

An Evaluation of Fast-Food Preferences According to Gender

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Abstract: This research has been conducted to determine the fast-food preferences of females and males who come to eat at the fast-food restaurants in the Kizilay region and in the large shopping malls of the province of Ankara. The research involved a total of 400 people (200 males and 200 females) who were 18 or years old or above. A questionnaire has been used to obtain the research data. According to the data obtained from the research results, the average age of the males was 28.18 ± 0.63 years and that of the females was 26.65 ± 0.54 years. It has been determined that the males and the females involved in the research prefer fast-food because they like it, it is delicious, prices are reasonable or they are ready and fast. The female participants usually go to hamburger restaurants (1.19 ± 1.31), while the male participants prefer to go to kebab and 'köfte' restaurants (1.61 ± 1.19). For both genders, among the western style fast-food, the most preferred types of fast-food are hamburgers (Males 1.56 ± 1.41 , Females 1.32 ± 1.39), french fries (Males 0.94 ± 0.09 , Females 1.12 ± 1.13) and chickenburgers (Males 0.76 ± 1.11 , Females 0.87 ± 1.19); and among traditional style of fast-food, the most preferred types are meat döner (Males 1.48 ± 0.09 , Females 1.59 ± 0.09), grilled meat balls (Males 1.07 ± 1.08 , Females 1.12 ± 1.12) and chicken döner (Males 0.77 ± 1.14 , Females 0.86 ± 1.16).

Key words: Gender % fast-food % preference

INTRODUCTION

Fast-food is usually defined as ready-to-eat dishes sold by commercial establishments that may or may not have on-site dining accommodations. The first fast-food establishments in the United States were employee cafeterias. At the same time, street food carts, food stands, and delicatessens started springing up in urban areas [1].

Today, there are numerous companies dealing with the fast-food system worldwide. A majority of them are of American origin [2].

The developments in the nutrition industry and technologies have had a great contribution to the quick development of the fast-food nutrition system [3]. Such developments have changed the nutrition habits and preferences of people. Nutrition sectors have offered ready, semi-ready and frozen food for people who have to eat in a very limited time [4].

Examining the lifestyle and the social structure of the Turkish society, it is observed that fast and ready food has a long history in their nutrition culture. The 'börek' makers, kebab stores and 'muhallebi' patisseries have long been places where people satisfy their hunger in a fast way [4].

This research has been planned to determine fast-food preferences of different genders.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research area is a major district of Ankara, Turkey. As places of research, restaurants selling fast-food, such as hamburgers, 'döner' and 'lahmacun', in large shopping centers of K2z2lay in Ankara were chosen. 400 people participated

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in the research. 200 of them were male and 200 were female, who were 18 years and older and usually ate at fast-food restaurants. The research data were collected using the technique of interview by questionnaire forms. The questionnaire form consisted of three sections which were general information about individuals, their fast-food restaurant preferences and their fast-food preferences. In the questions where the participants were asked to specify their preferences, they made three choices in a descending order from the most preferred to the least. The first preference scored 3 points, the second preference scored 2 points and the third one scored 1 point [5].

As for the anthropometric measurements of the participants, their body weight (kg) and height (cm) were measured and the body mass index (BMI) was calculated. Recently, the definition of the most appropriate weight to length is BMI (kg/m²). The evaluation of BMI is “<18.5 underweight”, “18.5-24.9 normal weight”, “25.0-29.9 overweight” and “≥30.0 obesity” [6].

Research data were analysed by using the SPSS statistical package program. Some of the research data are shown in tables. Arithmetic averages were taken (Mean±SD), and for statistical analysis Chi-square (X²) importance test and t-test were used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic characteristics of consumers: The demographic characteristics of consumers are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Demographic characteristics	Male		Female		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Age (year)						
18-22	70	35.0	86	43.0	156	39.0
23-27	46	23.0	41	20.5	87	21.8
28-32	32	16.0	30	15.0	62	15.5
33 and +	52	26.0	43	21.5	95	23.8
Marital status						
Married	73	36.5	69	34.5	142	35.5
Not married	127	63.5	131	65.5	258	64.5
Occupation status						
Employee	101	50.5	77	38.5	178	44.5
Unemployed	99	49.5	123	61.5	222	55.5
Total	200	100.0	200	100.0	400	100.0
Noneducational level						
Primary school	2	1.4	3	2.5	5	1.9
Secondary school	14	9.7	12	9.9	26	9.8
High school	50	34.7	29	24.0	79	29.8
College	69	47.9	68	56.2	137	51.7
Postgraduate education	9	6.3	9	7.4	18	6.8
Total	144	100.0	121	100.0	265	100.0

As can be seen in the table, 39.0% of the respondents were in the 18-22 age group. When the table is evaluated according to the gender, the percentage of the males in the 18-22 age group is 35.0% and that of the females is 43.0%. According to these results, it can be said that younger people prefer fast-food restaurants. The research carried out by Paeratakul *et al.* (2003), which involved 17,370 adults and children, also showed that most of the fast-food consumers were children (42%) while 37.0% were adults [7].

Table 2: The evaluation of the body weights of participants in terms of BMI

BMI (kg/m ²)	Male		Female		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Underweight	4	2.0	28	14.0	32	8.0
Normal weight	116	58.0	149	74.5	265	66.3
Overweight	76	38.0	22	11.0	98	24.5
Obese	4	2.0	1	0.5	5	1.2
Total	200	100.0	200	100.0	400	100.0
	X ² =53.665		df=3		p<0.05	

In this research, the average age of the male consumers was 28.18±0.63 years and the average of the females was 26.65±0.54 years. As a result of the research conducted by Özçelik and Sürücüoğlu (1998) in the area of Ankara K2z2lay on people eating in fast-food restaurants, it was determined that 63.0 % of the consumers coming to restaurants were 24 years old and younger [8].

In Table 1, when the occupation status of the participants was examined, it was determined that 55.5% were unemployed, while 44.5% were employed. Fifty and a half percent of the males and 61.5% of the females were employed. The gender difference as far as the occupation status is concerned was determined as statistically important.

When the marital status of the respondents was evaluated, it was found that 35.5% were married and 64.5% were not. 36.5% of the males were married while 63.5% were not. 34.5% of the females were married and 65.5% were not. The percentages of those who were married and not married in both groups were close to each other.

33.8 % of the respondents participated in this research were students (135 persons) and 66.2% (265 persons) were not. Twenty-eight percent (56 persons) of the male consumers were students and the females were 39.5% (79 persons). When the education levels of the participants who were not students were examined, it was determined that 58.5% of them had university degrees and higher education levels. In males, this percentage was 54.2%, while in females it was 63.6% (Table 1).

Overweight and obesity are caused by energy imbalance have become a global epidemic, affecting about a billion people worldwide [9]. The body weights of the 400 respondents participated in this research were evaluated according to their body mass index (Table 2). The percentage of the females with a normal body weight was higher than the males, while the percentage of the overweight and obese males was higher than that of the females. It has been determined that the difference between the genders as per BMI is statistically significant ($p<0.01$).

In the research which was conducted to compare the diet quality and the overweight status of adults both over 20 years old and living alone, it was determined that there was a small but important positive relation between fast-food consumption and being overweight [10].

Fast-food restaurant preferences: The tendency of consuming fast-food has increased due to its fast service, appropriateness, taste and reasonable prices [11]. The average points for the reasons why the research participants prefer fast-food restaurants have been presented in Table 3.

It has been determined that the respondents preferred fast-food for reasons such as the following: they like it; it is delicious; the prices are reasonable; it is fast and ready. When the differences between the average points for fast-food differences are assessed according to gender, it has been found that the difference between those who prefer fast-food for they like it and for the reasonable prices is statistically significant ($p<0.01$). The results show that the ratio of the women who go to fast-food restaurants because they like fast-food is higher than those who do so because of the price. The situation is the opposite for males; the ratio of the men who prefer fast-food restaurants for their reasonable prices is higher than those who do so for they like it.

Table 3: Average points for reasons for fast-food restaurant preferences according to gender

Reasons	Male	Female	t test
	Mean±SD	Mean±SD	
Likes fast-food	1.40±1.36	1.79±1.79	2.97*
It is delicious	1.24±1.19	1.24±1.21	0.00
It is a habit	0.71±1.02	0.67±0.97	0.35
Prices are reasonable	0.71±1.06	0.44±0.86	2.69*
Fed up with other kinds of food	0.57±1.00	0.50±0.87	0.74
Variety in the menu	0.38±0.76	0.32±0.74	0.79
It is fast and ready	0.58±0.94	0.51±0.86	0.77
It is close to shopping areas	0.34±0.78	0.35±0.78	0.13

*p<0.01

Table 4: Data about who the participants go to fast-food restaurants with, on what days they go to a fast-food restaurant and the service type they receive

	Male		Female		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Who with						
Alone	17	8.5	2	1.0	19	4.7
With friends	124	62.0	130	65.0	254	63.5
With the family	33	16.5	28	14.0	61	15.3
With the spouse	18	9.0	24	12.0	42	10.5
With the child	8	4.0	16	8.0	24	6.0
	X ² =15.817 [^]		df=3		p<0.01	
Days						
Weekdays	20	10.0	28	14.0	48	12.0
Weekend	84	42.0	75	37.5	159	39.7
Weekdays + weekend	96	48.0	97	48.5	193	48.3
	X ² =1.848		df=2		p>0.05	
Type of service						
To go	14	7.0	7	3.5	21	5.2
In the restaurant	111	55.5	126	63.0	237	59.3
Both	75	37.5	67	33.5	142	35.5
Total	200	100.0	200	100.0	400	100.0
	X ² =3.733		df=2		p>0.05	

Özgen ve Öanlzer (2002) discovered in their study conducted on students of 17 to 24 years old that the first reason for fast-food preference was its taste and the second reason was that it is served fast [12]. According to research carried out by Meyers and Wallace (2003), it was determined that the main factors for the preferences of costumers were cleanliness, taste and employee competence [13]. According to a study conducted in Singapore, among the factors that affect the fast-food restaurant preferences of the participants, the first three were convenience (26.4 %), speed of service (18.6 %) and price (13.1 %) [14].

Table 4 presents data about who the participants go to fast-food restaurants with, on what days they go to a fast-food restaurant and the service type they get. The findings show that both genders go to fast-food restaurants usually with their friends (males 62.0%, females 65.0%) and the percentage of those who go to a fast-food restaurant on their own is higher among the males (8.5%) than among the females (1.0%). It has been found statistically significant that who a person goes to a fast-food restaurant with changes according to gender (p<0.01). It has also been determined that the respondents prefer to go to fast-food restaurants at the weekends (weekend 39.7%, weekdays+weekends 48.3%) and choose to eat in the restaurant.

Table 5: Average points for the fast-food restaurant type preferences of the participants as per their gender

Restaurants	Male	Female	t test
	Mean±SD	Mean±SD	
Hamburger restaurant	0.94±1.18	1.19±1.31	2.01*
Pizza restaurant	0.88±1.18	1.11±1.18	2.00*
Chicken products restaurant	0.60±0.99	0.71±1.05	0.98
'Pide' restaurant	0.80±1.07	0.65±1.04	1.38
'Lahmacun' restaurant	0.85±1.05	0.58±0.99	2.53*
Sandwich restaurant	0.30±0.71	0.53±0.92	2.78**
Kebab and 'köfte' restaurant	1.61±1.19	1.14±1.13	4.00**

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01

Table 6: Average points for western style fast-food preferences according to gender

Western Style Fast-Food	Male	Female	t test
	Mean±SD	Mean±SD	
Hamburgers	1.56±1.41	1.32±1.39	1.68
Cheeseburgers	0.42±0.87	0.40±0.89	0.23
Chicken-burgers	0.76±1.11	0.87±1.19	1.00
'Big mac'	0.49±0.91	0.28±0.74	2.57*
Chicken nuggets	0.27±0.65	0.41±0.80	1.84
'Mc muffin' sausages	0.06±0.34	0.07±0.36	0.028
French fries	0.94±1.05	1.12±1.13	1.61
Hot dog	0.25±0.61	0.18±0.53	1.29
Salad bar	0.32±0.74	0.68±0.97	4.14**
Fish filettes	0.13±0.47	0.11±0.45	0.43
'Whopper'	0.72±1.13	0.46±0.93	2.41*
Bean burgers	0.04±0.23	0.04±0.26	0.20

* p<0.05 **p<0.01

The individuals participated in the research were asked about their preferences between fast food restaurants selling traditional type of food and those selling western type of food, and the average of their preference points have been presented in Table 5. The average preference points of the females who preferred hamburger, pizza, chicken and sandwich restaurants are higher than the average points of the males; whereas, the average points of preference for 'pide', 'lahmacun' and kebab and 'köfte' restaurants are higher in males. It has been determined that the average preference points for hamburger (p<0.05), pizza (p<0.05), 'lahmacun' (p<0.05), sandwich (p<0.01) and kebab and 'köfte' (p<0.01) restaurants as per genders show significant difference.

In a study about this subject, it was determined that when the families eat out, they prefer kebab and pizza restaurants more than fast-food restaurants like McDonald's and Wimpy [15]. It was determined in a research by Hertzler and Frary (1992) to find out and the diet status and eating out of students that male students went to fast-food restaurants more often than females. It was also determined that 11.0% of the students ate in fast-food restaurants several times a year, 35.0% ate once or twice a month, 38.0% ate several times a week and 7.0% ate several times a day [16].

Fast-food Preferences: Fast-food restaurants serve fast and standard menus to the consumers. In this food system, the "hamburger-french fries and coke" menu is the most popular one [17]. The fast-food sector could generally be classified under four main topics. These are hamburgers, non-hamburgers, ethnic food chains and family restaurants serving fast. According to this classification, establishments such as Mc Donald's, Burger King and Wendy's exemplify the hamburger

sector while those such as Pizza Hut, KFC and Taco Bell are examples of the non-hamburger sector. Ethnical food chains, on the other hand, are establishments which involve products reflecting the food culture of different societies. The fast-food chains of Chinese and Indian food and kebab meals are examples of this sector [18]. According to the 1993 data, the most preferred fast-food products in US were pizza, sandwiches with ham, steak, hamburgers, macaroni with cheese, sandwiches with turkey, spaghetti and sandwiches with cheese [17].

In Table 6, the average points for western style fast-food preferences as per genders are given. For both genders, the most preferred western style fast-food type is hamburgers (males 1.56 ± 1.41 , females 1.32 ± 1.39), which is followed by french fries (males 0.94 ± 1.05 , females 1.12 ± 1.13) and finally, the third type in rank is chicken burgers (males 0.76 ± 1.11 , females 0.87 ± 1.19). The average salad bar preference points of the females (0.68 ± 0.97) is significantly higher than those of the males (0.32 ± 0.74) ($p < 0.01$); while the average 'whopper' ($p < 0.05$) and 'big mac' preference points ($p < 0.05$) of the males is significantly higher than those of the females.

The consumers in the USA preferred mostly fast-food restaurants and the most preferred food types were hamburgers, french fries, pizza and chicken [19]. This is similar to the findings of this research.

According to the research conducted by Özçelik and Sürücüoğlu (1998), the most preferred western style fast-food products of consumers were hamburgers, french fries and chicken burgers, in order of preference [8]. In the research carried out by Wyne *et al.* (1994) in Southern Korea to determine the frequency of fast-food consumption, it was found that people living in Seoul had access to more varieties of fast-food compared with people living in other regions. The western style fast-food consumed most was sandwiches with sausage, hamburgers and french fries. However, their traditional fast-food products were preferred more [20].

Table 7: Average points for traditional fast-food preferences according to gender

Traditional Fast-Food	Male Mean \pm SD	Female Mean \pm SD	t test
Meat 'döner'	1.48 ± 0.09	1.59 ± 0.09	0.82
Grilled meat balls	1.07 ± 1.08	1.12 ± 1.12	0.45
Chicken 'döner'	0.77 ± 1.14	0.86 ± 1.16	0.82
Meat grilled on a skewer	0.61 ± 1.05	0.49 ± 0.93	1.16
Chicken grilled on a skewer	0.45 ± 0.88	0.66 ± 1.03	2.14*
'Kokoreç'	0.61 ± 1.04	0.16 ± 0.56	5.33**
Fish and bread	0.20 ± 0.64	0.21 ± 0.66	0.15
Roasted meat	0.35 ± 0.74	0.21 ± 0.57	2.11*
Roasted chicken	0.12 ± 0.45	0.21 ± 0.61	1.75
Liver and bread	0.20 ± 0.61	0.07 ± 0.31	2.69**
'İçli köfte'	0.09 ± 0.33	0.31 ± 0.68	4.18**

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$

Table 8: Average points for 'pide' preferences according to gender

'Pide's	Male Mean \pm SD	Female Mean \pm SD	t test
Pide with spinach	0.26 ± 0.73	0.47 ± 0.94	2.49*
Pide with minced meat	1.97 ± 1.16	1.72 ± 1.28	2.04*
Pide with cheese	0.56 ± 0.91	0.79 ± 1.04	2.36*
Pide with 'sucuk'	0.55 ± 0.90	0.41 ± 0.80	1.64
'Lahmacun'	1.16 ± 1.11	1.13 ± 1.14	0.31
Mixed pide	1.09 ± 1.16	0.93 ± 1.11	1.46
'Karadeniz' pide	0.42 ± 0.84	0.49 ± 0.91	0.79

* $p < 0.05$

The average points for traditional fast-food preferences are provided in Table 7. In both genders, the highest average fast-food preference point is for meat 'döner' (males 1.48 ± 0.09 , females 1.59 ± 0.09). The average chicken grilled on a skewer (0.66 ± 1.03) and 'içli köfte' (0.32 ± 0.68) preference points of the females is significantly higher than those of the males (0.45 ± 0.88 , 0.09 ± 0.33 , respectively); while the average 'kokoreç', roasted meat and liver and bread preference points of the males is significantly higher than those of the females (chicken grilled on a skewer $p < 0.05$, 'içli köfte' $p < 0.01$, kokoreç $p < 0.01$, roasted meat $p < 0.05$, liver and bread $p < 0.01$).

Similar findings were achieved in the research done by Özçelik and Sürücüoğlu (1998). According to this research, the three most preferred food types by the consumers were meat döner, chicken döner and grilled meat balls. In the research on the fast-food preferences of the students of Ankara University, the first most preferred food for both males and females was pide with ground meat, the second one for females was french fries and for males meat döner, and the third for both groups was hamburger [5].

The consumption of 'pide', which is one of the fast-food types, is wide spread in Turkish society. The preferences about the pide types of the males and the females involved in the research were examined and their average preference points have been presented in Table 8.

The average preference points of the males are higher for pide with minced meat, lahmacun, pide with 'sucuk' and mixed pide, while the average preference points of the females are higher in pide with spinach, pide with cheese and Karadeniz pide. It has been determined that the difference between the average preference points of the males and females for pide with minced meat, pide with cheese and pide with spinach is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the results of the research, it has been determined that males mostly prefer to go to kebab and 'köfte' restaurants (1.61 ± 1.19); whereas, women prefer to go to hamburger restaurants (1.19 ± 1.31). Consequently, it can be asserted that males prefer traditional restaurants but women prefer western style restaurants. When the choices of western style and traditional fast-food are assessed separately, for both genders, it has been found that the most preferred western style fast-food is hamburgers (males 1.56 ± 1.41 , females 1.32 ± 1.39), and the most preferred traditional fast-food is meat doner (males 1.48 ± 0.09 , females 1.59 ± 0.09).

In our era, many factors such as fast urbanization, industrialization, opening to western culture, lack of time for food preparation, the effect of mass media, advertisements and the development of food industry have naturally led to the development of the fast-food nutrition system. As a result of these developments, there have been some modifications in the life styles and nutrition habits of people. Fast-food restaurants offer consumers standard menus including many products. The food that fast-food restaurants serve should not carry any risks for people's health. The preparation and cooking of foods that are not appropriate to the nutrition rules affect man's health both in the short and the long run. Especially children and young people that show a great interest to such restaurants should be informed to be able to make the right choices.

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