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We Are What We Eat: A Survey of Eating Fast Food on High School Students

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Abstract

Because fast food provides delicious food, comfortable dining environment, and their advertisements have highly attraction, the fast food culture has become a part of our catering. The aim of this research is to survey the high school students' consumer behaviors on eating fast food. This study used quantification research method by questionnaire. There were 100 questionnaires were collected at a private high school students in Taichung City.

The results showed as follows:

1. The females prefer fast food more than the males, and the senior high school students prefer fast food more than the junior high students.
2. The females has less frequency of eating fast food than the males, and junior high students has less frequency of eating fast food than the senior high students.
3. For 46.7% of males, the most popular fast food is hamburger, and for 54.5% of females, the most popular fast food is French fries. In addition, 44% of senior high students and 38% of junior high students claimed that French fries are their favorite meal in the fast food restaurants.
4. The main reason for 46.7% of males and 45.5% of females, as well as 44% of senior high students and 48% of junior high students, choosing to eat fast food is delicious.
5. The greatest impact of eating fast food on teenagers is health problems.

Keywords: fast food, high school student

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I. Introduction

I.1 Statement of Problem

In 1984, the first McDonald was open in Taiwan. At that time, it surprised many people in Taiwan, and a new page of Taiwanese culinary culture was developing [1]. More and more fast food brands enter this island, and they make our lives different. However, some studies reported that eating fast food is not nutritionally balanced, and it's not healthy. We all know it's healthy to eat vegetables and fruits, but there are still many people would rather eat fast food than have a real healthy meal. Furthermore, the fast food industry continues to increase both domestically and abroad. That's to say, the number of fast food restaurants is rapidly increasing all over the world.

Oliver and King (2011) restated, "There seems to be a trend with developing countries wanting to follow in the footsteps of the western world, and copy their patterns of fast food and consumerism." They also called for the issue to be a major focus for debate, "By 2050, 60% of men and 50% of women could be clinically obese," and "Research and action should therefore be undertaken to avoid what could develop into a massive global problem [3].

While more research needs to be conducted specifically in regard to effects of fast food consumption among adolescents, sufficient evidence exists for public health recommendations to limit fast food consumption and facilitate healthier menu selection [4]. In a result, the scientific findings corresponding teenagers' health implications of the association between fast food consumption and health are critical.

I.2 Motivation

There's an old saying, "We are what we eat." But is it true? Fast food is so popular with the modern people nowadays. People from 3 to 60 years of age seem to be enjoying it. In other words, fast food has played an important part of many people's lives. We can find some characteristics of fast food: quick, convenient, delicious, affordable, and available 24 hours a day, with a drive thru or a counter where you can order or pick up foods in a very short time. For the busy and lazy society nowadays, fast food is a great option. Due to the popularity of fast food, we wonder the frequency, the preference, the reason, and the impact of eating fast food.

I.3 Research Questions

We conducted a survey to investigate the opinions of high school students with different backgrounds. The followings are the three main questions that we intend to explore in this research.

1. Who will prefer fast food most?
2. How often do high school students eat fast food?
3. What kind of fast food attracts high school students most?
4. Why do high school students choose to eat fast food instead of normal meals?
5. What's the greatest impact of eating fast food on teenagers?

II. Method

II.1 Participants

With regard to the methods of our study, we made a questionnaire to understand the frequency, the preference, and what high school students thought about fast food. We gave out 105 copies of the questionnaire, and 5 samples were invalid, so we got back 100 copies. The effective return rate was 95.2%. The participants of this survey are the Junior or Senior high school students at a private school in Taichung City.

II.2 Instrument

The questionnaire included two parts. The first part is personal information about the participants, including gender, identification and their weekly allowance. The second part is 5 research questions. Based on the results of investigation, we analyzed the data to explore our findings.

II.3 Procedure



III. Results

We analyzed the data and got results into each table below. According to the results, we tried to find out the essential factors that resulted in the differences.

III.1 The preference of fast food

Most females (70.9%) and males (73.3%) participants thought fast food is acceptable. 20% of males and 23.6% of females like fast food, and only 6.7% of males and 5.5% of females don't like fast food (see table 1). It reported that the female students prefer fast food more than the male students.

There isn't a big difference between senior high students and junior high students (see table 1). According to Table 1, the majority of the participants (72%) reported that fast food is acceptable. It reported that the senior high school students prefer fast food more than the juniors.

In the case of allowance, there was little impact on students' choice (see table 1). We may infer that the price of fast food is acceptable for high schools students who can afford the meals.

Table 1 The preference of fast food

	Yes	Acceptable	No
Gender			
Male	20.0%	73.3%	6.7%
Female	23.6%	70.9%	5.5%
Grade			
Junior high	20.0%	72.0%	8.0%
Senior high	24.0%	72.0%	4.0%
Allowance			
under NT\$300	22.5%	70.0%	7.5%
NT\$301~400	14.3%	85.7%	0.0%
NT\$401~500	8.3%	83.3%	8.3%
over NT\$500	26.8%	68.3%	4.9%

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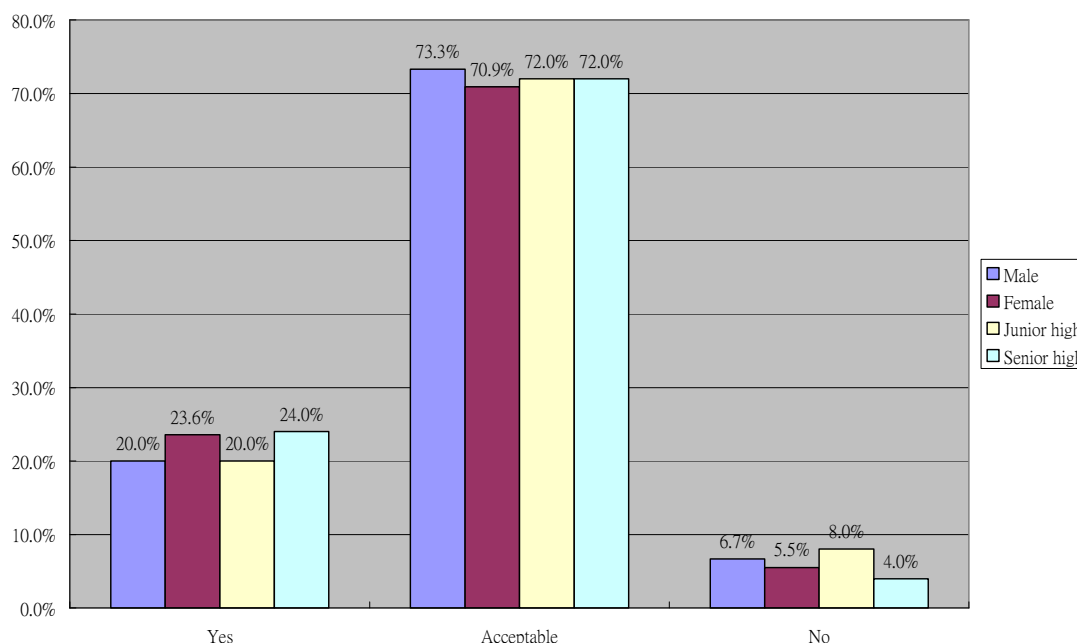


Figure 1 The preference of fast food reported by gender and grade

III.2 The frequency of eating fast food

The result reported that no participants eat fast food daily (0%), which would make sense. Most males (66.7%) and females (70.9%) students eat fast food once per month. 26.7% of males and 12.7% of females eat fast food once per week. And 6.7% of males and 16.4% of females eat fast food rarely. As it can be seen on the Table 2, female students reported less frequency of eating fast food.

In the grade, most senior high students (68%) and junior high students (70%) eat fast food about once per month. Senior high students (28%) and junior high students (10%) eat fast food about once per week. And there are 4% of senior high students and 20% of junior high students rarely eat fast food. Junior high students reported less frequency of eating fast food than the senior high students.

Most high school students (57.5% to 91.7% of participants) reported that they eat fast food once per month regardless of the expense.

Table 2 The frequency of eating fast food

	daily	once per week	once per month	rarely
Gender				
Male	0.0%	26.7%	66.7%	6.7%
Female	0.0%	12.7%	70.9%	16.4%
Grade				
Junior high	0.0%	10.0%	70.0%	20.0%
Senior high	0.0%	28.0%	68.0%	4.0%
Allowance				
under NT\$300	0.0%	15.0%	57.5%	27.5%
NT\$301~400	0.0%	28.0%	71.4%	0.0%
NT\$401~500	0.0%	8.3%	91.7%	0.0%
over NT\$500	0.0%	24.4%	73.2%	2.4%

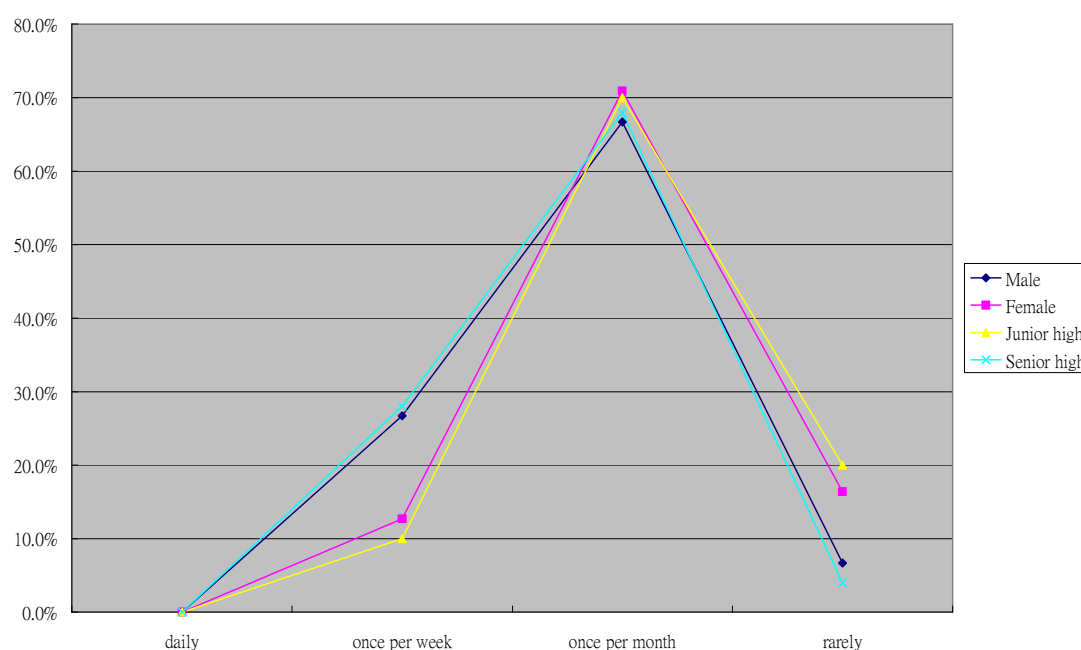


Figure 2 The frequency of fast food reported by gender and grade

III.3 The popularity of fast food

According to the Table 3, the most popular fast food that 46.7% of males prefer hamburger, and 54.5% of females prefer French fries. The least popular fast food for males (6.7%) is snacks, and the least popular fast food for females (7.3%) is hamburger, which is the males' favorite fast food.

The majority of senior high students (44%) and junior high students (38%) claimed that French fries are their favorite meal in the fast food restaurants. Senior high students (36%) and junior high students (16%) like chicken nugget. And 36% of senior high students and 30% of junior high students like hamburger. Only 4% of senior high students and 16% of junior high students consider snacks as their favorite meal in fast food restaurants.

Table 3 The popularity of fast food

	French fries	chicken nugget	hamburger	snack
Gender				
Male	24.4%	22.2%	46.7%	6.7%
Female	54.5%	23.6%	7.3%	14.5%
Grade				
Junior high	38.0%	16.0%	30.0%	16.0%
Senior high	44.0%	30.0%	20.0%	6.0%

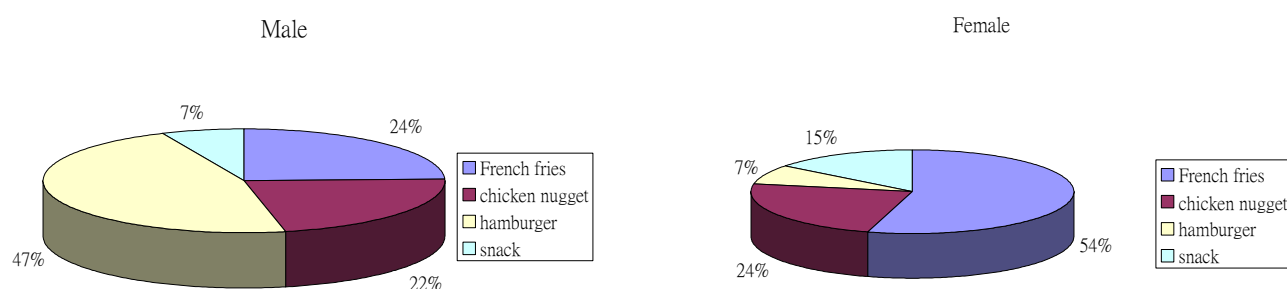


Figure 3 The popularity of fast food reported by gender

III.4 The main reason of choosing to eat fast food

In Table 4, we can learn that the main reason for males (46.7%) and females (45.5%) choosing to eat fast food is delicious. And only a minority of males (8.9%) and females (3.6%) consider inexpensive is the reason that they like fast food.

As the table 4 showed, the reasons why high school students like to have fast food are as follows: 44% of senior high students and 48% of junior high students think of fast food delicious. 38% of senior high students and 26% of junior high students think of fast food convenient. 14% of senior high students and 18% of junior

high students think of fast food fast. 4% of senior high students and 8% of junior high students think of fast food inexpensive. In brief, the delicious is the main reason, and only a minority of students choosing price is the reason why they eat fast food.

Table 4 The reasons of choosing to eat fast food

	convenient	fast	inexpensive	delicious
Gender				
Male	28.9%	15.6%	8.9%	46.7%
Female	34.5%	16.4%	3.6%	45.5%
Grade				
Junior high	26.0%	18.0%	8.0%	48.0%
Senior high	38.0%	14.0%	4.0%	44.0%

III.5 The greatest impact of eating fast food

As Table 5 showed, both males (51.1%) and females (40%) reported that health will be affected most when choosing to eat fast food. Besides, obesity would be another problem. However, only 4.4% of males reported that expenditure will cause impact, and 5.5% females care about their diet habit.

Table 5 The impact of eating fast food

	health	expenditure	obesity	diet habit
Gender				
Male	51.1%	4.4%	37.8%	6.7%
Female	40.0%	7.3%	37.3%	5.5%
Grade				
Junior high	54.0%	2.0%	38.0%	6.0%
Senior high	36.0%	10.0%	48.0%	6.0%

IV. Conclusion

From the analysis above, we conclude some results which revealed from the survey as follows:

1. The females prefer fast food more than the males, and the senior high school students prefer fast food more than the junior high students.
2. The females has less frequency of eating fast food than the males, and junior high students has less frequency of eating fast food than the senior high students.

3. For 46.7% of males, the most popular fast food is hamburger, and for 54.5% of females, the most popular fast food is French fries. In addition, 44% of senior high students and 38% of junior high students claimed that French fries are their favorite meal in the fast food restaurants.
4. The main reason for 46.7% of males and 45.5% of females, as well as 44% of senior high students and 48% of junior high students, choosing to eat fast food is delicious.
5. The greatest impact of eating fast food on teenagers is health problems.

As Harris, Munsell, Dembek, and Liu (2013) urged to claim that Fast food restaurants should stop targeting children and teens with marketing that encourages frequent visits to restaurants [2]. We believe the saying, "We are what we eat.", so everyone in the modern is supposed to place a great value on the health issue. However, some of us usually forget the consequence after tucking into a great meal when we see the advertisement in front of fast food restaurants. The results revealed some an alert that it is common for students to eat fast food as a normal meal in Taiwan. It's the high time to awake the consciousness of healthy diet, especially for teenagers.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

We are working on a research about the topic of eating fast food. We need some authentic data to understand more on this topic, so we design this questionnaire. It is only for academic purpose. Your personal information will be kept in private. Please take your time to complete this survey. The valuable opinions you give will be great help to our study. Thank you for your cooperation.

I. Personal Information

1. Gender:

☐ Male ☐ Female

2. Grade:

☐ Junior high school student ☐ Senior high school student

3. Weekly allowance:

☐ Under NT\$300 ☐ NT\$301~400 ☐ NT\$401~500 ☐ Over NT\$500

II. Questions

1. Do you like fast food?

☐ Yes ☐ Acceptable ☐ No

2. How often do you eat fast food on average?

☐ Daily ☐ Once per week ☐ Once per month ☐ Rarely

3. Which of the following fast food do you prefer most?

☐ French fries ☐ Chicken nuggets ☐ Hamburgers ☐ Snacks

4. Why do you choose to eat fast food mainly?

☐ Convenient ☐ Fast ☐ Inexpensive ☐ Delicious

5. What's the greatest impact of eating fast food on teenagers?

☐ Health ☐ Expenditure ☐ Obesity ☐ Diet habit