

The Trend of Healthy Fast Food: How Malaysian' Generation Y Makes the Purchase Decision?

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Abstract: Changing in consumer living standard and health conscious had impact the fast food industry in this 21 century. Customers now are changing their needs and wants from merely asking for convenient food to more healthy food. Due to these, consumer started to demand for healthy fast food from the fast food industry. Many fast food companies in United State had started to change their menu and offer a more alternatives to consumers in order to cope with these changes. However, as compare to United States, Malaysia is still considered slow accepting this trend regardless the health awareness messages sent by the Malaysia Government. This study intend to identify how Malaysian generation Y makes the decision when they purchase for healthy fast food. This study involved 153 respondents who used to purchase healthy fast food. The result shown that, service quality, eating behavior and consumer lifestyle are the important factors influencing consumers purchase of healthy fast food in Malaysia, however, sales promotion is not going to influence the purchase of healthy fast food.

Key words: healthy fast food, sales promotion, service quality, eating behavior and consumer lifestyle

INTRODUCTION

Fast food is food processed and prepared by using standard ingredients and production techniques (Freeman, 2007). The restaurant which served fast food is called fast food restaurant. Fast food restaurant is considered as franchised restaurant which supply quick service and food. In fast food restaurant, the food is served quickly, efficiently and with minimal service for dining and takeout facilities after the customers ordered the food (Elliot & Reed, 1999). Fast food restaurants can be distinguished and characterized by their reasonable priced and standard preparations (Royle & Towers, 2002). The types of food served by fast food restaurants are plenty. There are range from sandwich to chicken grills, pizza, hamburger, and etc. However, most of the fast food served is perceived by the consumers as deep-fried in partially hydrogenated oils (also known as Trans fats) which will lead to high cholesterol rates and heart diseases. In addition, fast food also contains a large amount of chemical additives and often lacks accurate nutrition labelling (Schlosser, 2002).

In recent times, the consumer started to realise the negative impact of consuming too much fast food. The population is becoming more health-conscious due to the growth in living standards. Also, the eating trend in United State started to change, whether eating at home or going out, consumers started to demand for more healthy food alternatives as compare to the normal food menu (Folkes & Wysocki, 2011). Moreover, consumers now prefer quality food intake and are becoming more conscious in nutritional diet, health and food safety (Ruth & Yeung, 2001; Rimal *et al.*, 2001). The changes in the consumer eating pattern and demand of healthy food were cause by the public awareness of heart disease, cancer, and other illnesses which happened because of unhealthy diet. People now concern more on the amount of calories, fat, and sodium they consumed (Folkes & Wysocki, 2011). The issue of food quality is influencing consumers today and it is an important thing for the consumers and marketers to start to pay attention to (Shaharudin, Mansor & Elias, 2011). In addition, the government from different countries has increased their spending in promoting healthier diets (Caterora, Gilly & Graham, 2010). As a consequent from the awareness campaign, it had influenced the consumers buying behaviour in fast food industry.

Current Trend in Fast Food Industry:

In order to cope with the changes in consumer needs and wants in fast food, some of the fast food restaurant started to offer something new on their menus. The menu consist of lower-fat and lower-calorie salads, sandwiches, and desserts that are both tasty and nutritious (Skamulis & Smith, 2003). In fact, the offered of healthy fast food is not new in the fast food industry. Early in 90S, McDonald's has introduced McLean burger; unfortunately, it did not catch the market. But now, healthy food is a trend, driven by the hope of the fast food industry to create greater profits due to the changes in the consumer health concern and lifestyle (Skamulis, 2003).

In the recent years, fast food restaurants chain in United States started to capture the demand of the consumers who asked for a healthy fast food. Many fast food restaurants are trying to transform the image from an unhealthy food to healthy fast food. Fast food chain such as Wendy's offered Garden Sensations salads, McDonald's has Fruit 'n Yogurt Parfait and 'Go Active Happy Meals' for adults, who featured an entree salad, bottled water, and a pedometer, Burger King has a Veggie Burger and Lite Combo Meals, which offered three chicken sandwiches with a side salad and bottled water, and Arby's has light food in their fast food menu (Skamulis & Smitch, 2003). Other than changing the menu offered, the health conscious trend also had increased the numbers of healthy fast food chain in the fast food industry in the United States. The growth of the healthy fast food chain, like Penner bread and Subway has proven the demand of healthy fast food in the fast food industry, this makes McDonald started to offer a healthier menu as an alternative to the consumer who are health conscious.

Generation Y and Fast Food:

Generations Y is a prime target for a food service business. Generation Y refers to the members of the generation of people born since the early 1980s to 2000. Generation Y are who are seen as being discerning consumers with a high disposable income (TheFreeDictionary, 2011). Harris *et al.* (2010) reported that majority of fast food advertising is targeted to Generations Y. In addition, past research from The NPD Group (2009) shown that Generation Y order more fast food than any other age group during non-meal times, after school and in the evening or midnight. The marketers for fast food industry are targeting the generation Y as their main customers. Most fast food restaurants used social media extensively to promote the company products as social media is the most popular communication medium for Generation Y.

Fast Food in Malaysia and the Current Trend:

Recently, Malaysia Government is concerned about the rise and impact of obesity issue in Malaysia. This happened due to the rapid increase of the disease such as high blood pressure and heart problems caused by obesity (Market Watch Malaysia, 2010). One of the action taken by Malaysian Government is they banned the Fast food products or "the silent killer" advertising. According to Malaysian Health Ministry, the decision to ban the advertisement was due to the increasing number of Malaysians suffering from the diseases, such as diabetes, hypertension and the critical rise in obesity among children and adults (Mirandah, 2011). In addition, the Information Ministry has also ordered Radio Television Malaysia Berhad (RTM) to stop the progress of fast food advertisements from being aired on television (Mirandah, 2011). The Minister of Information believed that such a move would help to encourage a healthy lifestyle in the Malaysian society (Mirandah, 2011).

Perhaps, banning the fast food advertisement is not a smart way to discourage the consumers from purchasing of fast food. According to Mirandah (2011), a better option to solve the obesity problem in Malaysia is to regulate the controls on the ingredient and other food substances that can possibly cause diseases.

Looking at the trend of focusing on the Healthy fast food in United states due to the consumer awareness on the important of healthy food, the fast food restaurants in Malaysia must considerably change their current marketing practices and focus on quality or healthy food, so that consumers will not receive continuous encouragement to seek out food that is can damaging their health (Harris, Schwartz & Brownell, 2010). Also, healthy food products are predicted to receive a higher demand from the consumers due to the rapid increase in lifestyle diseases, the increase in awareness of the consumers towards overweight issues and change in eating habits among consumers (Market Watch Malaysia, 2010). According to Euromonitor (2010), the Malaysian who is more health conscious started to switches their food from unhealthy food to a more healthy food option.

In order to support the government effort in reducing the diseases and the increase in the consumer demand of healthy food, many fast food restaurants have capture the health trend and offer healthy food as alternatives in their menu (Healthy Fast Food, 2011). This change is important to Malaysian as the disease of cardiovascular disease; mainly heart failure is the number one fatal disease in Malaysia (National Heart Association of Malaysia cited in Rasol & Yusuf, 2009). Based on the issues above, this study will identify the factors affecting Generation Y's purchasing decision of healthy fast food.

This study is important because this study gives guidance on the importance factors influencing the consumer purchase decision in the fast food industry. Also, it can serve as a guide for the fast food industry to improve their food quality. By doing so, the fast food industry can able to capture opportunity due to the changes in the consumer lifestyle and continue to survive in the future.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Price promotion is a special price or free food giveaway for the feature menu item, or other promotion such as non-food giveaways, sweepstakes, celebrity endorsements, licensed characters, movie or TV tie-ins, and contests (Harris *et al.*, 2010). Price promotion has always played an important role in influencing the consumer behaviour. Many fast food restaurants will use free toys to attract more consumers to purchase the fast food

meals to promote the value meal and stimulate sales growth. Also, Richards and Padilla (2007) reported that fast food promotion strategies definitely have an impact on category demand, and not just restaurant share. Hence, it is proposed that:

H1: There is significant relationship between price promotion and consumer purchasing decision on healthy fast food.

Service quality is reflected in a consumer perception of an encountered service (Cronin & Taylor, 1994). Service quality is important for fast food restaurants, consumers are expected to revisit to fast food outlets when the customers are satisfy with a specific service provider (Sirdeshmukh *et al.*, 2002). Service quality is tied to desirable business outcomes, such as customer loyalty which can led to profits (Schneider & White, 2004). Hence, it is proposed that:

H2: There is significant relationship between service quality and consumer purchasing decision on healthy fast food.

The definition of lifestyle from Business Dictionary (2011) is expressed in both work and leisure behaviour patterns and on an individual basis in activities, attitudes, interests, opinions, values, and allocation of income. What people do in their free time is often a good pointer of their lifestyle. The rapid growing in fast food industry is a reflection of consumer demand for convenience food. Halim and Hamed (2005) shows that, the consumer lifestyle such as attitude, satisfaction correlated with purchase decision and intention at traditional restaurant and fast food restaurant. Hence, it is proposed that:

H3: There is significant relationship between consumer lifestyle and purchasing decision on healthy fast food.

The consumers' choices of food and eating habit are based on their customs, culture and religion they live. Through doing and learning, consumers obtain habits, beliefs and also attitudes. As a consequent, it will influence their buying behaviour (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). Kapoor and Moorthy (2010) believe with the evolution of food retail modernization and rapid changes in the buying behaviour of consumers, the retail market for food and grocery is growing by leaps and bounds, especially for fast food industry. Previous research has suggested that social context and values of eating out may directly have an effect on consumer attitudes and eating behaviours among a consumer (Bagozzi *et al.*, 2000; Warde & Martens, 2000). Hence, it is proposed that:

H4: There is significant relationship between consumer eating behaviour and purchasing decision on healthy fast food.

Sample:

The population used in this research are Malaysian Generations Y as the generation Y is the prime group for fast food business. Target sample size is 250 respondents. Convenience sampling was use in this study to collect the data. Customers are picked from the fast food restaurant in Malaysia. Screening questions is used to identify the respondents who consume healthy fast food.

Data Collection:

The questionnaire contains two parts which are Section A and Section B. Section A is about demographic of respondents. Whereas Section B consists of scale measured the factor that affect consumer purchasing decision of healthy fast food. The Likert scale with 5 level of agreement was used to collect the respondent's feedback. The 5-level is starting from strongly disagree up to strongly agree, (1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neither agree nor disagree, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly Agree).

The questionnaire was designed based on published research. The Price promotion was measure by using construct from Ibrahim and Vignali (2005). Service quality construct was measured by using construct Tang (n.a.). Consumer Lifestyle was measured by using construct from Dana- Farber Cancer Institute, The Jimmy Fund, n.a.. The Consumer Eating Behaviour was measured by using construct from Boer *et al.* (2004). Lastly, purchase decision was measured by using construct from O' Cass, A, (2000).

Result:

Out of 250 survey questionnaires disseminated, 244 copies of survey were returned. The 244 survey questionnaires were then screened to identify the respondents who used to choose a healthy alternative when consume fast food. Other than this, any incomplete and unanswered questionnaires were omitted form the study as well. Out of 244 copies of questionnaire collected, 153 (62.7%) copies of questionnaire were considered as complete and will be used in this study.

Reliability:

According to Sekaran (2003), the result of reliabilities that are under 0.6 is considered to be poor, while in the range of 7.0, the result can be acceptable. If the result show reliabilities range between 0.8, it is considered as a good result

The following table 1 shows a result for this research.

Table 1: Reliability test.

Variables	Item	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Price Promotion	4	0.641
Service Quality	6	0.639
Consumer Lifestyle	5	0.641
Consumer Eating Behaviour	5	0.612
Purchasing Decision	7	0.773

In this study, all the data collected are reliable as the Cronbach's Alpha is more than 0.6.

Respondent Profile:

This survey analysis was complete by 125 Male (58 %) and 90 Female (42%) with a total of 215 sets of survey. The ages of respondents from the survey are Generations Y. The age of the respondents can be segregated into 4 categories which are 15 - 20 years old, 21 - 25 years old, 26 – 30 years old, and 31 - 35 years old. Most of the respondent aged is fall under 21 - 25 years old (160), followed by the respondents with age range 15 – 20 years old (32) and 26 – 30 years old (22). Only one of the target respondents falls under category of 31 - 35 years old in this research analysis.

In term of the fast food consumption, it can be found that 75 respondents purchased fast food less than once a week. 58 respondents purchased fast food once a month and 48 respondents purchased fast food once a week (48 respondents), 2 respondents purchased fast food every day.

In term of money spent in fast food, 127 candidates spent RM 10 to RM14 every time they visit fast food restaurant. 65 respondents spent less than RM 10 every time they purchase fast food from the fast food restaurant. Lastly, only have 23 candidates spent more than RM 15 every time they visit to fast food restaurant.

Correlation Analysis:

Correlation analysis is use to identify the association between the independent and the dependent variables. The result of the study is shown in table 2 below:

Table 2: Correlation analysis.

Independent Variables	Significant (2-tailed)	Correlation	Strength of correlations
Price promotion	0.746	.026*	Non or very weak relationship
Service quality	0.000	.410**	Moderate positive relationship
Consumer lifestyle	0.000	.516**	Strong positive relationship
Consumer Eating behaviour	0.000	.322**	Moderate positive relationship

Dependent Variable: Intention to purchase online

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

In general, $r > 0$ indicates positive relationship, $r < 0$ indicates negative relationship while $r = 0$ indicates no relationship. According to Choudhury (2009), the following rules of thumb for Pearson's correlation (r) guidelines on strength of relationship are very useful:

Table 3: Rules of thumb for Pearson's correlation (r).

Size of Correlation	Interpretation
+1.0 to +0.5	Strong positive relationship
+0.3 to +0.5	Moderate positive relationship
+0.1 to +0.3	Weak positive relationship
-0.1 to +0.1	None or very weak relationship
-0.3 to -0.1	Weak negative relationship
-0.5 to -0.3	Moderate negative relationship
-1.0 to -0.5	Strong negative relationship

Adopted from: Choudhury (2009)

Association between Price Promotion and Purchasing Decision:

A Pearson Correlation analysis was carried out to determine the association between Price Promotion and Purchasing Decision of respondent, the result shows Pearson Correlation (r) value = 0.026 and p-value is 0.746, which p-value is more than 0.05. Therefore there is “None or very weak relationship” correlation between Price Promotion and Purchasing Decision.

Association between Service Quality and Purchasing Decision:

A Pearson Correlation analysis was carried out to determine the association between Service Quality and Purchasing Decision of the respondents. The result shows Pearson Correlation (r) value = 0.410 and p-value = 0.000. Since p-value is less than 0.05, therefore it is concluded that there is a significant correlation between

Service Quality and Purchasing Decision of the respondents and with the **“Moderate positive relationship”** as r value = 0.338.

Association between Consumer Lifestyle and Purchasing Decision:

From the research study, it is found that Consumer Lifestyle has the **“Strong positive relationship”** with a purchasing decision of healthy fast food among respondents. A Pearson Correlation analysis was carried out to determine the association between Consumer Lifestyle and Purchasing Decision, the result shows Pearson Correlation (r) value = 0.516 and p -value is 0.000.

Association between Consumer Eating Behaviour and Purchasing Decision:

A Pearson Correlation analysis was carried out to determine the association between Consumer Eating Behaviour and Purchasing Decision with a Pearson Correlation (r) value = 0.322 and p -value is 0.000. Therefore there is significant **“Moderate positive relationship”** between Consumer Eating Behaviour and Purchasing Decision.

Multiple Regressions:

Multiple regressions is used to identify the relationship between the independent and dependent variable, the result is shown in table 4 below:

Table 4: Multiple Regressions .

	Un standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Price Promotion	-.039	.058	-.045	.683	.496
Service Quality	.227	.069	.231	3.297	.001
Consumer Lifestyle	.382	.060	.427	6.336	.000
Consumer eating behaviour	.224	.068	.222	3.289	.001
Dependent variable: Purchase decision R ² = .385, F = 23.203, significance level of 0.000					

The research study shows R^2 with the value of 0.385 (38.5%) of the variance in dependent variable, Purchasing Decision is explained by the independent variables, Price Promotion, Service Quality, Consumer Lifestyle and lastly Consumer Eating Behaviour. The F value of 23.203 is significant and at the strong significance level of 0.000.

Based on the table 4, Beta (β) value is -0.039, $t = -0.683$ and p -value = 0.496 for Price Promotion. The p -value for the Price Promotion is more than 0.05. Therefore, $H1$ is **rejected** at 5% significant level. Hence, there is no significant relationship between price promotion and consumer purchasing decision on healthy fast food. The Beta (β) value of Service Quality is 0.227, $t = 3.297$ and p -value = 0.001. The p -value for the Service Quality is less than 0.05. Therefore, $H2$ is **accepted** at 5% significant level. Hence, there is significant relationship between service quality and consumer purchasing decision on healthy fast food. The Beta (β) value of Consumer Lifestyle is 0.382 and $t = 6.336$. The p -value of the Consumer Lifestyle is 0.000 and is less than 0.05. Therefore, $H3$ is **accepted** at 5% significant level. Hence, there is significant relationship between consumer lifestyle and purchasing decision on healthy fast food. The Beta (β) value of consumer eating behaviour and purchasing decision on healthy fast food is 0.224 and $t = 3.289$ and p -value = 0.001 and is less than 0.05. Therefore, $H3$ is **accepted** at 5% significant level.

In conclusion, consumer’s Purchasing Decision for healthy fast food is highly dependent on three factors, which are Consumer Lifestyle ($\beta = 0.382$), Service Quality ($\beta = 0.227$) and Consumer Eating Behaviour ($\beta = 0.224$) of the product. While the remaining factor Price Promotion seems to be least dependent for Purchasing Decision on healthy fast food.

Discussion:

Sales Promotion:

To the authors surprise, the result form the study shown that sales promotion is not going to influence the consume purchase decision for healthy fast food. This is probably cause by the attitude of the Generation Y in their purchase behaviour. Generations Y is a group who have lesser prices sensitive while purchasing in fast food restaurants (Hsieh& Chang 2004). According to Madiba and Lombard (2011), Generations Y in the year 15 or more are not motivated to make a purchase from a fast food supplier based on promotional campaign launched. Younger consumers will become more concerned about the satisfaction of their social needs than the satisfaction of their economic needs after experiencing on psychological satisfactions (Hsieh & Chang, 2004). Therefore, these age groups will make a purchase at fast food restaurant irrespective of whether there is a promotion running or not. In addition, for the generation Y who age 20 to 35 years age group, the decision to make a purchase by these age groups is more out of habit and supported by the needs to purchase food rather

than a promotional initiative (Madiba & Lombard, 2011). In addition, according to the research conducted by Aryal *et al* (2009), consumer willing to pay 6-20 percent price premium in order to get a more healthy product such as organic products. This can be one of the reasons why the sales promotion is not going to affect the consumer purchase decision when it comes to healthy fast food.

Service Quality:

Almost all of the fast food restaurants today are trying to focus on ways to increase their service quality due to the believed that good service quality can maintain a good relationship with the customer. In addition, a good service will enhance the level of satisfaction among their customers and thus increase the customers' loyalty (Qin & Prybutok, 2008; Gillbert, Veloutsou, Goode, & Moutinho, 2004; Kara, Kaynak, & Kucukemiroglu, 1995). It has been reported that service excellence enhances customers purchase decision to repeat purchase, to buy more, to buy other services, to become less price sensitive, and to share with others customers about their positive experiences (Anderson & Fornell, 1994; Zeithaml *et al.*, 1996)

Consumer Lifestyle:

Due to current busy lifestyle, consumers will not only to emphasise on convenience but they will also look at the freshness and quality of the products when they want to choose a fast food .The rapid growth rate in the fast food industry is a reflection of consumer needs and wants in convenience fast food, but the fast food cannot deny the fact that there is in increasing needs for healthy food. This happened because the new generation now are expose to the nutrition information (Tangari *et al.*, 2010) which makes them more concern and aware on the importance of healthy lifestyle and diet in maintaining their health.

Consumer Eating Behaviour:

Marketers have identified several factors on how teenagers choose their favourite restaurants, the factors include: food and prices, meal packs, fun, environment, and the opportunity to accompany friends and also family (Guber & Berry, 1993; Kraak & Pelletier 1998). According to Market Watch Malaysia 2010), the changing in eating habits among consumers has increased the demand for healthy food products. This happened due to the increase in consumer healthy awareness due to rapid increase in diseases such as high blood pressure, heart attack and also obesity. Therefore, consumers would like to seek for other variety of fast food, such as the side platters which consist of bread, soups, salads, and any others more healthy dishes (Azli and Scribd, 2011).

Conclusion:

This research was conducted on 250 Generation Y who age form 15-35 in Malaysia with the objective to identify their purchase decision on healthy fast food. In this research, price promotion, service quality, consumer lifestyle and consumer eating behaviour has been included as the factors influencing the purchasing decision on healthy fast food. The result shown that service quality, consumer lifestyle and eating behaviour are going to influence the purchase decision on healthy fast food, however, to the authors' surprise, price promotion is not going to influence the Generation Y purchase decision on healthy fast food.

Implications to Fast Food Industry:

The research shown that, service quality is important in influencing the consumer purchasing on healthy fast food. Hence, the new strategy on service quality is needed to attract more Generations Y to purchase healthy fast food. The Marketers should alter their service quality from many perspectives, such as changing the outlook or the appearance of the fast food restaurants and make it more energetic in order to attract the attention of generation Y. Also, it is suggested that the cleanliness of the place and equipments used on fast food restaurants is important to ensure the freshness of the food.

The study also shows that there is a significant relationship between consumer lifestyle, consumer eating behaviour on purchasing decision of healthy fast food. With these, the fast food restaurants should continue to innovate new healthy food. Consumer especially Generation Y loves to experience new things in every product that he or she purchases. Innovation in fast food industry must come with creativity and new ideas have to attract the consumer purchase decision on healthy fast food. Moreover, the increase in consumer's awareness on health had increased their demand in healthy food. This is the future trend for fast food restaurants to offer healthier food options to Generations Y who awareness of the benefits of a balanced diet.

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