

ECONOMIC AND BEHAVIORAL DETERMINANTS OF FAST-FOOD CONSUMPTION

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Abstract

The behavioral shift in the consumption pattern has been observed for last few years in urban population of Pakistan, where Fast-food consumption has become an increasingly important component of changing food consumption patterns, particularly among youth. In this study economic, demographic, and preference-related determinants of fast-food consumption, with particular emphasis on the moderating role of taste preference in Pakistan is examined. In this regard the primary data comprising 294 respondents were collected through a structured questionnaire from consumers in urban areas including Lahore and Islamabad. The estimated model incorporated age, price, income, and taste preference, in one equation and an interaction term between gender and taste in other with results that age is negatively associated with fast-food consumption, whereas income and taste preference exert positive and statistically significant impact. As predicted, price effect is negative but statistically weak, suggesting limited price responsiveness in the sample. Interaction term is negative and statistically significant indicating that the relationship between gender and fast-food consumption is conditional on taste preference. These results imply the prominence of integrating economic and behavioral factors into the analysis of fast-food demand and offer useful suggestions for consumer-oriented marketing and healthier food-choice policies.

Keywords: Fast-food consumption, choice behavior, interaction, preferences, price effect, income effect.

INTRODUCTION

Generally the food prepared and served rapidly, at relatively low cost and with an emphasis on convenience, accessibility, and immediate consumption is considered fast-food (AlTamimi et al., 2023). This covers an extensive variety of products, including hamburgers, fried chicken, French fries, sandwiches, pizza, chicken nuggets, fish, and ice cream (Hatta et al., 2023). Contrasting to conservative home-prepared meals, fast food is primarily associated with standardized production, quick service, take-away facilities, and home delivery. Its growing popularity reflects changing lifestyles in which time constraints, convenience, affordability, and social interaction increasingly influence food choices.

The urban growth of fast-food industry has expanded rapidly worldwide, alongside industrialization, rising incomes, and changing consumer lifestyles (Awlqadr et al., 2025). The home-delivery platforms, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic, while product innovation and the emergence of international and locally adapted food brands have further stimulated market growth. At present, worldwide fast-food market is estimated at over US\$ 809 billion in 2026 and is projected to grow substantially by 2030 (Fortune Business Insights, 2026). In this drastic growth major international chains,

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including McDonald's, KFC, Subway, Pizza Hut, Burger King, and Domino's, have contributed to the globalization and standardization of fast-food.

In the developing world, the expansion of fast food is relevant, where urbanization and rising household incomes have altered traditional food-consumption forms. An argument over this behavior confirms that urbanization changes lifestyles and food demand and associate increasing incomes in developing countries with greater consumption of Western-style foods (Regmi and Dyck, 2001). Like every other economic behavior, the globalization has also affected food production, processing, marketing, and consumption, increasing the prominence of products such as burgers, pizzas, carbonated beverages, etc. Additionally, varying labor patterns and the increasing participation of women in the labor force can reduce the time available for household chores including food preparation, and increased demand for food alternatives (Reardon et al., 2021; Dolislager et al., 2022). Consequently, convenience, time saving, taste, price, and socialization have become important determinants of fast-food consumption.

The underlying convenience and source of socialization has also affected consumption of fast-food in Pakistan which has expanded rapidly, particularly in major urban centers, following the entry of international chains in 1990s. As a consequence, the establishment and expansion of brands such as KFC, McDonald's, Pizza Hut, Subway, Burger King, Domino's, etc., increased the availability and diversity of fast-food items. Resultantly, the larger introduction of international food brands and changing consumption preferences among youth (Usman et al., 2017; Akbar et al., 2021).

In addition to its growth effects on the economy, it also creates health and diet concerns due to poor diet. Hefty publicity over media added to drive this trend; whereby young people frequently eat out due to convenience and social routine. Therefore, to find into what drives their food choices is crucial for both businesses and policymakers on health (Bisu et al., (2024). Thus, understanding the determinants of consumer choice is important not only for businesses but also for policymakers concerned with food standards, consumer welfare, and public health.

Notwithstanding industrial growth of fast-food in Pakistan, research on consumer behavior specifically remains scarce. In a very brief literature on Pakistan, the studies overlook how personal traits and income shape taste preferences and the research gap is highly noticeable in Islamabad and Lahore, where rising wealth, busy lifestyles, and endless food options create the perfect environment for studying modern food varieties. As a result, this study examines the fast-food consumption behavior, focusing on the effects of age, income, price, gender, and taste preference and investigates whether taste preference moderates the influence of demographic factors, particularly age and gender, on consumption preferences. Precisely, we assess the associations between key economic and behavioral determinants and fast-food consumption and derives relevant economic effects for policy design. With the help of a field survey in urban areas like Islamabad and Lahore, the research contributes to the limited empirical literature on fast-food consumer behavior in Pakistan. The inferences drawn would help policymakers in developing evidence-based measures related to food safety, nutrition, and consumer awareness, while helping fast-food businesses improve menu, pricing, marketing, and product strategies in response to consumer choices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since it echoes interface of economic incentives, individual preferences, social influences, and lifestyles, fast-food consumption has attracted considerable attention of the researcher, particularly studying the behavior of young consumers and university students, and marketing exposure as major determinants of

fast-food selection. Simultaneously, readings point worries concerning nutritional quality and the health consequences of frequent eating. Such results propose that fast-food demand is not determined by a single factor but by the interaction of economic capacity, consumer preferences, demographic characteristics, and the time based opportunity.

Ease and availability are the most steadily reported determinants of fast-food feasting. The busy academic and occupational schedules, limited food-preparation facilities, ease of access, and minimal preparation requirements encourage consumers to substitute fast food for home-prepared meals (Baig and Saeed, 2012; Rana & Paul 2020). On the same track, some studies identified time constraints, affordability, hygiene, and accessibility as important considerations among students (Narayan and Prabu, 2015). These features are mainly pertinent in urban settings, where increasingly time-intensive lifestyles raise the opportunity cost of preparing household meals.

Price and the power to buy the fast-food are the main economic considerations to influence the demand and may be perceived as relatively inexpensive compared with other outdoor eating, although the response to price varies across customers. People with high income can have greater capacity to purchase meals outside the home, whereas lower-income consumers may respond more strongly to discounts, value meals, and promotional pricing; as reported by Thakkar and Thatte (2014) about the relationship between price satisfaction and restaurant visitation, while Pandey et al., (2022) identified affordability, convenience, taste, and accessibility as important determinants of fast-food consumption in youth. These researches further specify that menu pricing can influence customer regularity. Fast-food demand is driven by how much money people have, their personal limits, and the value they place on taste, which is another central determinant of fast-food consumption. Rana & Paul (2020), and Kumar (2014) validate about delight, flavor, and sensual appeal substantially influence young customers' selections. Pandey et al., (2022) additionally recommend that preferences developed during childhood may persist into adulthood. Fast-food products combine strong sensory appeal with standardized quality, variety, convenience, and brand familiarity, thereby generating considerable consumer utility. Some of the studies provide evidence that food quality, price, service speed, and restaurant environment also influence consumer choice (Tabassum et al., 2012); while Majabadi et al. (2016) identified accessibility, taste, variety, affordability, and social interaction as important motivations among teenagers. In the same way, Shaban and Alkazemi (2019) described that taste and convenience were major drivers of fast-food consumption among young people indicating that taste operates alongside economic and environmental factors rather than independently. Another important factor that shapes the fast-food choices is social environment, as Kumar (2014) shows that social interaction with friends is important motivations among young consumers, consistent with Ghosh (2024). The peer nets and the family traits can also establish food preferences at an early age, while advertising and promotional tactics strengthen the preferences. Pandey et al. (2022) established about the influence of parental purchasing behavior on adolescents, whereas Kaushik and Narang (2011) emphasized the role of targeted marketing; resulting into the choices of fast-food may not only reflect individual behavior but also social norms and commercial effects.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is tested by Sajjad et al. (2023), using data from 220 college students in Pakistan, found significant gender differences in fast-food consumption and reported that subjective norms and behavioral intentions were central forecasters; and fast-food demand is partly rooted in social expectations and perceived behavioral mechanism. An additional thread examines health

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awareness and the extent to which knowledge affects actual food choices (see for example, Kumar et al., 2014) who suggests that greater awareness of the adverse effects of fast food may be associated with healthier dietary selections. Conversely, Abraham et al. (2018) recognized differently a knowledge–behavior gap, showing that awareness of health risks does not necessarily translate into healthier consumption. Likewise, Elkhateeb et al. (2018) highlighted the need to convert health awareness into actual dietary change showing that consumers face competing incentives: fast food provides immediate benefits through taste and convenience; whereas potential health costs are generally hindered.

Another strand of literature showed that the demographic characteristics, particularly age and gender, are also considerably important; younger consumers generally report higher levels of fast-food consumption, possibly because of greater mobility, social activity (Usman et al., 2017; Hidaka, 2018). The impact of gender remains mixed (for example) Majabadi et al. (2016) reports higher consumption among boys, whereas Syafiqah et al. (2018) found more frequent consumption among female university students. Higher occurrence among male students is reported by Narayan and Prabu (2015). So the influence of gender could be context-specific and influenced by social norms, economic circumstances, mobility, and food preferences.

Being one of the important determinant of purchasing capacity and access to alternative food choices, income is relevant too (Cuma et al., 2007). The family income and structure are potential determinants of fast-food consumption (Drewnowski and Darmon 2005; and Steenhuis et al., 2011). The increase in income can impact expenditure on commercially prepared foods and alter dietary choice. Hence, this upshot of income may function not simply through affordability but also through broader changes in lifestyle.

The youth, particularly university/college students represent an exclusively important population because the transition toward independent living frequently changes established food choices (Mat et al., 2016). The increasing tendency of fast-food consumption among Malaysian university students, (Didarloo et al., 2022) shows convenience, taste, and affordability as important determinants. Developed feasting among urban than semi-urban teenagers, highlighting the importance of the surrounding food environment (Sukhwil et al. 2017). All these researches normally supports the importance of convenience, affordability, taste, accessibility, and social factors in explaining fast-food choice.

Regardless of all the extensive literature reviewed above, important gaps can still be identified, for example, much of the existing research relies on cross-sectional self-reported samples, which limits generalizability. Furthermore, some of the studies examine age, gender, income, price, and taste as separate determinants rather than investigating whether these factors interact. Especially, minute attention has been devoted to how the taste preference modifies the relationship between gender and fast-food consumption; important because consumers with dissimilar tastes concerns may respond differently to economic factors. Moreover, the literature from Pakistan also remains relatively limited and is often concentrates on specific populations. All this emphasize the need for a survey based empirical research that incorporates economic and behavioral determinants within a single demand framework, which the present study does.

Overall, the demand for fast-food is driven by price, convenience, taste, demographics, and social factors and the present study fills the gap by analyzing these interacting factors within the Islamabad–Lahore urban market, focusing specifically on how taste preferences influence gender-based eating habits.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

The consumer choice theory is the main stay of this research which assumes that individuals allocate limited resources among alternative goods to maximize utility subject to income and price restraints. The consumption of fast-food is expected to depend largely on price, income, demographic characteristics, and tastes. Thus, any change in price affects the demand through: (i) substitution; and (ii) income effects. This reflects that the higher prices may encourage substitution toward alternatives while reducing consumers' real purchasing power. Therefore, this study covers the standard demand framework by incorporating age, gender, and taste preference as key determinants. Additionally, whether taste preference moderates the relationship between gender and fast-food consumption is the manor hypothesis of this study.

1.1. Model Specification

Let FFC_i the demand for fast-food consumption, and a general function of demand is;

$$FFC_i = f(G, A, T, P, Y) \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

Where, FFC_i fast-food consumption of individual i , G is Gender, A is Age, T is the Taste, P shows Price, and Y represents Income of the individual respondent. This model comprises set of two reduced-form equations: (i) general form and (ii) the mediating /interacting impact of gender and taste (given in equation 2 and 3, below).

$$FFC_i = \alpha_1(G)_i + \alpha_2(A)_i + \alpha_3(T)_i + \alpha_4(P)_i + \alpha_5(Y)_i + u_1 \dots \dots \dots (2)$$

$$FCC_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1(G)_i + \beta_2(G * T)_i + \beta_3(A)_i + \beta_4(P)_i + \beta_5(Y)_i + u_2 \dots \dots \dots (3)$$

Here, we assume $\beta_4 < 0$; $\beta_5 > 0$ and this covers the conventional demand specification by introducing moderation effects. Equation (2) estimates the direct association between the principal economic, demographic, and preference variables and fast-food consumption. Equation (3) extends the baseline specification by introducing the Gender $\times$ Taste interaction to determine whether the association between taste preference and fast-food consumption differs by gender.

1.2. Research Design and Data

The mainstay of this research is quantitative analysis based on cross-sectional survey data, collected from two main urban area: Lahore and Islamabad, with the target population comprising on the consumer of the fast-food mainly. A structured, self-administered questionnaire is designed on the basis of the study objectives and the relevant literature.

1.3. Sampling and Sample Size

Although the target was about 315 respondents including the 15 respondents of the pilot survey. However, 294 questionnaires were found eligible to qualify for analysis after performing all the screening and cleaning of the data. Out of this, 162 respondents (55.1%) were from Islamabad and 132 (44.9%) were from Lahore whereas, the demographic composition of the sample, including age, gender, and educational characteristics, is presented in table 1 below (in section 4). The questionnaire was finalized after pilot test on 15 consumers to improve clarity, they finalized the questions to cover consumption behavior, price perceptions, income, taste preferences, and demographics. The software used for analysis is IBM SPSS 25. The Ordinary least squares is used for empirical analysis that |how price, income, gender, age, and taste affect fast-food consumption, specifically how taste preferences change the way gender impacts consumer demand.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section first we do a quick descriptive analysis including the respondents' age, gender, education, and occupation, providing an overview of the demographic composition of the sample. Out of these 294 respondents, 148 (50.5%) were female and 146 (49.5%) were male. The sample is therefore almost equally distributed across gender, providing a balanced basis for examining whether gender is associated with fast-food demands. The age group 21-25 represents the largest proportion of the individuals in the survey (57% of respondents); aged 16–20 years represent 20% of the sample, while 14% fall within the 26–35 years category; aged 36–50 years account for 6%, and only 1% are above 50 years. This indicates that sample is largely composed of young adults. The graduating respondents are little over 73%; followed by with higher secondary education (13.3%) and secondary education (5.6%), 5.1% with master's degrees, while 1.5% hold PhD degrees and 1.0% have education below matric. Thus the sample is mainly well educated, which includes a substantial number of university students and employees: students establish the largest group, with 151 respondents (51.0%), followed by teachers with 60 respondents (21%). Rest of the respondents (28%) belong to other occupational categories. This sample is quite relevant to our study as the literature suggests that the youth are the manor consumers of fast-food.

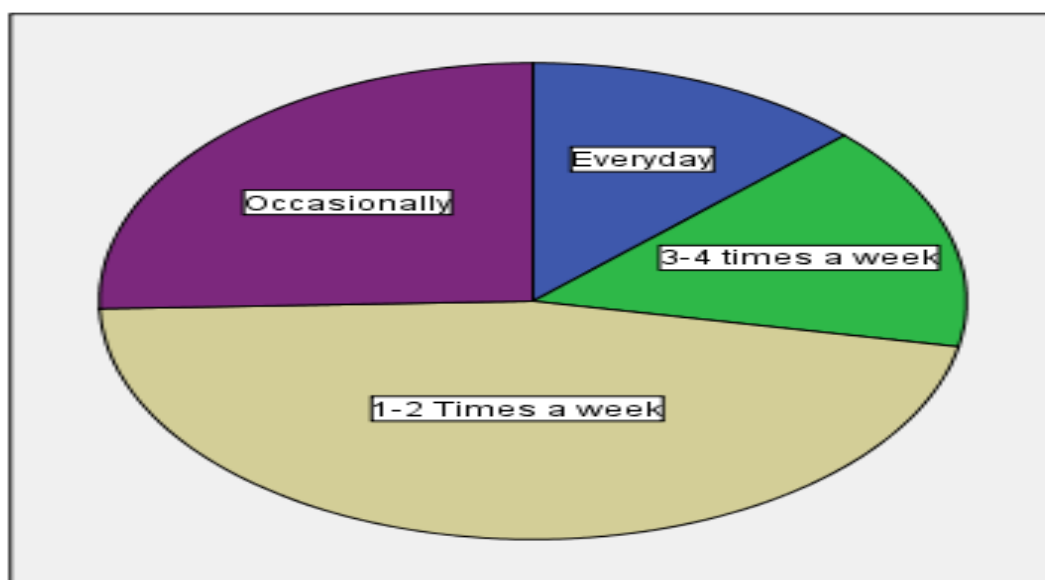
FAST FOOD CONSUMPTION PATTERNS

The Table A entails the preference of respondents in favoring fast food (table A):

Table A: Descriptive analysis		
S#	Category	Descriptions
1	Frequency	A significant majority (96.3%) of respondents consume fast food (Table 1). This highlights the prevalence of fast food within the sample. Table 2 and Figure1 indicate that nearly half (46.4%) consume fast food 1-2 times a week, with a notable portion (25%) consuming it daily. This suggests a regular habit of fast food consumption among many respondents.
2	Preference	Table 1 and Figure 2 reveal a strong preference for fast food over other options like Chinese or local food (87.8% vs. 6.1% and 2.7%). This aligns with the overall high consumption rates observed.
3	Choice Factors	Figure 3 highlights taste, price, and easy access as the top factors influencing fast food choices for both genders. Interestingly, the figure suggests gender differences in preferences for product quality, variety, and brand image. These potential gender-based variations warrant further investigation. This chart maps the preference of Respondents: Most of the respondents for either gender prefer fast food (respectively) due to Taste, Price and Easy Access. However, females prefer product quality and variety over fast service, whereas male prefer fast service over product quality. Brand Image and product variety are least preferred by male, whereas fast service is least preferred by females.
4	Types Consumed	Figure 4 indicates pizza (60%) as the most popular fast food item, followed by burgers (56%). This provides specific insights into

		consumption preferences within the sample.
5	Restaurant Preference	Table 1 and Figure 5 show KFC as the most frequented fast food restaurant (36.7%), followed by Pizza Hut (29.6%) and McDonald's (10.2%). This offers valuable information about brand preferences within the target population.
6	Preferred Food	Table 1 also shows 87% of the respondents consume fast food 2.6% of the respondent prefer Chinese food 6.1% respondent like local food 3.6% prefer other food. Only 13% of the respondents indicated that they did not favor fast food. The majority of respondents prefer fast food rather than the other food.
7	Ethnicity	The survey participants belonged to a variety of ethnic backgrounds, with Punjabi making up the largest group over 41% of the sample. This is followed by Federal Capital (23.5%) and Pashtun (11.3%) ethnicities. Sindhis (4.6%) and Balochis (2.7%) were also represented, along with a notable group (16.8%) categorized as "Other"(those who didn't showed their ethnicity). This information helps to contextualize the findings of the study, acknowledging the ethnic diversity within the sample. It's important to consider potential variations in fast food consumption habits across different ethnicities in future research. Since, the ethnic distribution of the sample effects the general population of Islamabad and Lahore, it add to the generalizability of the findings to the entire population

Figure 1: No. of Times Consuming Fast Food in a week



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Table 1: Consumption Patterns

Do you consume fast food?		
	Frequency	Percent
No	12	3.7
Yes	282	96.3
No. of Times Consuming Fast Food in a week		
	Frequency	Percent
Everyday	37	12.7
3-4 Times a week	45	15.3
1-2 Times a week	137	46.5
Occasionally	75	25.5
Type of Food Prefer in Outdoors		
Food-type	Frequency	Percent
Fast Food	258	87.8
Chinese Food	8	2.7
Local Food	18	6.1
Any Other	10	3.4
Frequently Visited Fast Food Restaurants		
Brand	Frequency	Percent
KFC	108	36.7
McDonald's	30	10.2
Pizza Hut	87	29.6
Burger King	13	4.6
Subway	4	1.5
Jollibee	2	.5
Other	50	16.8
Ethnic Breakdown of the Sample		
Ethnicity	Frequency	Percent
Federal Capital	69	23.5
Punjabi	122	41.1
Pashtun	33	11.3
Sindhi	13	4.6
Balochi	8	2.7
Other	49	16.8

Source: Author's own calculations, based on survey.

Figure 2: Type of Food Prefer in Outdoors

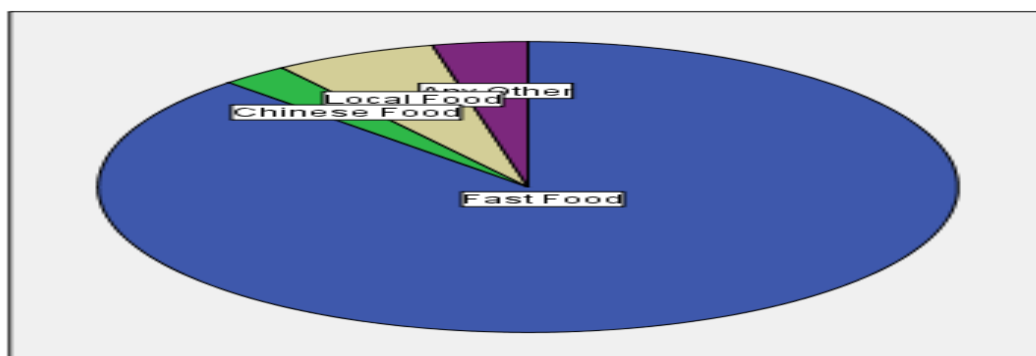


Figure 3: Factor Influence Fast Food

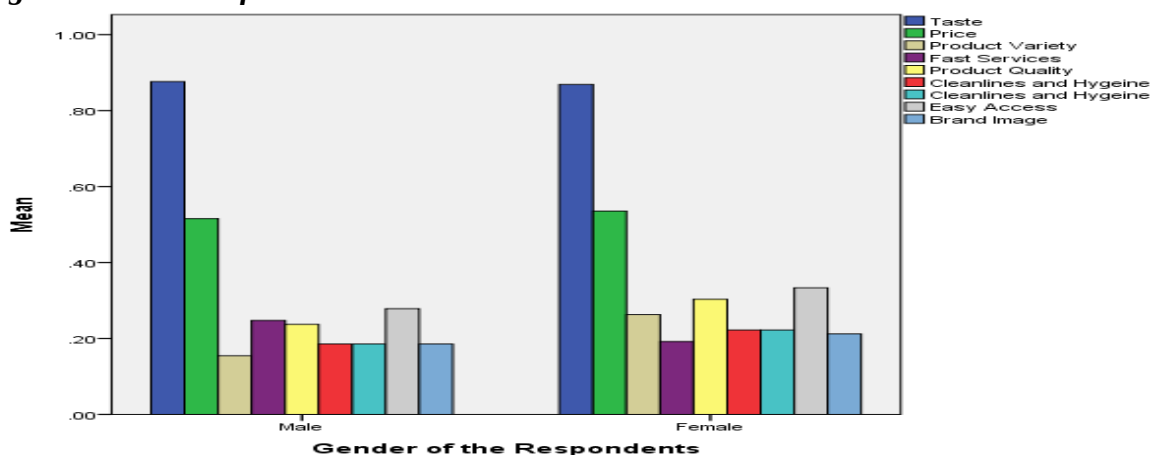


Figure 4: Types of Fast Food

The types of fast-food mainly consumed by people in sample area include; burger, pizza, drink, ice cream, shawarma, sandwich and any other. Results show that burger 56%, pizza 60%, drink 21%, ice-cream 17%, shawarma 20%, sandwich 15% any other 11%. Respondent prefer pizza were the main fast-food consumed.

Hence, it could be inferred that pizza was the most preferred fast food menu by the young consumer among other varieties available in fast food chain.

4.2. Empirical Finding

The estimated results are grounded on the models specified in Section 3 to examine the determinants of fast-food consumption (FFC). Table 2 reports two specifications: the first is the general model incorporating gender, age, price, income, and taste, while the second introduces the Gender $\times$ Taste interaction to examine whether taste preference modifies the relationship between gender and fast-food consumption.

The results of the general model indicate that gender has a negative and statistically significant coefficient, suggesting that female respondents report lower fast-food consumption than male respondents, holding other factors constant. This finding indicates a meaningful gender difference in consumption behavior within the sample. However, the introduction of the interaction term substantially changes the interpretation of the gender effect.

Age also has a negative and significant effect on fast-food consumption. Consequently, eating the fast-food declines as age increases, implying that younger respondents are relatively more frequent consumers of fast food. The consistency of this result is established by previous evidence that younger individuals generally exhibit greater fast-food consumption (Usman et al., 2017; Hidaka, 2018) and may reflect differences in lifestyle, social activities, dietary preferences, and food choices across age groups.

The coefficient (0.390; $t = 3.78$) shows the positive and statistically significant income effect indicating that higher-income tend to consume more fast food: greater the purchasing power more ability to purchase commercially prepared food and may also be associated with changing consumption preferences (Drewnowski & Darmon, 2005; Steenhuis et al., 2011). Thus our empirical evidence is strong enough to postulate that positive income effect provides support for the importance of economic capacity in explaining fast-food demand.

The statistically significant and positive effect of Taste on the preferences suggests that respondents with stronger preferences for the taste of fast food are more likely to consume it more. These results are also in line with previous literature identifying taste as a major determinant of food choice (Didarloo et al., 2022). On the other hand, an inverse relationship is shown by the negative price coefficient, although the evidence concerning its statistical significance should be interpreted cautiously given the reported test statistics. These results of equation 1 present almost 58% of the variation in fast-food consumption, while the reported F -statistic of 6.53 indicates that the explanatory variables jointly provide substantial explanatory power and indicate demographic characteristics, income, and taste preference are important determinants of fast-food consumption.

GENDER-TASTE INTERACTION

In the other design of the study, we introduced the Gender $\times$ Taste interaction to examine whether the effect of taste preference differs according to gender, the coefficient of which is negative and statistically significant, providing evidence that the relationship between taste preference and fast-food consumption varies by gender. Interestingly, once the interaction is included, the coefficient on gender becomes positive but statistically insignificant, while the interaction term remains significant. This indicates that the negative gender effect observed in the general model should not be interpreted independently of taste preference. Rather, the relationship between gender and fast-food consumption is conditional on the respondent's taste

preference.

The interaction model also produces a higher R^2 of 0.63, indicating that incorporating the Gender $\times$ Taste interaction improves the model's explanatory capacity. The reported F-statistic of 5.69 further indicates that the model has overall explanatory power.

In a nutshell these results demonstrate: taste preference is not simply an independent determinant of fast-food consumption, its effect varies across gender and the significant negative interaction suggests the marginal effect associated with taste differs among male and female respondents. The conformist demand for fast-food framework is extended by this result and shows that consumer preferences interact with demographic characteristics. Since the coefficient of interaction term cannot be interpreted in isolation, the precise magnitude and direction of the conditional effects should ideally be examined through predicted values at different levels of taste preference. Thus, results show age and gender to be negatively associated with fast-food consumption in the general model, whereas income and taste have positive effects; the interaction provides the behavioral principal, suggesting that taste preference modifies gender-related differences.

Table 2: Model for FFC with G and Taste Interaction		
Variable	Coefficient (t-stat)	Coefficient (t-stat)
Constant	0.038 (3.01)*	0.04 (2.79)*
Gender	-0.21 (-4.07)*	0.099 (1.26)
Gender-Taste	--	-0.315 (-2.67)*
Age	-0.21 (-3.04)*	-0.301 (-2.21)*
Price	-0.035 (-2.03)*	0.015 (1.65)**
Income	0.39 (3.78)*	0.275 (3.95)*
Taste	0.092 (1.99)*	--
N=294	$R^2 = 0.58$ F-stat = 6.53	$R^2 = 0.63$ F-stat = 5.69

(Note: the values in parentheses are t-stats, * and ** indicate statistically significant at 5 and 10 percent level of significance.)

4.3. Discussion of Results

In summary of the finding we can see that the regression results present fast-food consumption being influenced by demographic, economic, and preference-related factor: Age has a negative effect, indicating lower consumption by elderly respondents, consistent with Li et al. (2020) and Hidaka (2018). Weak but negative price effect while positive and strong income effect are consistent with Steenhuis et al., 2011; Janssen et al., 2017), and validate the economic theory. Taste preference positively influences consumption confirming The taste of respondents is importance is setting the preferences while the interaction between gender and taste is negative and significant indicates that gender differences in fast-food consumption depend on taste preference, supporting evidence of gender-related differences in food preferences (Usman et al., 2017). In a nutshell, the results show that the taste is an important behavioral dimension of fast-food demand.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The objective of this research is to identify the determinants of fast-food consumption, with particular

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emphasis on the moderating role of taste preference among consumers in Islamabad and Lahore. These results show that age, gender, and price are negatively associated with fast-food consumption, whereas income and taste preference have positive impacts. Increasing age reduces the fast-food choices, significantly, suggesting that younger individuals consume fast food more frequently. On the other hand the positive income effect on consumption, potentially reflects greater purchasing power and changing dietary choices. As expected theoretically, price has the negative effect, its influence is statistically weak, indicating that taste and convenience may outweigh price reflections.

The interaction between taste and gender is negative, suggesting that strong taste preferences can modify the declining tendency of fast-food consumption associated with increasing age. In a model where we analyze taste alongside demographic traits, individual factors like age and gender lose their independent statistical significance; because the impact of age and gender is actually driven by taste preferences. Eventually, the demand for fast-food is not just driven by basic economic factors, but by a combination of personal preferences and demographic credentials.

The results reflect many implications for policy makers and the businesses: fast-food firms can improve market performance through age- and preference-based market segmentation, particularly by developing products and promotional strategies suited to younger consumers and different taste profiles such as menu pricing while maintaining product quality. To the perspective of policy makers it is evident that fast-food businesses should be encouraged to provide healthier alternatives and clear nutritional material and consider interventions such as health-oriented food labeling, incentives for healthier products, and behavioral-economics approaches, including nudges and choice framing, to encourage healthier consumption without eliminating consumer choice.

Contextually, these findings should be interpreted within the range of urban respondents and should not be generalized to the entire Pakistani population. As this research follows non-probability sampling, the estimates provide evidence of associations within the sample rather than population-wide causal or representative effects. Within the perspective of this limitations, the future studies should employ probability-based and geographically diverse samples to improve external validity.



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