



ISSN  
1859-3968

TẠP CHÍ KHOA HỌC VÀ CÔNG NGHỆ  
TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC HÙNG VƯƠNG  
Tập 25, Số 4 (2021): 3-12

Email: tapchikhoahoc@hvu.edu.vn Website: www.hvu.edu.vn

JOURNAL OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
HUNG VUONG UNIVERSITY  
Vol. 25, No. 4 (2021): 3-12

# CONSUMER'S PERCEPTION AND BEHAVIOR TOWARDS FAST FOODS: A CASE STUDY IN GIA LAM DISTRICT, HANOI CITY

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Received: 15 November 2021; Revised: 29 November 2021; Accepted: 29 November 2021

## Abstract

Together with economic transition, Vietnam has obtained remarkable changes in culture, society, and human daily life, especially in food consumption. There are more and more people, particularly youngsters choosing to eat outdoor and fast foods. Based on primary data collected from 200 consumers in Gia Lam district, Hanoi city by Google forms, this research indicated that consumers have differently perceived advantages and disadvantages of fast foods. Consumers' behaviors towards fast foods have been strongly influenced by the brand. Among varieties of brand, price, taste, advertisement, and experience are factors which lead consumers' purchasing decisions.

**Keywords:** *Perception, behavior, fast food, consumer.*

## 1. Introduction

Fast-food is one of the different kinds in general foods which have a short time for preparation and service than any other meals, then purchased in self-service or carry-out eating places without waiting for a long time [1]. It has been developed in the modern generation for only a century-old [2] and spread and propagated largely on over the world [3].

Over the past decades, the consumption of fast foods has increased worldwide [4-5]. Recent studies have shown that the trend of fast-food consumption has been increasing among consumers all over the world. Fast foods are quick to prepare, easy to access, moderately inexpensive, and favored by people of most age groups, especially the young generation. Fast foods contain high levels of energy, sugar, and salt, along with low levels of micronutrients and fibers [6].

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According to Park (2004), the fast foods business has become a common type in the global. It differs from other kinds of food outside the home in the sense that it is fast and easy to prepare, to provide a common and consistent product [7]. Jekanowski et al. (2001) stated that due to the constant nature of quality and a standard menu of fast foods, little time is spent acquiring information about the product [8].

Since the early 1980s, a huge number of publications have been published on the fast food industry. The early publications on fast food focused more on the positive and negative aspects of fast food and the overall attitudes of the customers demanding fast foods. The most frequent consumers of fast foods are reported to be people in their teens and twenties [9].

Several studies have been conducted on reasons why youngsters, particularly college students prefer to eat fast foods. The reasons have been investigated including diversified menu choices, convenience, taste, advertisement, and location [10]. Moreover, many groups of people are willing to eat fast food because of its cheapness and being less concentrated on nutrition [11].

Together with economic transition, Vietnam has obtained remarkable changes in culture, society, and human daily life, especially in food consumption that was strongly impacted by integration and globalization [12]. For Thi H. L., et al. (2015), as the living standard improved and with increased income, Vietnamese people have paid more attention to other essential needs, especially the need for a healthy diet and nutrition. In the context of modernization and globalization, food is more than just the kinds of things people eat, but it's how people prepare it and where,

when, and why people eat it [13]. More than just the quantity and quality of food, eating at a diverse range of gastronomic locations – from indoor, air-conditioned, upmarket cafes to fast food outlets – demonstrates a person's knowledge and command of up-to-date lifestyle trends regarding how to socialize and consume 'properly' [14] and, by extension, offers a means of expressing a modern, urban lifestyle and middle-class. As a result, there are several foreign franchise brands reaching in the food industry, for example, McDonalds coming to Vietnam in the last month of 2013 [12]. Besides, other global franchises as Burger King, Pizza Hut, Auntie Annes Pretzel, Subway, and Baskin Robbin constantly enlarge further their scope networks in central or public centres of big cities in Vietnam as Hanoi, HCMC, Nha Trang, Haiphong, Danang, etc... [15].

Consumers are very sensitive to what they intend to consume in the food market. As a result of the consumer's behavior on market, emphasis on factors influencing the decision-making process of fast-food consumption rises [16]. In Vietnam, studies on fast foods in general and consumers' behavior towards fast foods, in particular, are very limited. Based on data collected in Gia Lam district, Hanoi city, this paper aims: (i) to investigate consumer's perception and behaviors towards fast foods; and (ii) to determine factors influencing consumer's perception and behaviors towards fast foods.

## 2. Theoretical framework

There are so many researches which have focused on consumer's perceptions and behaviors towards different kinds of food. In the case of fast foods, some popular studies have been conducted. Bryant and Dundes (2008) in their study on students'

perception of fast foods indicated that cultural and gender characteristics were influencing factors. More American college males (61%) considered value (amount of food for the money) to be a priority than did other respondents (35%) and relatively few American college males (29%) cited nutritional status as important (versus 60% of other college respondents). The convenience of fast food is more important to Americans (69%) than Spaniards (48%) while more Spanish college students (49%) than Americans (18%) objected to the proliferation of fast food establishments in their own countries [17].

Goyal and Singh (2007) conducted an exploratory study on consumer perception about fast foods in India to estimate the importance of various factors affecting the choice of fast food outlets by young consumers. Results from the study witnessed that young Indian consumers have a passion for visiting fast food outlets for fun and change but home food is still their first choice. They felt homemade food was much better than food served at fast food outlets. They had the highest value for taste and quality (nutritional values) followed by ambiance and hygiene. Further, consumers felt that fast food outlets might provide additional information on nutritional values and hygiene conditions inside the kitchen [18].

Conducting the research in India, Aloia et al. (2013) explored the differences in fast food preferences, perceptions, and patronage between Indians living in high-and low-income neighborhoods. The study found out that participants from high-income neighborhoods were more likely to perceive western-style fast food as fast food, while people from the low-income neighborhoods

were more likely to identify food sold by street vendors as fast food. Also, the findings revealed that participants from both low-income and high-income neighborhoods visited fast food restaurants for the same reasons as convenience, price, social enjoyment, and quality meals. Both groups preferred home meals over restaurant meals and recognized that home-cooked food was healthier [19].

Thakkar and Thatte (2014) investigated consumers' perception towards two fast food franchises including McDonald's and KFC. Their research concluded that consumers attached great importance to factors such as quality of food, facility layout, service quality- speed, and cleanliness. The taste and quality of food items were however the most important factors that influence consumers [20].

Doing research in Ghana, Horsu Emmanuel Nondzor & Yeboah Solomon Tawiah (2015) indicated that the growth of fast food is a result of urbanization, people working for long hours, growing interest in exotic meals, advertising, availability of commercial buildings, and rise in income. Those who do not patronize fast food perceive them to be unhealthy, expensive, and too foreign. By contrast, those who patronize perceive them to be convenient, time-saving, delicious, good for fun and change and expose them to likable environments [21].

Kim Dang et al. (2018) examined consumer preference and attitude regarding online food products in Hanoi and showed that the most crucial factors influencing food purchases through the Internet were convenience (69.1%) and price (59.3%). Only one-third of participants selected products based on accurate evidence about food safety certification or food origin.

Most participants were concerned about the expiration date (51.6%), while brand (9.8%) and food licensing information (11.3%) were often neglected [22].

### 3. Methods

Gia Lam district is located in the gateway to the east of Hanoi, 8 km from the city center. It has a total area of area 108,446 km<sup>2</sup> with a population of 190,194 people. The research has been conducted in Gia Lam due to the strong urbanization in the area such the economic development, transportation improving for making people daily job has become more comfortable, local people’s lifestyle has changed rapidly.

The research has been mostly based on primary data collected from 200 consumers in Trau Quy, Kieu Ky, Bat Trang, Da Ton, Dang Xa communes belonging to Gia Lam district by personal interview through the internet because the research has been conducted during the time of social distance in Hanoi. The semi-questionnaires designed by Google forms were sent to respondents

and collected through Zalo and Facebook from 1st May to 30th July 2021.

SPSS version 20.0 was employed to analyze the data. Respondents were asked about the perception of influences of fast foods on health using a 5-point Likert scale (for example, the measure included the following questions with five response options: High influence, Moderate influence, Some influence, Little influence, and No influence).

In this research, ordinal logistic regression has been used to explain factors that affect an individual’s brand influence. The model consists of 6 independent variables:

$$\text{Log} [\text{Pi}/(1-\text{Pi})] = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \dots + \beta_{10}X_{10} + \epsilon_i$$

Where: The dependent variables are ordinal respond variables and independent variable measures influencing of brand name of fast foods on consumer’s behavior as showed in Table 1. The Likert scale is used to allow the individual to express how important of different roles of agriculture to them. The Likert scale consists of 5 points scale which ranges from: Strongly disagree to Neutral, Agree, Disagree and Strongly agree.

**Table 1. Description of variables**

Variables	Description
<b>Dependent variables</b>	
x <sub>1</sub>	Price for good quality of the products
x <sub>2</sub>	Convenient restaurants
x <sub>3</sub>	Advertisements for fast foods
x <sub>4</sub>	Varieties of fast foods
x <sub>5</sub>	Consumer’s experience
x <sub>6</sub>	Health awareness and knowledge of food ingredients
x <sub>7</sub>	Taste
x <sub>8</sub>	Good services
<b>Independent variables</b>	
The influencing of brand name of fast foods on consumer’s behavior.	

## 4. Results and discussion

### 4.1. Overview of respondents

According to all respondents, the male has mostly participated in the study (57%). With regards to age groups, the majority of respondents are being 20-30 (72.5%) and over 30 years (21.5%). Furthermore, the majority of participants were found to have the highest education level with a bachelor's degree (56%). The most common individual income was below 4 million VND (50.5%), followed by more than 7 million VND per month (36%). The major representatives are either students or salaried with 54% and 21%, respectively. Most of them are single. They regularly have 6 members in the family. As result, these samples can be characterized as male young-adult, high-education level, but have moderate-low income. They commonly live with their parents as a nuclear family and are single.

**Table 2. Socioeconomic characteristics of respondents**

	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	86	43.0
	Male	114	57.0
Age group	20-30 years	145	72.5
	Over 30 years	43	21.5
	Under 20 years	12	6.0
Education background	Bachelor's degree	112	56.0
	High school	29	14.5
	Postgraduate	38	19.0
	Professional	21	10.5
Income	4-7 million VND	27	13.5
	Below 4 million VND	101	50.5
	More than 7 million VND	72	36.0
Occupation	Business Owner	30	15.0
	Home maker	20	10.0
	Salaried	42	21.0
	Student	108	54.0
Marital status	In relationship	23	11.0
	Married with children	37	18.0
	Married with no children	16	8.0
	Single	124	62.0
Members in a family	Up to 3 members	69	34.5
	4 to 6 members	129	64.5
	More than 6 members	2	1.0

Source: Surveyed data, 2021

**4.2. Consumer’s perception and behavior towards fast foods**

There is 10 percent of 200 respondents who do not favor fast foods. They are mostly old-aged and homemakers. Consumers who support fast foods mainly are youngsters, students, and office-based workers. Interestingly, the same consumers may have different perceptions of fast foods. For some

kinds of fast foods, consumers considered as unhealthy, low quality, no taste, not hygiene... At the same time, they perceived the other types of fast foods as good taste and quick delivery. Whether customers support fast foods or not, they all consume them with different levels and frequencies. Form them, a brand of fast foods plays an important role in making selection.

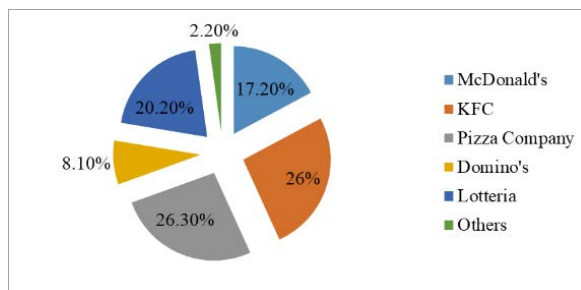
**Table 3. Controversy consumer’s perception of fast foods**

People who don’t patronize fast foods	Answers (%)	People who patronize fast foods	Answers (%)
Unhealthy	65.0	Taste	60.0
Low quality	30.0	Quick delivery	45.0
Not satisfied with the service	20.0	Liked by children	35.0
Does not satisfy my hunger	40.0	To celebrate parties	35.0
Unawareness of nutritional information	60.0	No time to cook at home	45.0
Not hygiene	40.0	Just for changeover from routine dishes	24.0

Source: Surveyed data, 2021

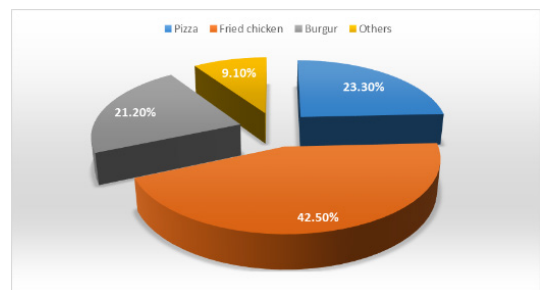
Figure 1 showed the brands of fast foods to which respondents preferred the most. 26.30% of respondents love Pizza Company while 26% preferred KFC. Lotteria accounted for 20.20%. Figure 2 witnessed that fried

chicken was the most preferable accounting for 42.5% while the pizza meal was 23.30%. The respondents who preferred the restaurants of Pizza Company were almost like eating pizza.



**Figure 1. Brands of Western fast food meal being the most preferred**

The surveyed data resulted that 39.5% of respondents consume Western fast foods once a week, followed by 33.5% and 27% of 2 once a month and very rarely, respectively. When segmented by brand,



**Figure 2. Types of fast food meal being the most preferred**

Pizza Company is being most favored, followed by KFC (26%) Lotteria (20.20%), McDonalds (17.2%) and Domino’s (8.1%). Most of them consumed it in evening snacks time, accounted for 45%.



**Table 4. Frequency of fast food consumption**

		Frequency	Percentage
Frequency of fast food consumption	Once a month	67	33.5
	Once a week	79	39.5
	Very rarely	54	27.0
Mealtime being the most preferred	Dinner	59	29.5
	Evening snacks	90	45.0
	Lunch	51	25.5

Source: Surveyed data, 2021

The surveyed data (Table 5) showed that at different income levels, consumers have different levels of consumption of fast food. People with income from 4-7 million/month use fast food most often with 48% of respondents using fast food once a month. 50% of people with income less than 4 million/month regularly use fast food (once a week). Up to 65% of people with an income of more than 7 million VND/month do not regularly use

fast food. The reason for this problem is the fact that consumers with incomes from 4-8 million think that fast food has a reasonable price that is suitable for their daily consumption. In contrast, people with lower incomes rarely use fast foods because of their high cost. Meanwhile, people with high incomes have more alternatives to eating. They often choose fresh products with higher costs instead of choosing fast food.

**Table 5. Relationship between Income per capita per month and Frequency of fast food consumption (Unit: %)**

Frequency of fast food consumption	Income per capita per month (VND)		
	< 4,000,000	4,000,000 – 7,000,000	>= 7,000,000
Once a month	10,0	48,0	20,0
Once a week	50,0	20,0	15,0
Very rarely	40,0	32,0	65,0

Source: Surveyed data, 2021

#### 4.3. Factors influencing consumer's selection of fast food brand

Surveyed data shows that up to 22% of respondents supposed that they selected the brand of fast food first when they purchase. They felt believable in the brand they preferred. Similar to the findings of [23], this research also shows that brand reputation is the most important factor of the student consumers of fast food. The question is

which characteristics of a brand that influence consumer's selection. Based on the literature review on factors influencing consumers' preference of fast foods, the characteristics of a brand are examined in this study include price, convenience, advertisement, varieties of products, the experience of purchasing, gender, educational achievement, taste, and services.

**Table 6. Result of Binary logistic regression**

Variables	$\beta$	Significant	EXP( $\beta$ )
Price	-1.437	0.018	0.168
Convenience	0.517	0.546	2.972
Advertisement	0.209	0.04	0.062
Varieties of products	0.14	0.028	0.014
Experience of purchasing	0.053	0.027	0.01
Understanding of brand	1.008	0.199	0.165
Taste	-2.121	0.024	0.328
Services	1.612	0.019	0.211

Omnibus tests of Model Coefficients: Chi - Square 62.514 Sig 0.013  
Nagelkerke R Square 0.669

Source: Summary of results of Binary Logistic model, 2021

The Chi - squared test shows the overall fit of the model, Chi - squared = 62.514 with Prob > Sig = 0.0013. Therefore, the factors in the model all have an impact on the decision to buy and use processed food. The Nagelkerle coefficient  $R_2 = 0.669$  means that 66.9% of the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables in the model. The results of the logistic model indicate that the factors that have a statistically significant influence on the decision for recommendation to consume fast food are price, advertising, varieties of products, the experience of purchasing, taste, and services. The specific levels of influence as follows:

- Price: with a statistical significance of less than 5%,  $\beta = -1.437$  shows that the price of products has a favorable impact on purchasing decisions and consuming fast food. People who disagree with the price of products factor affecting their consumption decisions have a 16.8% lower probability of buying fast food than consumers who agree. It can be said that this result is consistent with the current reality when modern life is increasingly busy, people have less time for kitchen work. The criterion of saving time is of the utmost importance, so the buyers

dare to buy food is to the consumer instead of cooking.

- Advertising: the advertising variable is included in the model with the expectation that it affects the decision to buy and consume fast food. Model analysis confirms statistically that when consumers do not agree with advertising factors that affect their purchasing decisions, the probability of consuming processed foods is only 6.2% probability ratio decides to consume when they agree.

- Experience: the results of the regression model show that when consumers agree to buy food, it has a direct influence on them, and they have the probability of buying and using processed food and recommendation. 1% higher than consumers who disagree with their experience.

- Taste: with a statistical significance of less than 5%,  $\beta = -2.121$  shows that taste of products has a favorable impact on purchasing decisions and consuming fast food. People who disagree with the taste of products factor affecting their consumption decisions have a 32.8% lower probability of buying fast food than consumers who agree. It can be said that this result is consistent



with the current reality when modern life is increasingly more economical, people enjoy more kind of taste.

- Services: the results of the regression model show that when consumers agree with service, it has a direct influence on them, and they have the probability of buying and using fast food. 21.1% higher than consumers who disagree with this. Thus, the service of the brand name is a factor that should be one of the top concerns. This is completely consistent with the fact that consumers are increasingly interested in and pay more attention before they recommend to other buyers.

In addition, several other factors affect consumers' decision to recommend consuming fast foods, such as understanding of the brand, knowledge of nutrition, gender, etc. However, these factors are not statistically significant.

## 5. Conclusions

There is an existence of different perceptions of fast foods among consumers and even in the idea of a consumer. This study witnessed that a consumer prefers some kinds of fast foods to others because of the brand, experience, and belief. The study also found out that consumers attached great importance to various factors such as quality, facility layout, service quality (speed and cleanliness) to fast foods. But all factors are not equally important while choosing a specific type of fast foods. Fast foods' brand is the most important factor influencing consumers' purchasing behavior. Moreover, to determine which characteristics, make consumers select a specific brand, a binary logistic regression has been employed. It is indicated that price, advertisement, experience, taste, and services strongly impact consumers' buying decision.

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## NHẬN THỨC VÀ HÀNH VI ỨNG XỬ CỦA NGƯỜI TIÊU DÙNG ĐỐI VỚI THỨC ĂN NHANH: NGHIÊN CỨU ĐIỂN HÌNH Ở HUYỆN GIA LÂM, THÀNH PHỐ HÀ NỘI

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### Tóm tắt

Cùng với quá trình chuyển đổi kinh tế, Việt Nam đã có những chuyển biến rõ nét về văn hóa, xã hội và đời sống hàng ngày của con người, đặc biệt là trong tiêu dùng lương thực, thực phẩm. Ngày càng có nhiều người, đặc biệt là giới trẻ chọn ăn đồ ăn nhanh. Dựa trên dữ liệu sơ cấp được thu thập từ 200 người tiêu dùng tại huyện Gia Lâm, thành phố Hà Nội bằng các biểu mẫu của Google, nghiên cứu này chỉ ra rằng người tiêu dùng có nhận thức khác nhau về những ưu và nhược điểm của thức ăn nhanh. Thương hiệu của các loại thức ăn nhanh có ảnh hưởng lớn đến hành vi của người tiêu dùng. Việc người tiêu dùng lựa chọn nhãn hiệu này hay nhãn hiệu khác phụ thuộc vào giá cả, khẩu vị, hình thức quảng cáo và trải nghiệm của họ.

**Từ khóa:** Nhận thức, hành vi, thức ăn nhanh, người tiêu dùng.