



The Factors Affecting Purchase Intention of university students in Fast Food Industry in Quetta. Pakistan

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Abstract

Purchase intention is a crucial factor that affects fast food usage as it reflects the individual's willingness to buy a product or service. In the fast-food industry, purchase intention is particularly important because it can determine the success or failure of a business. If a consumer has a positive purchase intention towards a particular fast-food brand, it is more likely that they will purchase from that brand repeatedly. On the other hand, if a consumer has a negative purchase intention, they may choose to purchase from a competitor or not purchase at all. This article explores the factors that influence the purchase intention of university students in Quetta, Pakistan, in the fast-food industry. The aim of this study is to explore the factors namely, physical environment and health consciousness which affect the purchase intention of universities students. The study uses a quantitative approach, and data was collected from 300 university students through a self-administered questionnaire. Statistics software (SPSS V23) was used to analyze the data. The results indicate that factors such as physical environment and health cautiousness have a significant impact on the purchase intention of university students. Furthermore, the study also suggests that demographic variables such as gender, age, and income have a moderate influence on purchase intention. The findings of this study have important implications for fast-food businesses operating in Quetta, as they can use these factors to develop effective marketing strategies to target the university student market.

Keyword: Purchase Intention, Fast food, physical environment, health consciousness



Introduction

Background of the Study

The fast food industry is a highly competitive market, and it is essential for businesses to understand the factors that influence the purchase intention of their target customers, particularly university students who are a significant market segment for this industry. Hahm et al. (2023) argue that if industry is well understood, has a rich potential to pay high dividends to businesses. Likewise, the study by Quach et al. (2020) aimed to identify these factors and their effects on the purchase intention of university students in Vietnam. The study found that food quality is the most critical factor affecting purchase intention. This result is consistent with previous research that suggests that consumers are willing to pay more for higher quality food (Wu & Chen, 2017). The food quality includes the taste, freshness, and nutritional value of the food, and customers expect fast food restaurants to maintain consistent food quality. The second most important factor is price. The study found that price sensitivity is high among university students, and they are more likely to choose a restaurant with lower prices. This finding is consistent with the theory of rational behavior, which suggests that consumers make purchase decisions based on the cost-benefit analysis. Service quality is another significant factor affecting purchase intention. This factor includes factors such as the speed of service, the friendliness of the staff, and the cleanliness of the restaurant. The study found that customers expect fast and efficient service, and they are more likely to visit a restaurant with good service quality. Brand image also has a moderate effect on purchase intention. A strong brand image can create positive associations with the restaurant and influence customers' decision-making processes. The study found that customers are more likely to visit a restaurant with a well-known brand and positive reputation. Finally, perceived value also has a moderate effect on purchase intention. Perceived value is the customers' assessment of the benefits they receive compared to the price they pay. Customers are more likely to visit a restaurant if they perceive that they are getting a good value for their money. To conclude, the study by Quach et al. (2020) highlights the importance of food quality, price, service quality, brand image, and perceived value in influencing the purchase intention of university students in the fast food industry. Businesses in this industry can use these findings to develop strategies that meet customers' expectations and improve their competitive position. Several companies from all over the world made fast foods under varied brand names and offers slightly differentiated goods and services. As consumer itself is identical in food choices, that is



why firms are facing competition on continuous basis in order to engage the customers.

Consumer behavior is the behavior that consumers display in searching for purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing of products, services and ideas. Positive or negative buying behaviors of consumers in fast food industry relating to menus of specific fast food can affect the expenditures and profits of that particular firm. In response, research on consumer behavior is beneficial for companies it help out them in knowing the antecedents due to which consumers buy, use or dispose a particular product.

For selection of food choices, if we consider both male and female it can be seen that they have various factors of attraction in fast foods. In studies of Chen et al. (2023) present factors which attract female consumers to buy a particular fast food are reputation of brand, food point's location, packaging and food quality, whereas factors of attraction for male are facilities which are provided by the restaurants, employees coordination, offerings by restaurants for late night activities, price and taste of particular fast food (Chen et al., 2023).

Scholars define fast food as a food which people purchase with ease and consume at different places with quick service and they don't need to prepare themselves (French et al., 2000).

A detailed and comprehensive study of marketing literature regarding fast-food intake in whole the world, near to angle of consumers and health experts, highlights that people are still more focused on the health factor of fast food they consume. While, there are a few organization, like the World Cancer Research Fund and the American Institute for Cancer Research highlighted that the consumption of fast –food should be kept minimum because of its possibility of link with the weight increase (Sajjad et al., 2023).

Other standard, the youngest people care about when to go for taking of fast- food that is –it is the physical environment, which is: the cleanliness/ sanitation and purity, four-dimensional design and functionality, climate and surrounding environment (Wall and Berry, 2007). Keeping in mind that, the purpose behind visiting the fast food shop is the taste of food and drinks that a particular brand offers but still people do evaluation of the restaurant on the bases of its physical environment too, and thus inclusion of these factor plus, physical appearance of fast food centers plays an important role in purchase intension of customers (Untaru & Ispas, 2013).

In Pakistan, from the total population almost one quarter people consume fast foods and their numbers are increasing continuously. In addition, there is a potential for fast food market in Pakistan. The success of some international fast food chains like Pizza Hut, MacDonald, KNN's,



hot stove, burger king, hot n chili. Etc. proved the increasing demand of fast foods. It is crucial for international product and services providers to understand the perceptions and buying behavior of consumers because consumer all over the world have different cultural priorities (Lee and Ulgado, 1997).

The main aim of this research study is to analyze and examine the factors that affect the purchase intension of students of universities of Quetta, on fast food items in Quetta city. The research study will also facilitate us to groom our knowledge about the factors like health consciousness and physical environment and their effect on purchase intension towards fast food in the Quetta city.

Literature Review

Fast food

The usage of fast food has been increasing very sharply in the entire world, which covers both under and over developed countries. The basic reason behind is that the changes and shifts of life styles of people and their dietary habit. Most importantly, Young people are more prone to intake of fast food as compared to other age groups (Sajjad et al., 2023).

Fast food is type of food that takes no time to be cooked and served. While, on the move, sitting, driving, want to be relaxed at home, or on a single call, the food is delivered with ease. And is popular because of its cheapness and taste (Young Men's Health , 2018).

Due to mobility of the people worldwide, communication, media, culture and markets are totally linked and interconnected has put the fast food in the list of best global businesses.

Health Consciousness

People are too much worried about fast food quality, because trend of fast food intake is increasing worldwide. While several studies show that fast foods provide enough amount of protein, carbohydrates and several vitamins, but are generally low in calcium, vitamins C and A and fiber, and are rich in calories, complete and saturated fat, and cholesterol (French et al., 2000).

In a study participants were asked regarding health concerns regarding fast foods, majorities' responses were in affirmation and they believed that is health factor which puts bricks in consumption of fast food items (Sajjad et al., 2023).



Physical Environment

The most important thing or factor which young generation value a lot, whenever, they like to spend time outside, or want to go for outing, for a lunch or dinner, that is the environment of that fast food restaurant, because they think that the physical environment adds more value to the restaurant except its taste and other factors.

Physical environment of fast food restaurant has been named as “services cape”. Due to its dimensions and physical environment, like temperature, noise, music, outlook, and decoration style, which is considered more eye catching and attracting and pulling youth in (Bitner, 1992).

While, a few more studies have highlighted the impact of physical environment on consumers move toward purchasing, and was considered and included in qualities of a particular fast food center (Wall and Berry, 2007).

Purchase Intentions:

Purchase intentions are used by marketers as for making marketing mix decisions, because purchase intension actually or linked with the future sales, or predict the future sales. So, that is why more important factor to identify and focus on as a marketer (Morwitz, 2012)

Whereas, as per a research around 70 to 90% client had a strong role of purchase intension in doing the purchases in their daily rotten purchasing activities (Jamieson, 1989).

Physical environment and purchase intension of fast food customers.

Researchers from all over the world have studied the impact of physical environment on buying intensions of customers. When customers enter in a restaurant, first thing he or she perceives is the physical environment of that environment, main factor of customer perception based from it. After that, customers not only go for eating in restaurants, but want change from, routine life, interact with others and get rid of their problems and tensions. That’s why on the basis of above reasons physical environment of food outlets must be kept with attractive components for customers. One of the most significant of consumer’s behavior and psychology is physical environment when consumption of services or products are related to pleasure, or when time which is spent by a consumer to certain physical environment for longer period of time (Ryu and Han, 2011; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1994; Bitner, 1992).



Emotions of customers may increase or decrease because of physical environment which ultimately effect the behavior or satisfaction of customers (Reidenbach & Sandifer-Smallwood, 1990; Sayed et al., 2003). According to Milliman (1986) “in some cases the interior or more specifically the physical environment is more influential on the purchase decision than the product itself”. If a customer found a particular restaurant’s environment unattractive or less satisfactory, they may switch on to another one for meal. (Riley and Canny, 1994) shows that satisfaction of customers is either negatively or positively get affected by physical environment and their positive effect of customer’s satisfaction on behavioral intensions. Hahm et al. (2023) indicates that it is necessary for the management of a restaurants to keep it up to date physical environment in product and service quality for the purpose of retaining customers and to gain competitive advantage in fast food market.

Thus we can hypothesis that,

H1: Physical environment has a positive association with purchase intension of university students.

Health consciousness and purchase intension of fast food customers.

The risk of becoming fat and weight gain increases when people eat out of home or specially when they go for fast food restaurants (Nago et al., 2014). In addition, fast food contains excessive amount of energy, fats and calories and also taken by large number of people (Bauer et al., 2012). Fast food industry is now taking initiative in refining the healthfulness of their products and services after knowing harmful fact from consumer organizations and health authorities. It consists of selecting possible healthier food items (Kirkpatrick et al., 2013), selection of healthful labeled foods for example “weight watchers” accepted food menu (Anderson & Miroso, 2014) moreover, little decrease in fast food which contained sodium was made for four years because of Australian efforts taken to decrease sodium in diet (Garcia et al., 2014).

Behaviors of both male and female in selection of food is entirely different. Generally, females were continuously found in more health conscious behavior as compared to males and adopt healthful food patterns (Arganini et al., 2012).

To achieve the nutritional requirements is the most important aim of eating. Some important factors from the production process of food are taken as an indicator to prove the nutritional quality of particular fast food. Sensory needs are significant indicators for the relationship of consumers and goods and that’s why it is the most important element in judging the quality of product on



consumers. “Organic quality” of meal is made by both sensory and nutritional needs. Necessary aims of food are achieved by both of them on order to please and feed the customers (Murmura, 2015):

To examine the contributions of fast food to health and diet, different researches have been conducted. Studies shown that young people have more intake of fast foods when they go with their friends and families because of social norms. However, studies are limited which explore whether youth, particularly, student take into consideration their health while using fast food or not.

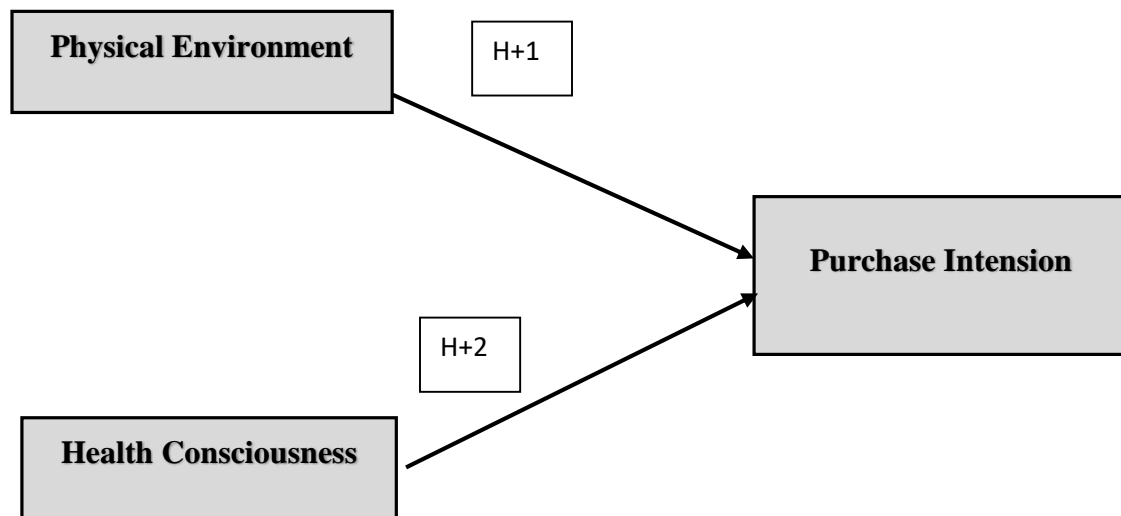
Thus hypothesis can be made as,

H2: Health Consciousness has a direct effect on purchase intension of university students.

The Conceptual Framework of the study

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework of the study



Methodology

Quantitative research methodology was used to conduct the research.

Research Design This research presented a casual study to examine the effects of factors (physical environment and health consciousness) on purchasing behavior of fast food consumers in Quetta city



Sample and Procedures Sample was selected from the MS students both male and female of university of Balochistan in order to know their buying behavior regarding fast food outlets (KFC, MacDonal, local brands) situated in Quetta city.

Data collection Techniques Convenience sampling technique was used to collect the data from different departments in university of Balochistan.

Research instrument Questionnaire was used to collect the data from the participants. Because for causal research it is preferable as well as easy to collect data from large sample through questionnaire. In total 150 questionnaires were moved, but later only we received 48 usable responses.

Data analysis and interpretation SPSS 26 was used do analyze and interpret the data. In which we used multiple regression analysis because we have one dependent variable (purchasing intension of fast food consumers) and two independent variables (physical environment and health consciousness) respectively.

Ethical considerations and Confidentiality. All data will be taken with the consent of participants and will be kept confidential.

Result

The finding shows that 150 questionnaires were disputed among respondent. And 48 were received back, among these 48 responded 24 were male and 23 were female and one did not mention genders, 26 fell range of (15-20) , 19 participants range from (21-25), 1 from age group of (26=30) and 2 participants from the age group of (31-35) respectively. Out of 48 respondents, 5 didn't visited the fast food restaurants during last 3 months. 32 respondents visited Hot n Spicy and 11 visited Balana restaurant in Quetta city As the participants were asked to respond on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree"(1) to "strongly agree"(5).

Data Analysis & Interpretation

After cleaning the data, and checking for missing value, the second step was to perform descriptive statistics.



The descriptive statistics showed total number of respondents were 48. Out of total, 24 were male and 24 were female and, male and female were 50% each. In addition, the mean values of gender, age and history are 1.46, 1.56 and 1.13 with standard deviation of .544, .741 and .570 respectively.

After description, the reliability of scale was tested, with Cronbach's Alpha values of health conscious, physical environments and purchase intention of 0.88, 0.83 and 0.80 respectively.

Multiple Regression.

In multiple regression predictors are more than one. Results of multiple regression using SPSS are given below.

Table 1

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Seq.	Std. Error. Est.
1	.762	.580	.541	.903

Coefficient of correlation between these variables is 0.762. Coefficient of determination R square shows that 58 percent variation in purchase intention is explained by physical environment, health concerns. As mentioned in Table 2.

Table 2

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.162	.431		2.694	.010
	PE	.441	.136	.497	3.239	.002
	HC	.203	.098	.263	2.072	.044

After getting coefficients for constant and other predictor variables by using SPSS it is clear that with zero, health consciousness and physical environment, the purchase intension of consumer is 1.162.

The coefficient value of .441 for physical environment shows that keeping all other variables constant, one-unit increase in physical environment on average will cause .441-unit increase in



purchase intention of consumer of fast food. The coefficient value of .203 for health consciousness shows that keeping all other variables constant, one-unit increase in health consciousness on average will cause .203-unit increase in purchase intention of consumer of fast food. Significance for intercept having value of .010 shows that it is statistically significant and .002 for physical environment also shows that it is statistically significant. Value of .044 significances for health consciousness shows that it's statically significant.

Discussion

This study investigated the direct relationship of health consciousness and physical environment on purchase intension of university students in Quetta Baluchistan.

The hypothesis that there is a positive association between health consciousness and purchase intention of fast food consumers in university students has received attention from researchers due to the growing concern over the health implications of fast food consumption. University students are a significant consumer group in the fast food industry, and their purchase intention is influenced by various factors, including their health consciousness. The findings of the study by Chua et al. (2018) provide support for the hypothesis that there is a positive association between health consciousness and purchase intention of fast food consumers in university students. The study found that university students who are more health-conscious are more likely to purchase fast food products that are perceived to be healthier or have healthier options. This finding suggests that students who are health-conscious are more likely to make healthier food choices, even when they consume fast food. One possible explanation for this positive association is that health-conscious students are more aware of the health consequences of consuming fast food and, as a result, may be more likely to seek out healthier options or modify their consumption behavior. This explanation is supported by the fact that the fast food industry has been under pressure to provide healthier food options in response to consumer demand for healthier food choices. Another possible explanation for the positive association is that students who are health-conscious may be more likely to consider the nutritional value of the food they consume and may be more aware of the ingredients in fast food products. As a result, they may be more likely to purchase products that are perceived to be healthier or have healthier options. The positive association between health consciousness and purchase intention of fast food consumers in university students has significant implications for businesses in the fast food industry. These businesses may need to consider strategies that address the concerns of health-conscious



consumers, such as providing healthier food options or offering more transparent nutritional information. They may also need to consider marketing strategies that target health-conscious consumers and highlight the health benefits of their products (Kwok et al.,2015).

Thus, the hypothesis that there is a positive association between health consciousness and purchase intention of fast food consumers in university students has received support from research. This association has significant implications for businesses in the fast food industry, and strategies that address the concerns of health-conscious consumers may be necessary to remain competitive. Hence, results of first hypothesis indicated that there is a positive association between health consciousness and purchase intension of fast food consumers in university students. Generally, female students found in more health conscious behavior as compared to males and adopt healthful food patterns (Arganini et al., 2012).

Moreover, second hypothesis demonstrated that physical environment and purchase intension of fast food consumers are positively associated is proven true. As, literature also supports this.

The relationship between the physical environment and purchase intention of fast food consumers has been a topic of interest for researchers and businesses in the fast food industry. The physical environment of fast food restaurants, such as the ambiance, cleanliness, lighting, and seating arrangements, can influence consumer behavior and purchase intention.

Several studies have examined the relationship between the physical environment and purchase intention of fast food consumers, and many of them have found a positive association between the two. For instance, a study by Lobo et al. (2019) found that the physical environment of fast food restaurants, including the ambiance and cleanliness, positively influenced the purchase intention of consumers.

Another study by Focke et al. (2017) found that the seating arrangements, lighting, and interior design of fast food restaurants significantly influenced the purchase intention of consumers. The study found that consumers were more likely to purchase food from restaurants with comfortable seating arrangements and pleasant lighting and interior design.

The positive association between the physical environment and purchase intention of fast food consumers can be explained by several factors. Firstly, a comfortable and pleasant physical environment can enhance the overall dining experience of consumers, leading to increased satisfaction and a higher likelihood of returning to the restaurant.



Secondly, a clean and well-maintained physical environment can create a positive image of the restaurant and increase consumers' perception of the quality of the food and service. This perception can lead to increased purchase intention and loyalty among consumers. Likewise, Riley and Canny (1994) maintain that satisfaction of customers is either negatively or positively get affected by physical environment and their positive effect of customer's satisfaction on purchase intentions.

Thus, the existing research suggests that there is a positive association between the physical environment and purchase intention of fast food consumers. Businesses in the fast food industry can benefit from creating a comfortable and pleasant physical environment that enhances consumers' overall dining experience and creates a positive image of the restaurant. These efforts can lead to increased consumer satisfaction, loyalty, and purchase intention.

Direction for Future Research

The sample size for the study was too small. For future higher sample size is suggested. In addition, here only two factor explored which influence the purchasing behaviors, additional factors could be explored in the same context of the study. Likewise, this study collected data via survey, other methods, like interview, and focus group discussion can be used to collect the data, which could explore other factor and add value to body of knowledge.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study examined the influence of factors e.g. physical environment and health consciousness on purchase intention of fast food consumers specially university student in Quetta city. We tested a model with above two independent variables and a dependent variable. The findings confirm that the relationship between physical environment and purchase intention was significant. The results have revealed that health consciousness and physical environment both had a significant and positive impact on purchase intentions of fast food consumers. Hence, this suggest that youth prefer health along with physical location of fast food restaurants whenever they go outing. Despite of above two factors there are numerus factors that may affect the buying behavior of consumers so, management of fast food restaurants should give proper attention to those factors and retain their customers.



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