

“MC DONALDIZATION OF A NATION”-A STUDY ON THE SOCIAL INFLUENCE OF MULTINATIONAL FAST FOOD CHAINS IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

It is important to understand social and environmental factors related to fast food consumption because they influence eating habits. The globalization taking place across the world increase the global connectivity and integration in the economic, social, technological, cultural, political and ecological spheres. As a part of this, the social aspect of fast food behaviour influences the eating habits of people globally. The globalization convergence of patterns of production and consumption is resulting in speedy service system even at door steps. A fast food restaurant also known as Quick Service Restaurant (QSR) is a specific type of restaurant characterized both by its fast food cuisine and by minimal table. The fast food industry spends over million dollars a year on catchy slogans to lure customers past the door of the competition. This enables the cultural food habits of different countries to meet on a common platform. McDonaldization is a term used by sociologist George (1993) which explains when a society takes on the characteristics of fast food restaurants. The multinational food giants like Burger King, McDonald, KFC, Domino’s Pizza, Baskin and Robbins, Sushi King, Star Bucks, Pizza Hut, Merry Brown conquered the hearts of people. The Malaysian food market is influenced by these fast food chains resulting in changing consumption choices.

The New Straits Times(2008) recently highlighted the government’s action on banning fast food ads in the wake of it’s prioritized concern over the alarming decline of the population’s health, while the consumption of fast food products being the main suspecting factor of this uprising calamity. Mirandah (2008).Many working parents feeling guilty about

spending less time with their kids, started spending money on them. The country’s farms are replaced by gigantic corporate farms with absentee ownership. The study says that the people are socially influenced to fast foods the due to micro and macro environment factors. The micro environment consists of family, schools, neighborhood where as the macro environment consists of economical, political and cultural people are influenced by the environments both being socially influenced by peers choices, social norms, health care, media, faith and religion etc. in selecting the brands. From the study it was found out that the brand name has the highest influence while choosing the fast food. The respondents consuming these food products to a greater extent fall under the age group 15 to 22. The study will highlight the views of Malaysians on multinational fast food companies and the reasons for accepting them.

Key Words: Fast foods, McDonaldization, Consumption, Food Habits, Micro and macro environments

INTRODUCTION

Food has become highly charged and contested field. As a material substance with crucial balance of nutrients and toxins, food has immediate biological implications and unlike clothing, piercing, body paint, food is literally transformed and becomes a part of human body. Thus the saying” You are what you eat”. In recent years, food has emerged as political topic par excellence, the Capability of connecting individual bodies to abstract communities and techno scientific innovations to moral concerns. The globalist convergence of patterns of production and consumption join hands bringing the world to a

common platform of consumption.

A fast food restaurant also known as Quick Service Restaurant (QSR) is a specific type of restaurant characterized both by its fast food cuisine and by minimal table service. Food served in fast food restaurants is cooked in bulk in advance and kept hot to order, food is usually available ready to take away, though seating is provided. The multinational food giants like Burger King, McDonald, KFC, Domino's Pizza, Baskin and Robbins, Sushi King, Star Bucks and Pizza Hut conquered the hearts of people.

The children are the target customers of fast food industries. Their decisions are of prime importance while selecting menus and venues. The Malaysian food market is influenced by these fast food chains resulting in changing consumption choices. The objective of the study is to know the fast food consumption habits of the Malaysians, to identify the age groups consuming these products to a higher extent and to identify Malaysia's favorite multinational fast food company.

LITERATURE REVIEW

ORIGIN OF FAST FOOD OUTLETS AND THEORY BEHIND THE FOOD CHOICE

Fast food is the food that can be prepared and served very quickly. The fast food restaurants are often viewed as a representation of day by day family outing, the concept of "ready cooked food to go" is as old as cities themselves, unique variations are historical in various cultures. Fast food outlets are takeaway or takeout providers, often with "drive-thru" service which allows customers to order and pickup food from their cars, but most of them having a seating area in which customers can eat the food on the premises. Because of commercial emphasis on speed, uniformity and low cost fast food products are often made with ingredients formulated to achieve a certain flavour or consistency and to preserve freshness.

The Domino's pizza was founded in 1960 at Michigan by Tom Monaghan and David Brandon. It has over 8000 stores worldwide. The McDonald's Corporation was founded in 1940 by Dick and Mac McDonald. The company became a symbol of globalisation and spread the American way of life. McDonald's restaurants are found in 120 countries serving 54 million customers each day. Nearly one in eight workers in America have at some time been employed at McDonald's (2001) KFC was founded by Colonel Harland Sanders in 1952. The original Starbucks was placed in Seattle, Washington in 1971 by three partners: English teacher Jerry Baldwin,

History teacher Kristina Taplin and writer Gordon Bowker. It has more than 7000 outlets.

Burger King was founded on December 4, 1954 in Florida, America by James Mc Lamore and David Edgerton who were both alumni of Cornell University of Hotel Management. The Pizza Hut was founded in 1958 by the Carney brothers- Dan and Frank. Their restaurants are located throughout the world. Baskin-Robbins is a global chain of ice cream parlours founded by Burt Baskin and Irv Robbins in 1945 at California. The hamburger is having an eighty acre campus of university and McDonald with managerial training center. Degree in Hamburgology course lasts for two weeks and trains a few thousand managers, executive and franchise a year. The McDonald's creates a common McDonald's campus and a common McDonald's language.

The theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) by Montano and Kasprzyk (2008) describes 'intention' as the best predictor of whether or not a health behavior is performed. According to TRA, direct determinants intentions are attitude towards the behavior and subjective norm associated with the behavior

- Attitude refers to personal beliefs about the positive or negative value associated with a health behavior and its outcomes
- Subjective norm refers to a person's positive or negative value associated with a behavior. It depends on whether or not the behavior is accepted by important referent individuals and their motivation to comply with those referents. Ultimately, interventions can be designed to change behavioral intention by affecting attitude and subjective norm to promote specific health behaviors. These theories work out well when they go in for buying Fast foods

MARKETING STRATEGIES AND LEGAL ISSUES ACROSS THE GLOBE

The McDonald Company had been a target of criticism since its inception as it used its political influence to increase its profit at the expense of people's health and the social condition of workers. In 2002, Vegetarian groups sued for misrepresenting their French Fries as vegetarian as it had beef extract added to them. It was failing to provide nutritional information about its food and was contributing to the epidemic of obesity in society which leads to diabetes and coronary heart disease. KFC used partially hydrogenated oil in its fried foods which contains relatively high levels of trans fat which increases the risk of heart disease. Burger King has been targeted by various animal groups, such as,

PETA, over the treatment of the animals it uses in the production of its products. Its products contained large amount of fat, trans-fat and calories.

A survey of American school children found that 96 percent could identify Ronald McDonald. The only fiction character with high degree of recognition was Santa Claus. The golden arches are now widely recognized in Malaysia than the Christian cross. In Malaysia fast food has become the operating systems of today's retail economy wiping out small business and spreading identical stores through out country. Franchise and stores in the country strive to offer exactly the same product or service at numerous locations.

The country's farms are replaced by gigantic corporate farms with absentee owners. Fast food in Malaysia is heavily marketed to children and prepared by children who are barely older than children. This is the one reason why people buy fast food; it has been designed to taste good. It is also in expensive and convenient. Fast food has joined Hollywood movies, blue jeans and pop music. Unlike other commodities, however fast food isn't viewed, read, played, or worn. It enters the body and becomes part of the consumer.

THE KIDS PSYCHOLOGICAL MARKETING TOOLS

The advertisement jargons of McDonald consist of Mc burger balls, telephones shaped like French fries, ties, golf bags lunch boxes, mouse pads, leather jackets and much more bearing stamp of McDonald. Many working parents feeling guilty about spending less time with their kids begin spending money for them. Marketing experts has called the 1980's 'the decade of the child consumer'. Sociologist Vance Packard described children as 'Surrogate sales man' who had to persuade other people, usually their parents, to buy what they wanted'. Marketers make a thorough analysis of 'children requesting styles and appeals' under seven categories Kids as Customers (1992).

1. Pleading nag-'PLEASE' or 'mom'. 'mom' mom
2. Persistent nag – I am gonna ask one more time
3. Force full nags-'Well then. I will go and ask dad'
4. Demonstrative nags-Highly risk nags with tears, refusal to leave the store
5. Sugar coating nags-You are the best dad in the world
6. Threatening nags-youthful forms of black mails
7. Pity nags—heart broken, teased Kids tend to

kick in any one or two.

They study the fantasy lives of young children, then apply the findings in advertisements and product designs. Burger king has more than eight thousand playgrounds as its restaurants play lands brings in children who bring in parents, who brings money.

ISSUES

The fast food industry has saved people a lot of time, but has taken a big bite out of morality and society in the process Reishman (2003). There has been much talk about fast foods up in Malaysia, ever since the previous Health Minister Dr. Chua Soi Lek announced previously that his Ministry was seriously considering a ban on fast food advertising before. Malaysia wishes to support nutritious eating among it's children and young people, and they feel eliminating fast food advertisements will help end childhood obesity Brunei Times (2007) The Previous Minister of Information said that He was willing to stop fast food advertisement from being aired on Radio Television Malaysia stations. The previous Information Minister also announced during his Ministry that if studies showed that fast food would adversely affect the people's health, immediate action would have taken to protect the public.

The banning of advertisement of fast food products or "the silent killer", aptly described by the Malaysian Health Ministry was primarily motivated by increasing number of Malaysians suffering from "affluent" diseases, such as diabetes, hypertension causes and the critical rise in obesity among children and adults. A statistical report provided by Weight management Information Centre revealed that one in every five adult Malaysians is either overweight or obese. In Malaysia, the percentage of adult women who are obese is considerably higher (7.9 percent) than men (4.7 percent).

The Malaysian Medical Association's president Datuk Dr. Teoh Siang Chin said the nutritional value of fast food was doubtful. President of Consumer Association of Penang (CAP)

Mr. S.M Mohamed Idris cited one study which showed that fast food consumption had strong positive associations with weight gain and insulin resistance, suggesting that fast food increases the risk of obesity and Type 2 diabetes.

Malaysia's popular local media The New Straits Times(2008) recently highlighted the government's action on banning fast food ads in the wake of it's prioritized concern over the alarming decline of the population's health, while the consumption of fast food products being the main suspecting factor of

this uprising calamity. Mirandah (2008). In Malaysia fast food has become the operating systems of today's retail economy wiping out small business and spreading identical stores through out country. Franchise and stores in the country strive to offer exactly the same product or service at numerous locations.. The country's farms are replaced by gigantic corporate farms with absentee owners. Fast food in Malaysia is heavily marketed to children and prepared by children who are barely older than children. This is the one reason why people buy fast food, it has been designed to taste good. It is also inexpensive and convenient.

Many working parents feeling guilty about spending less time with their kids, started spending money on them. The Malaysian food market is influenced by these fast food chains resulting in changing consumption choices Fast food and its consequence have inescapable, regardless of whether you eat it twice a day, try to avoid it, or have never taken a single bite. What people eat or don't eat has always been determined by a complex interplay of social, economic and technological forces. In Malaysia Teenagers have prolonged fast food industry experiences. Teenagers are ideal candidates for these jobs where they are paid very less.

The following table (See Table-1) says about the number of outlets, market share and Sales of some of the Multinational fast food outlets

Table 1: Fast Food Industries number of outlets, Share and Sales in a year in Malaysia

BRAND	YEAR (EST)	NO. OF OUTLETS	MARKET SHARE	SALES (USD MILLION)
KFC	1973	294	45	152.3
Mc DONALDS	1982	141	30	92
PIZZA HUT	1984	85	8	31.6
DOMINO'S PIZZA	1997	17	-	-

USD 1= RM 3.8

Source: The Edge (2001)

OBJECTIVES

The main objective is to study the social influence of multinational fast food chains on Malaysia.

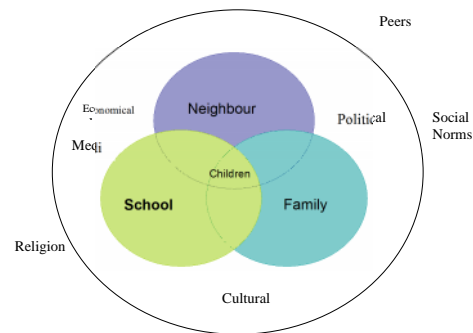
The general objectives are:

- To know the fast food consumption habits of the Malaysians.
- To identify the age groups consuming these products to a higher extent.
- To identify Malaysia's favorite multinational fast food company.

The study says that the people are socially influenced to fast foods due to micro and macro environment. (See Figure 1) Kids are the target customers of the

multinational fast food chains. The kids are highly influenced by the surroundings and the peoples around them, their preferences are influenced by the family members, neighbours whom they are regularly in contact and their own and other age groups at school, which can be called as micro environments. These contacts highly influence children's buying behavior of a product especially fast foods. The macro environments consist of a wider group which influences the purchase decisions of the family members, neighbourhood and various age groups at School. The macro environments like political conditions, cultural environments, Economic situations, Media influences and Social situations socially influences the purchasing behaviour for longer time and make up fast food market. The drive forces from other macro environments such as peers, social norms, health care ,religion, policies, food industries forms the mass trend and the behaviour of a society to determine the buying behavior of products, especially fast foods.

Figure 1: The Micro and macro environments which socially influence the Fast food buying decisions (Source: Philip Kotler Adopted from Marketing Management 2003)



The conceptual frame work derived here from the study shows here how the people are socially influenced by the fast food chains(See figure 2) Sales promotions are key ingredients in marketing campaigns, consist of diverse collection of incentive tools designed to stimulate quicker purchase of particular products or services by customers. The customers opt these promotional tools and are influenced when they buy the family packs of fast foods which is having premiums like Free coupon, price packs etc. They become the part the frequency promotion programs of the company by using the home delivery service. The consumers decision making varies with the type of buying decisions, they usually go in for personal sources like family, friends, neighbours, acquaintances etc. This shows that the decision, preferences and suggestions of others

influences buying decisions of customers in selecting the locations, service and in deciding the quality of food. Brand is an offering from a known source. Branding is the art and corner stone for marketing. Successful brands engage customers on a deeper level touching emotions such as surprise, passion and excitement and influence them. In the study the customer's fast food choices are influenced by the brand name. The peer group preferences are influencing the customers while choosing a menu of fast foods during a social get together or celebrations. All the above factors are interconnected each other while selecting fast foods. These Factors can be called as social driving forces which influences the buying decisions of fast foods.

Figure 2 : Conceptual Framework for the Evaluation of Social Influence of Fast Food on Malaysia (Source: Philip Kotler Adapted from Marketing Management 2003)

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What are the key antecedents of social influence resulting in fast food consumption?
2. Which dimension of social influence has maximum impact on fast food consumption?

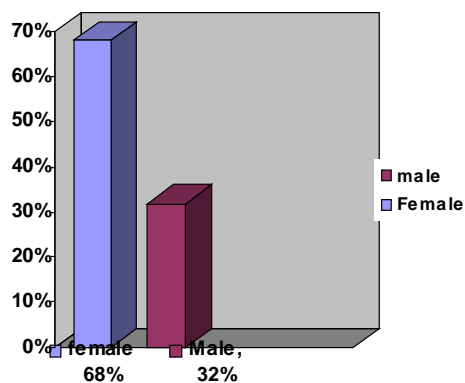
METHODOLOGY

The respondents were selected from Petaling Jaya. Non probability convenience sampling was employed for choosing the respondents. The questionnaire was given to 125 respondents and 98 questionnaires were returned. Data were analysed with Statistical Package for Social Science. Descriptive Statistics were conducted to check the relationship between the variables. Ranking method was used in order to identify the fast food chain they liked the most and the factors that influenced their fast food buying decision.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The study was conducted among 68% of females (See graph 2) and 32% of males

Figure 2: Respondents Gender wise classification



The respondents ranked the multinational fast food chains they liked the most in the following order. Some respondents are using fast food restaurants during social get-together. (See Table 2)

Table 2 : Rank order of multinational fast food chain the respondents liked the most

MULTINATIONAL FAST FOOD CHAIN	Percentage	RANK
Mc Donald's	24	1
KFC	22	2
Pizza Hut	16	3
Starbucks	13	4
Domino's Pizza	9	5
Burger King	7	6
Sushi King	6	7
Baskin robins	3	8

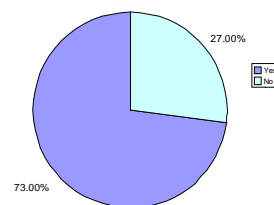
The respondents ranked (22%) location as the main factor that influenced their fast food buying decision (See Table 3). 11% of the respondents agreed that their choice is influenced by others decisions while selecting the menu.

Table 3: Rank order of factors that influenced the fast food buying decision of respondents

FACTORS	Percentage	RANK
Location	22	1
Food Choice	21	2
Brand name	15	3
Quality	14	4
Price	9	5
Value convenience	8	6
Good service	5	7
Temperature	3	8
Ad campaigns	2	9
Dietary restrictions	1	10

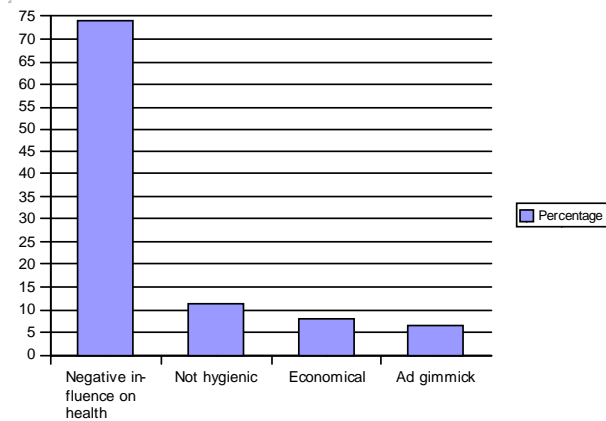
73% of the respondents agreed that their choice is influenced by the brand name (See Figure 4) and 55% of the respondents have been consuming fast food for more than 6 years. Among 47% of the respondents who felt that they are overweight, 41% agreed that their overweight is influenced by fast food.

Figure 4: Influence of brand name on fast food buying decisions



The parents/ elders did not have positive opinion regarding fast food (See Figure 5) 64% of the parents rarely consumed fast food.23% of the parents never encouraged the fast food consumption of their children. 13% of the parents agreed that the fast food ordered by them is not hygienic

Figure 5: Opinion regarding fast food



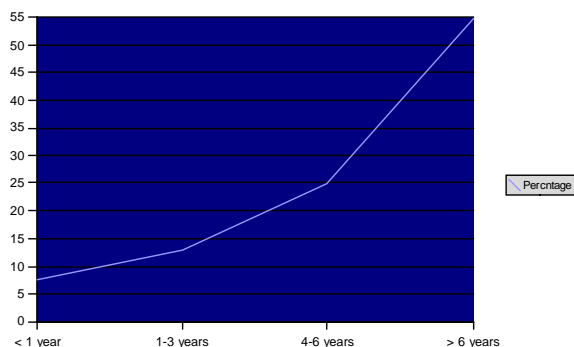
From 68 females, 18% choose fast food outlets for celebrations, but out of 32 males 13% only chooses fast food outlets for celebrations (See Table 6)

Table 6. Gender wise selection of fast food outlets for celebrations

Gender	Percentage
Male	13
Female	18

64% of the parents rarely consumed fast food.23% of the parents never encouraged the fast food consumption of their children. 52% of the respondents agreed that the fast food ordered by them is not hygienic. 55% of the respondents have been consuming fast food for more than 6 years.8% of the respondents have been consuming fast food for less than 1 year.46% of the respondents consuming fast food for more than 6 years fall under the age group 15-22 years(See Figure 7)

Figure 7: Respondents Fast food experiences through years



30% of the respondents agreed that their overweight

is connected with their eating habits.48% of the respondents falling under the age group 15-18 responded that their overweight is influenced by fast food consumption.18% of the respondents above 26 years agreed that their overweight is influenced by fast food consumption(See Figure 8)

Figure 8:The respondent's relation of Overweight and eating habits

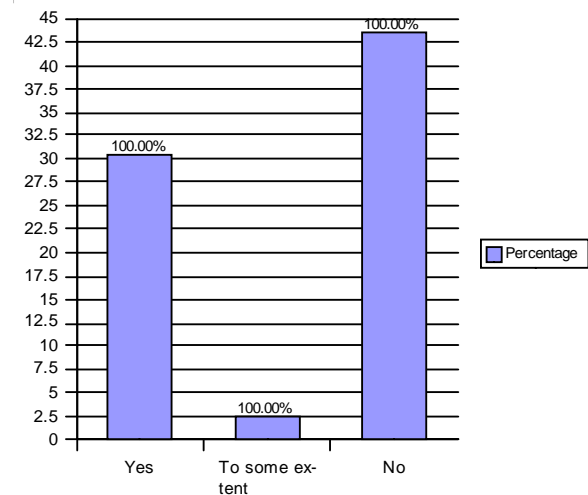


Table 9 shows that 6% of respondents falls in age group 15-18 uses the family packs and 3% uses the home delivery services. 9% of respondents falls in age group between 19 -22 uses the family packs and 4% uses home delivery services. 9% of respondents fall in the age group 23-26 uses family packs and 9% uses the home delivery services. Where as 6% of respondents falls in the age group above 26 uses the family pack and 5% uses the home delivery services

Table 9: Respondent's age group using family pack and home delivery services

Age group	Percentage for Family Pack	Percentage for Home delivery service
15-18	6	3
19-22	9	4
23-26	9	9
Above 26	6	5

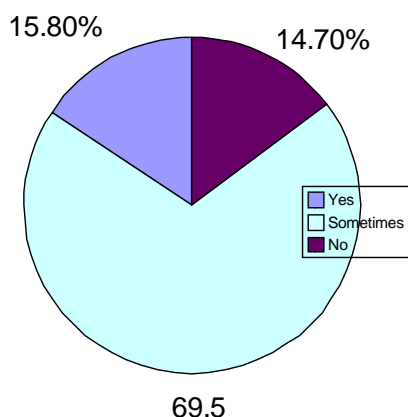
Table 10 shows that 16% of respondents falls in age group 15-18 recommend the fast food choices of others. 15% of respondents falls in age group between 19 -22 recommends their fast food choices to others and 20 % of respondents falls in the age group 23-26 recommends their fast food choice to others. Where as 16% of respondents falls in the age group above 26 recommends their fast food choices to others

Table 10 Respondents age group recommending fast food choices to others

Age group	Percentage
15-18	16
19-22	15
23-26	20
Above 26	16

The respondents recommends fast food to others (See Figure 11)69.5% of the respondents responded that they would sometimes recommend their fast food choice to others.16% of the respondents will recommend their fast food choice to others sometimes, while 14% of the respondents group 23-26 would not recommend their choice of fast food to others.

Figure 11: Respondents recommendation of fast food to other



CONCLUSION

From the above study it can be concluded that the eating habits of the Malaysians are socially influenced with the entry of multinational fast food chains. The respondents consuming these products to a greater extent fall under the age group 15 to 22 years. It was found that McDonald's is Malaysia's favourite multinational fast food company followed by KFC. The brand name has the highest influence while choosing the fast food. The respondents also gave importance to the location of fast food outlet. Most of the respondents knew about the fast food chains through their friends and their choice is influenced by others. The promotional tools influence the respondents for buying the product. The influence of peer group in selecting and referring the products is clearly shown in the study .Even though the respondents knew the fast food are not hygienic they consume it in a wider way. However, the parents do not encourage the consumption of fast food because

of its negative influence on health. It can be concluded that the micro and macro environments socially influence the choice of fast food, and forms a fast-food culture nation.

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