives, so they know the aware of the junk food.

The following are some reasons for avoiding junk food:

- a. Junk foods are lack of energy
- b. Junk food leads to poor concentration
- c. Junk food contains high cholesterol
- d. Consumption of junk food leads to Heart disease
- e. Fast foods are having low nutrition value
- f. Junk foods are highly addictive

9. Conclusion

Junk food now a day it's easy and tasty available food in the market. So, all categories of students are very much interested to have their fast and tasty food very quickly. So, they are preferring junk food as their meals. They are not distillate on their own health. So many health-related problems occur due to their food consumption. People are very much fond on have more spicy foods and snacks. This creates many health problems like obesity, depression and stomach upset. To overcome this respondent has to plan their intakes of food items as organic and reduce their junk food consumption. Even the parents have to necessary step to stop their children in eating the outside food.

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Appendix: Survey Questionnaire

1. Name: _____
 2. Gender:
 - (i) Male
 - (ii) Female
 3. Age: _____
 4. Educational background:
 - (i) Graduate
 - (ii) Under graduate
 - (iii) Post graduate
 5. Weekly pocket money:
 - (i) 50-100 (ii) 100-200
 - (iii) 200-500 (iv) 500-1000
 - (v) More than 1000
 6. Are you a permanent resident of Fatehgarh Sahib?
 - (i) Yes
 - (ii) No
-

7. In your opinion do you consider junk food is healthy or not?
(i) Yes (ii) No
8. What are the factors influencing the choice of junk food?
(i) Time (ii) Taste
(iii) Changing Lifestyles (iv) Influence Of Advertisements
9. What is your favorite junk food?
(i) Fast Food (ii) Snacks
(iii) Soft Drinks (iv) Candies
10. Where do you often have junk food?
(i) Food Joints (ii) Canteen
(iii) Kiosks & Roadside Stands
11. How many times do you eat junk food on an average per week?
(i) Once (ii) Twice
(iii) Thrice (iv) Three Times or More
12. Do you take junk food as an alternative to breakfast?
(i) Yes (ii) No
(iii) Sometimes
13. Do you consider junk food as addictive?
(i) Yes (ii) No
(iii) Can't Say
14. Do you check the nutrient fact label in the junk food?
(i) Yes (ii) No
(iii) Sometimes
15. Are you aware about the chemicals present in the junk food and its safety level?
(i) Yes I Know (ii) Partially Aware
(iii) Unaware

16. Do you really know the harmful effects of chemical present in junk food?

- (i) Yes, Completely Aware (ii) No
(iii) Others

17. Does the nutritional information about a product really influence your decision to buy junk food?

- (i) Yes, Always (ii) Yes, But Sometimes
(iii) Never

18. Have you noticed any adverse impact on your health due to junk food?

- (i) Yes, Substantial. (ii) Yes, But Not Substantial
(iii) No

19. Do you think government is adequately monitoring junk food quality?

- (i) Yes (ii) No
(iii) Maybe

20. How much amount (approx) do you spend in a week on junk food consumption?

- (i) 100-500 (ii) Rs 500 – Rs 1000
(iii) >1000.