

**DETERMINANTS OF FAST FOOD BUYING BEHAVIOR AMONG MOUNT
KENYA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN THIKA CAMPUS KIAMBU COUNTY,
KENYA**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF MASTERS OF SCIENCE DEGREE
IN HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT OF
MOUNT KENYA UNIVERSITY**

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DECLARATION AND APPROVAL

DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University or for any other award.

Signature 

Date: 4-7-2025

Ruth Wambui Ndung'u

MHM/2019/49405

We confirm that the work reported in this thesis was carried out by the candidate under our supervision.

Signature



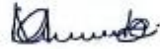
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my parents and my siblings, for their support, encouragement, and prayers, which enabled me to work hard throughout the study period.



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To you all, I say thank you!



ABSTRACT

The fast food industry is rapidly growing and has become more competitive causing fast food vendors to deliberate on factors influencing fast food buying behavior. In recent years, consumer preferences in the fast food industry have undergone significant changes, driven by a growing awareness of health and nutrition. This shift towards healthier dietary choices has influenced the overall demand for fast food, with many consumers now seeking healthier options. While some studies have been done elsewhere, there is a shortage of information about the correlates of fast food behavior among university students. This study therefore employed a cross-sectional design at Mount Kenya University, Thika Campus, surveying 422 students using structured questionnaires for quantitative data collection. The cross-sectional approach was chosen for its efficiency in capturing data from a diverse sample within a limited timeframe, though it does not allow for causal inference. Convenience sampling was utilized to recruit participants until the desired sample size was achieved. Descriptive statistics, including mean, percentages, and standard deviation, were calculated using SPSS. Hierarchical Multiple Regression analysis was applied to examine relationships between variables, with fast food behavior as the dependent variable. The independent variables included personal factors (e.g., dietary habits, financial constraints), psychological attributes (e.g., quality, appearance), and socio-cultural influences (e.g., peer pressure, family traditions). Results revealed that female students were 1.25 times more likely to consume fast food than males, while students under 30 years old were 2.26 times more prone to fast food consumption than their older counterparts. The Chi-square test established significant correlations between marital status, residential arrangements, and fast food purchasing habits (95% confidence level). Furthermore, personal factors accounted for 19.8% of the variance in fast food purchasing behavior, as indicated by a Hierarchical Multiple Regression model with fast food consumption as the dependent variable. Psychological attributes entered into a similar model were found to explain 30.3% of the variance in these behaviors. Lastly, socio-cultural factors were shown to account for 18.5% of the variance, underscoring their influence on fast food purchasing behavior among the student population. To promote healthier eating habits, the study recommends targeted educational campaigns within universities to increase awareness of fast food-related health risks and encourage nutritious alternatives. Financial wellness programs should be implemented to support students in making budget-conscious, healthy food choices. Fast food vendors are encouraged to introduce and market affordable, nutritious menu options tailored to student needs. Furthermore, maintaining stringent hygiene standards in fast food establishments can enhance dining experiences and positively shape purchasing decisions. Further research might build on these results by increasing sample diversity and extending the study to include students from other colleges to improve generalizability.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BMI	Body mass index
EKB Model	Engel Kollat Blackwell Model
MKU	Mount Kenya University
WHR	Waist-hip ratio



OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Consumer buying behavior: Is known as the decision process that a consumer goes through while purchasing for a product and services.

Consumer behaviors: A study of how consumer select and buy products for use to meet their need and desire.

Buying Behavior: Is a process that a customer makes while purchasing a product.

Fast food: Is quick, readily available meals, sold at a cheaper price.

Fast food restaurant: It an eating place that service foodstuff that are ready made at a high speed.

Healthy food: This food add a nutritive value to our body such as water, fat, protein, vitamin and mineral water they help us retain our energy.

Unhealthy food: This are food that add little nutritive value they can harm our bodies if used excessively such as salty food, sugary food and fatty foods.

Energy dense food : Referred to the number of calories in a specific amount of food

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the introduction of the study. It starts by providing the background of the study, then the problem statement, the study objectives, the study questions, the justification, and the limitations of the study. The chapter ends by providing the delimitation of the study.

1.1 Background to the study

According to Junaid (2023), Fast food is a category of mass-produced cuisine where customer speed of service is highly valued and intended for commercial resale. Elkhateeb & Alrshidi (2018) further explained Fast food as inexpensive, readily, and easily available and a substitute for home-prepared meals. As noted by Xue et al. (2021) and Jay (2017), the fast food industry is rapidly growing and has become more competitive causing vendors to deliberate on factors influencing buying intention for fast food. According to the global fast food restaurant industry market research report in 2023, Over the previous five years, industry revenue has increased at a compound annual growth rate of 2.1%, and is expected to reach \$978.4 billion in 2023 (IBISWorld, 2023). According to South Africa fast food market statistics, \$2.7 billion was valued the market size of fast food in 2018 and was estimated to reach \$4.9billion by 2026 (South Africa Fast Food Market, 2021). In 2021, high energy dense food were estimated to reach 30.8 billion market value in the Middle East Africa with projection of approximately 59.16 billion in 2026 (Market Data Forecast, 2021). According to the Kenya food index report, 1.8 billion is the estimated online Kenyan food and beverage market size and by 2024 it is anticipated to reach 3.8 billion (Kamau, 2020).

Studies carried out globally have shown that taste, hygiene, religious beliefs, knowledge, variants, convenience, affordability, quick preparation, get together, parties, nearness,

and accessibility as the main determinants of fast food buying behaviors (Anitharaj, 2018; Blešić et al., 2018; Garay-Quintero et al., 2018; Gogoi, 2020; Khongrangjem et al., 2018; Raj, 2020; Reshi et al., 2023; Xue et al., 2021). According to Anjana (2018) consumer buying behavior is a process of decision-making and or attitudes customers have while buying and consuming products. As reported by Gogoi (2020), taste and hygiene are the main drivers of customer fast food buying behavior. In Pakistan, Xue et al. (2021) noted that understanding of fast food and uniqueness-seeking features were the main predictors of fast food purchasing intentions. He further indicated that socially, nuclear families had a better experience eating together than joint families. In Colombia, Garay-Quintero et al. (2018) found out that religious affiliation and beliefs restricted people buying behavior. In India, Reshi et al. (2023) pointed out that the quality of food and cost were the primary determinants affecting customer purchasing decisions in the fast-food sector. Raj (2020) also noted that young and less educated people, purchased fast food according to its taste and aroma, alternatives, convenience, affordability, readily available and have a high shelf life for boxed food item. While the elderly and the affluent, considered food safety, nutritional value, and food labels before purchasing fast food and as a result ended up eating at home. Another Indian study revealed that university students bought fast food during social gatherings like parties and for taste adventure (Anitharaj, 2018). Khongrangjem et al. (2018) pointed out intake of fast food by majority of the university students was during lunch break and they considered it taste. Nearness and accessibility of the fast food restaurant within the university influenced the purchase intention of the student (Blešić et al., 2018).

Studies carried out in Africa have shown food quality, brand, income, taste and convenience as the main determinants of fast food buying behavior (Atanda & Dane, 2020; Fungai, 2017; Nwantu et al., 2021; Shebl et al., 2021). In a Zimbabwean study by

Fungai (2017), it was noted that food quality and brand influenced customer purchase and repurchase of fast food. In Nigeria, Atanda & Dane (2020) revealed that convenience and taste were the reasons for purchasing fast food. In another study carried out in Nigeria by Nwantu et al. (2021) it identified that individuals believed that cultural elements played a crucial role in shaping their choices regarding consumption. In an Egyptian study by Shebl et al. (2021), it was noted that customers choice, buying intention and purchasing power are affected by consumers and family income.

In Kenya, food quality, food cost/price, availability and convenience are the main determinant of fast food buying behavior (Njagi, 2019; Wambui et al., 2019). According Wambui et al. (2019), food quality and cost determined fast food purchase. Njagi (2019), in a study conducted in Nairobi reported that availability and convenience of fast food joints attributed to fast food purchase behavior.

Globally, there is substantial evidence on determinants of fast food buying behaviour (Anitharaj, 2018; Blešić et al., 2018; Garay-Quintero et al., 2018a; Gogoi, 2020; Khongrangjem et al., 2018; Raj, 2020; Reshi et al., 2023; Xue et al., 2021). Nonetheless, there is few evidence on the same in Africa (Atanda & Dane, 2020; Fungai, 2017; Nwantu et al., 2021; Shebl et al., 2021) and in Kenya (Njagi, 2019; Wambui et al., 2019). There is a huge gap in literature on fast food buying behaviors among university students globally and regionally (Anitharaj, 2018; Atanda & Dane, 2020; Blešić et al., 2018; Khongrangjem et al., 2018). In fact, there is no literature on fast food buying behavior among university students in Kenya. Therefore, this research was carried out to examine the determinants of fast food buying behaviors among Mount Kenya University students in Thika campus.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In recent years, consumer preferences in the fast food industry have undergone significant changes, driven by a growing awareness of health and nutrition (Ghoochani et al., 2018; Gogoi, 2020). This shift towards healthier dietary choices has influenced the overall demand for fast food, with many consumers now seeking healthier options. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has further impacted fast food purchasing behaviors. During the pandemic, many individuals turned to home-cooked meals due to the limited availability and access to fast food outlets, altering their eating habits and preferences (Athar et al., 2021; Liewin & Genoveva, 2021). Despite these shifts, young adults and college students continue to be a major consumer segment for fast food outlets, driven by the aforementioned factors of convenience and socialization (Atanda & Dane, 2020; Banik et al., 2020; Rabotata & Malatji, 2021; Tam et al., 2017). Alarmingly, this persistent consumption pattern, especially the intake of high-fat foods, has been associated with a lack of awareness regarding the potential adverse health impacts (Subedi et al., 2020).

Understanding these evolving trends is particularly important in the context of university students, who represent a unique demographic with distinct dietary needs, time constraints, and social influences. At Mount Kenya University, Thika Campus, in Kiambu County, Kenya, there is a need to comprehensively explore the factors that drive fast food purchasing decisions among students. This study aims to identify and analyze the determinants of fast food buying behavior among these students, taking into account demographic factors, psychological influences, social dynamics, marketing impacts, and situational contexts.

By investigating these determinants, the research seeks to provide insights into how health consciousness has shaped fast food consumption patterns among university

students. This understanding will help in developing targeted marketing strategies, promoting healthier eating habits, and informing policy decisions within the university community.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The researcher carried out this research with an intention of describing determinants of fast food buying behavior among Mount Kenya University student in Thika campus.

1.4 Objectives of the study

1.4.1 General Objective

To describe the determinants of fast food buying behavior among Mount Kenya University students in Thika campus Kiambu County, Kenya.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

1. To determine how personal factors, influence fast food buying behavior among Mount Kenya University students in Thika campus Kiambu County, Kenya.
2. To determine the psychological factor that influence fast food buying behavior among Mount Kenya University students in Thika campus Kiambu County, Kenya.
3. To examine how socio-cultural factors influence fast food buying behavior among Mount Kenya University students in Thika campus Kiambu County, Kenya.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What personal factors influence fast food buying behavior among Mount Kenya University students in Thika campus Kiambu County, Kenya?
2. What psychological factors influence fast food buying behavior among Mount Kenya University students in Thika campus Kiambu County, Kenya?
3. What socio-cultural factors influence fast food buying behavior among Mount Kenya University students in Thika campus Kiambu County, Kenya?

1.6 Significance of the Study

Customers go through a consumer decision buying process before deciding on what to purchase. Various factors influencing buying behavior include social, personal, psychological and cultural factors (Agarwal & Guirat, 2017). In the recent years, fast food buying trends have changed as customers are more health conscious and are inclining to more healthier diets (Ghoochani et al., 2018; Gogoi, 2020). Further, the COVID -19 pandemic affected fast food purchase intentions with most people tending to eat home cooked meals due to the limited fast food outlet options (Athar et al., 2021; Liewin & Genoveva, 2021).

Moreover, there exist mixed evidence on how personal factors influence fast food buying behavior amongst university students. Tam et al. (2017) & Whatnall et al. (2020) noted that undergraduates aged less than 25 years and those who are single bought fast food more frequently ranging from daily to 2-3 times in a week compared to their counterparts. Furthermore, Tam et al. (2017) & Whatnall et al. (2020) noted that female students bought fast food more than males. On the contrary, Atanda & Dane (2020) reported that male students bought fast more often (daily) compared to female students in Nigeria due to convenience. Perceived cost, taste, quality, nearness of the restaurant or fast food joints to the university and awareness of accessibility and availability of fast food joints near the university are some of the psychological factors influencing students fast food buying behavior (Akhter, 2017; Atanda & Dane, 2020; Banik et al., 2020). Atanda & Dane (2020) indicated that lack of cooking premises led to purchase of fast food by students. Friends, classmates, social networks and social gathering and parties were the most reported socio-cultural reasons of fast food buying behavior amongst university learners (Anitharaj, 2018; Atanda & Dane, 2020).

Findings from this study will aid the fast food industry in Kenya to better understand the buying behavior of their customers mostly the young adults. Customers are becoming more concerned about what they eat because of health problems such as obesity and overweight. By understanding the steps customers follow while intending to purchase food product; the fast food industry will develop strategies to assist them stand out from their competitor and satisfy their customer needs. Finally, it will assist other researchers interested in doing a study concerning consumer buying behavior.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This research work was carried out among Mount Kenya University students enrolled in Thika campus, Kiambu County, Kenya. This study investigated fast food buying behavior among students within the campus. This study was important because no other study that has been conducted among students.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

Some of the students were not willing to participate in the study while others gave incomplete information. To overcome this, the researcher explained that personal information will not be shared, and the results will only contain the statistics.

1.9 Delimitations

This study delimitation was that there were no previous studies on fast food buying behaviors carried out among students in Mount Kenya University, Thika campus, Kiambu County. In addition, the study used black box model of consumer buying behavior.

1.10 Assumptions of the Study

This study stipulated that, it was able to interview the proposed sample and get information about factors that influence fast food behaviors.

1.11 Operational definition of key terms

Buying Behavior is a process that a customer makes while purchasing a product.

Consumer behaviors: a study of how consumer select and buy products for use to meet their need and desire.

Consumer buying behavior: Is known as the decision process that a consumer goes through while purchasing for a product and services.

Energy dense food referred to the number of calories in a specific amount of food

Fast food restaurant it an eating place that service foodstuff that are ready made at a high speed.

Fast food: is quick, readily available meals, sold at a cheaper price.

Healthy food: this food adds a nutritive value to our body such as water, fat, protein, vitamin and mineral water they help us retain our energy.

Unhealthy food this are food that add little nutritive value they can harm our bodies if used excessively such as salty food, sugary food and fatty foods.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the literature. The chapter starts by providing the theoretical background of the study after which a literature review is presented per the objectives. The chapter ends by providing a conceptual framework for the study.

2.2 Empirical Literature

Black box model was used in this research to explain consumer buying behavior.

2.2.1 Buyers Black Box Model

According to the concept, while making a purchase decision, rational consumers take a variety of cues into account, including advertisements, their surroundings, and their own preferences. The results highlight the fact that beauty business success is dependent on more than just product quality, and that customer decisions in this sector are complicated. Socioeconomic choices, brand image, cultural influences, and demography are more important in shaping customer behavior (Kotler et al., 2018; Stankevich, 2017). When it comes to influencing buying habits, cultural elements are king. Elements such as regional identity and local authenticity increase product attractiveness, according to research, which is in line with how consumers see things. Studies on the film business have shown that internet evaluations, particularly those that resonate within relevant cultural settings, impact customer decisions. These results are also applicable to cosmetics. The luxury market is particularly affected by the degree to which customers' self-images correspond with those of the brands they purchase from, demonstrating the profound effect of cultural factors and personal significance on consumer behavior. If the cosmetics industry wants to keep up with the competition, it must grasp these behavioral elements (Kotler et al., 2018; Stankevich, 2017). In addition to increasing recognition of the brand, tactics that

make customers happier may help close the gap between seemingly unrelated variables (like demographics and culture) and tangible results (like revenue and brand loyalty). In order to keep up with changing customer expectations and encourage brand loyalty over the long run, beauty firms should use creative, culturally sensitive tactics, according to these observations.

According to Kotler et al. (2018) the buyer black box model comprises of three major components that is environmental factors, the buyer's black box and the buyer responses. The environmental factors consist of the marketer stimuli that involve the 4Ps of marketing namely, product, place, price, and promotion. A product is everything a business delivers to consumers in order to satisfy their needs. Value for customers is achieved by meticulous consideration of the product's design, features, quality, and branding as a whole. What goes into setting a product's price include variables including manufacturing costs, level of competition, and the market's estimation of the product's worth (Kotler et al. ,2018). Finding the sweet spot between consumer affordability and business profitability is essential when setting prices. Place is all about making sure the product is easily accessible to clients by making sure it's offered in handy places or channels, like shops, online, or any other way they may get their hands on it. Finally, Promotion encompasses all the actions taken by a business to inform consumers about the product's advantages and encourage them to make a purchase. The needs of customers but also aids companies in achieving their financial and brand-building objectives (Kotler et al. ,2018). The environmental stimuli revolve around the economic, technological, political, and sociocultural factors. Income levels, inflation rates, and economic stability are all examples of economic variables that have an effect on consumers' capacity to spend and how much they are willing to spend. During prosperous times, people may feel more comfortable spending money on luxuries; yet, when times are tough, they prefer to

prioritize essentials or look for things with good value. To make sure their prices and products are in line with customers' budgets, marketers often change them in response to these economic changes. How people use and anticipate items is heavily influenced by technological aspects. Consumers' interactions with companies have been revolutionized by the rise of digital platforms, mobile devices, and automation, which has facilitated easier and more tailored shopping. Innovations in product design and manufacturing have been fueled by technological advancements, which may result in enhanced usefulness or reduced production costs. Consequently, businesses are relying more and more on technology to cater to the demands of contemporary customers by improving user experiences and offering efficient, tailored solutions. Market dynamics and consumer confidence are also impacted by political variables, such as trade rules, political stability, and government initiatives. For example, import limitations, taxes, or tariffs imposed by the government may affect product availability and costs, which in turn affect customer choices. Additionally, consumers' preferences are changing due to legislative changes in sustainability and data privacy, elevating the importance of businesses' transparency and corporate responsibility (Stankevich, 2017). A consumer's tastes are fundamentally influenced by sociocultural elements like demographic shifts, cultural standards, and social values. Social movements, such as the increasing demand for sustainable or ethically produced items, have the power to reshape consumer expectations, even as cultural traditions often govern which products are deemed desirable. Businesses are adapting their offerings and marketing strategies to appeal to a wider range of consumers as a result of changing demographics, such as a more diverse or older population, which in turn generates new needs (Stankevich, 2017). Marketers may get valuable insights into customer behavior changes by considering these environmental aspects in aggregate.

Businesses may adjust their tactics to meet changing customer requirements and react to market developments by evaluating various factors.

The buyer's black box explains the characteristics of a buyer and the decision-making process of a consumer. The buyer's characteristics are formed by one's personal, psychological, sociocultural factors. Personal factors like one's occupation, to include what someone does for work or a student for those not working. Marital status is another example of a personal factor which looks at whether someone is single or married and how this influences the decision to purchase fast food. The age of a consumer is another personal factor and according to the theory people at different stages of life have different views on the intake of fast food. Similarly, the level of income influences a person's decision on whether to consume fast food (Kotler et al., 2018; Stankevich, 2017).

Psychological factors include motivation, which are the drives that make a consumer want to fulfill their needs, thus influencing a consumer's purchase intention. Perception impacts on the buying behavior of consumers because of how they view the product. Learning can also affect the buying behavior of a consumer such that after getting information about the product they intend to purchase the product based on the advertisement or through referrals or testimonies of other people's experiences. Moreover, what a person belief in will affect their purchase decision depending on how they view the product (Claessens, 2015; Kotler et al., 2018).

Social factors like peers, friends, workmates, family, and the level of status in the community influence the purchase intention of a customer. Reference groups are the type of people the consumer is associated with, for example workmates and friends. These people will influence the decision-making process of a consumer while purchasing products and services. In addition, the consumer's family will also affect their purchase decision, as the consumer will buy what is more needed or favored by their family

members. Regarding role and status, the consumer is inclined to buy products that reflect their status. Moreover, cultural factors show people's way of life and consist of values, traditions, beliefs, myths, language, religion, and taboos. A person's culture plays an important role in a consumer's buying decision process. It helps determine the type of product a person will purchase for a particular occasion to satisfy and meet their needs and the needs of their tribes' men (Kotler et al., 2018; Stankevich, 2017).

It is noteworthy that buyer's characteristics play a paramount role in the buying decision process of a consumer. The buying decision process also known as the Engel, Kollat and Blackwell model (EKB) was developed in 1978. This process comprises of five stages that describe the buying process a consumer goes through before making the final decision. The first stage is needing recognition, where a customer must recognize their need to purchase a product. After a need or want is recognized, information searches start where a consumer looks for information concerning the product that will satisfy those needs. The information is found using different sources, that is, experiences and memory of the consumer as the internal source or external source including friends, family, agents, and newspapers. The third step involves evaluation of alternatives the acquired information used by the consumer to evaluate products is based on several criteria that include cost and service availability. The consumer moves on to the fourth step that is purchase decision in this step the consumer goes ahead and acquire the preferred choice. At this point, the consumer can change their purchase decision depending on the information they receive at the point of sale. The final step is post purchase evaluation this part is critical because either the consumer will be satisfied or dissatisfied by the using the product they bought depending on their expectation (Kotler et al., 2018; Stankevich, 2017).

Finally, this model denotes that the buyer responses entail how customers react to different stimuli and make a rational decision process. At this point the buyer has recognized the problem and want to decide with respect to the choice of the product, choice of the brand, choice of the dealer, buying timing, and procurement amount. Product choice is the final good a customer buys for personal use; these products are purchased for consumption such as food. For brand choice, customers identify themselves with a particular brand and know it by heart and meet their need thus preferring purchasing it. If a customer is satisfied, they will keep on repurchasing from the same brand. Purchase timing is when a customer plans whether to buy and when to buy a particular product. Finally, the purchase amount entails the total amount being paid for a product by the a customer (Claessens, 2015; Kotler et al., 2018).



Mount Kenya

Black box model (Claessens, 2015)

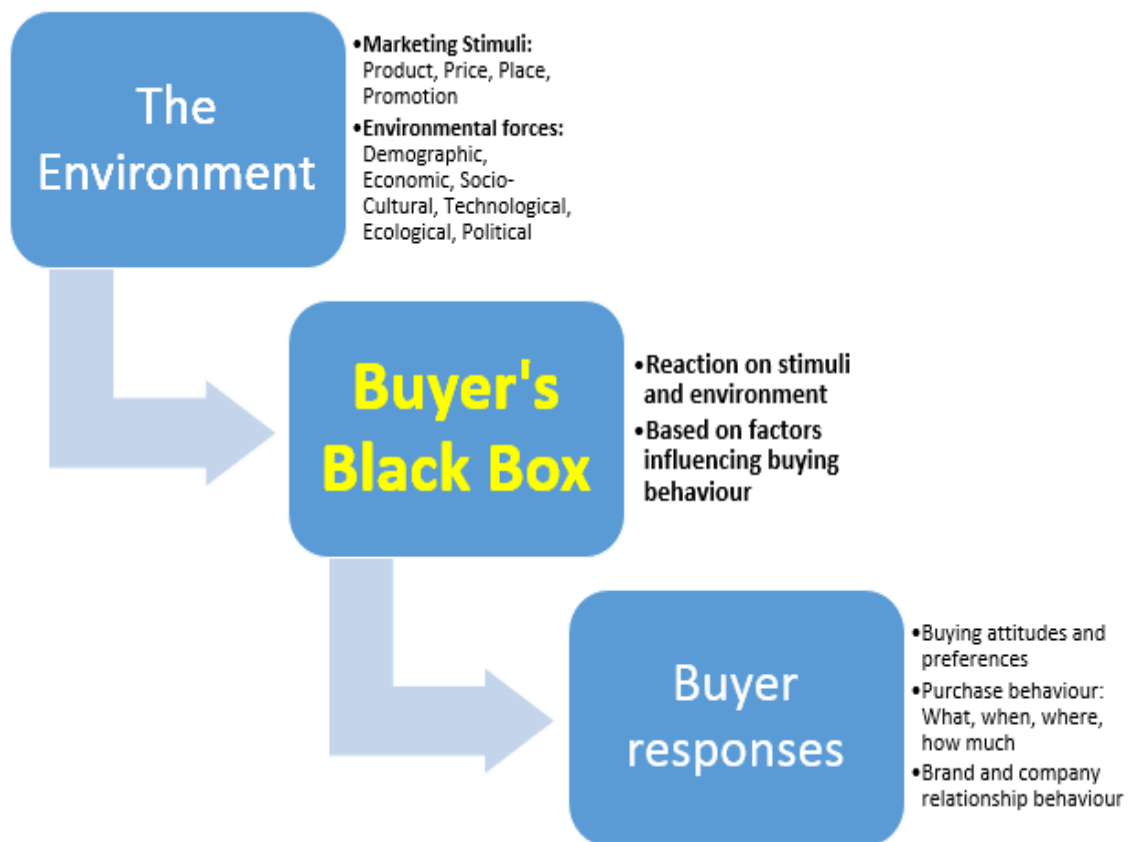


Figure 1 Black box model

2.3 Theoretical Framework

2.3.1 Personal factors influencing fast food buying behavior.

According to Agarwal & Guirat (2017) personal factors include age, marital, economic status, occupation, lifestyle and personality. Varied age groups have varied priorities and interests, which is why age is a big impact in fast food choices. Trendy, inexpensive, and speedy solutions tend to be more appealing to younger customers, such as teens and young adults. Products that are portable and have enticing tastes and sales are frequently what they seek for (Agarwal & Guirat, 2017). On the other hand, older folks are more likely to choose healthier options and place a premium on meals that cater to certain nutritional needs. This age group is showing signs of a change toward more conscientious

eating behaviors by actively seeking out alternatives that support their health objectives, such as nutrient-dense meals or lower-calorie options. Fast food restaurants may better adapt their products and advertising to the demands of different age groups if they have a firm grasp of the preferences associated with these demographics (Agarwal & Guirat, 2017). The sorts of meals that customers choose to eat at fast food restaurants are heavily impacted by their marital status. Because of their hectic schedules, single people frequently value speed and convenience while eating out, so they choose for fast, on-the-go options. Fast food or single-serving goods are likely to appeal to these shoppers since they are convenient for on-the-go consumption (Agarwal & Guirat, 2017). When going out to eat, however, married couples and families usually choose for more budget-friendly alternatives. They like to shop for meals that can be shared, such as combos or bigger portions that can feed more than one person. In an effort to feed their families more cheaply, this population often seeks out meals that are both convenient and give excellent value for money. If fast food chains can learn how customers' marital status affects their ordering habits, they may adjust their offerings and marketing to better suit the demands of different demographics (Agarwal & Guirat, 2017).

A person's propensity to buy fast food is highly affected by their socioeconomic position, profession, way of life, and personality. Premium or upscale fast food is more affordable for individuals with more discretionary cash, whereas value meals and promotions are more important to those with less disposable income (Agarwal & Guirat, 2017). Professionals with hectic schedules tend to search for quick and easy meals, while students are more likely to prioritize affordability and fillingness. Other factors include lifestyle preferences; for example, those who are concerned about their health may choose healthier menu items, while others who place a premium on convenience may go for the tried-and-true fast food classics (Agarwal & Guirat, 2017). Finally, personality qualities

impact food choices; those who are more daring like to try new things while dining out, and those who are more outgoing tend to love eating in with others, while those who are more introverted may prefer takeout.

As noted by Yarimoglu et al. (2019) online survey study carried out in Turkey among 392 participants, (71.8%) adults aged less than 40 years purchased fast food regularly, while 38.3% bought junk food thrice a week. This study revealed that sweet fast food was preferred more than salty fast food. A cross-sectional analysis study by Whatnall et al. (2020) investigating determinants of eating behaviors in Australian university among 3062 students, reported that the highest number of the participants were aged 17 to 24 years with females being more than males. This study indicated that (74.3%) of the participants were undergraduate students while (72.1%) received financial support from their parents/guardians or government support. Additionally, the study found that there was an excessive ingestion of junk foods such as snacks, confectionery products including gummies and candies. Tam et al. (2017) online survey carried out in Australia among 653 students reported that the majority of the respondents were female, many of them were less than 25 years old and signed up for full-time study. This study also noted a high intake of hot beverages and sandwiches by the students within the university. A quantitative research done in India, by Reshi et al. (2023) among 500 respondents using an online survey, found that the two biggest variables affecting consumer behavior in the fast-food sector are pricing and meal quality. In addition, the study revealed that brand image, location, and convenience also had a big impact on how customers behave.

In Africa, analytical-descriptive research, carried out in Egypt among 425 customers by Shebl et al. (2021) reported that young adult less than 30 years preferred buying food from fast food restaurant. This study noted a high number of females consume fast food in restaurant compared to males, who opted eating out at different place such as cafes. As

for marital status, married consume more fast food compared to single people. Moreover, the study pointed out that economic factor influenced purchasing power, behavior and customers' choices. According to Atanda & Dane (2020) online survey carried out in Nigeria among 322 students, reported that more than a half of the participants ate fast food every day. This study further found out that men liked eating fast food daily due to convenience while females purchase fast food once per a week or selected day. Additionally, it was revealed that singles consumed fast food throughout, but the wedded participants preferred to consume fast food a few days per week or about once a week. In Kenya, according to a descriptive study by Wambui et al. (2019) in Nairobi Central Business district, among 325 customers; Almost half (38.77%) of the consumers were aged between 18 to 25 years. Concerning gender, more females purchased fast food from franchised restaurants more than males. Njagi (2019) descriptive correlation research study conducted in Nairobi, Kenya, reported that a high number of participants aged between 20 to 30 years purchased fast food. Further, this study indicated that single people bought fast food in a high number due to convenience compared to married people.

2.3.2 Psychological factors influencing fast food buying behavior.

Psychological factors include perception, motivation, attitudes, and beliefs (Kotler et al., 2018). An exploratory study carried out in Bangladesh by Akhter (2017) identified that majority of university students ate fast food because of it was convenient to them. This study further indicated that quality of food service and availability of fast food restaurants within the university influenced students purchase intention. Banik et al. (2020) reported that more than fifty percent of the college students devoured food because of its taste/pleasure (58.5%), while more than a quarter due to convenience (32.5%). According to Khongrangjem et al. (2018) Indian study among 160 Pre-University students reported

a high number of respondents (72.5%) revealed that the main reason for the intake of fast food is taste. In an online survey study carried out in Australia by Tam et al. (2017) investigating university students, noted that university students purchased food because of its taste, value, convenience and cost. In addition, the study pointed out that female students to be more health conscious compared to male students and tend to follow a more special dietary behavior. According to Blešić et al. (2018), a Serbian study amongst 279 students from the University of Novi Sad, reported that food quality, appearance, hygienic factors, nearness and accessibility of fast food within the University were the main essential factors in selecting fast food restaurant. However, it was further noted that atmosphere and service factors were the least important factors when picking fast food restaurants. In another study carried out in Italy by Savelli et al. (2017) among 1138 University students reported that the majority of university students perceived price awareness and sales promotion. In addition, students were knowledgeable about the food products they purchased, and they paid high attention toward the ingredients and health value of the food products. According to a quantitative correlational survey, carried out in Iran by Ghoochani et al. (2018) among 350 people, found out belief and health awareness are the leading factors, affecting customers attitudes towards junk food. It was further noted that the attitude of older and wedded customers towards fast food was positive. In an Apulian (South Italy), survey study by Corallo et al. (2019) among 380 participants found out the emotions of the customer played an important role while purchasing. The customer preferred the taste food and the price was worth the quality of the food. A cross-sectional study by Alolabi et al. (2022) conducted among 728 Syrian Private University students reported that students ate because of boredom, happiness, and anxiety/upset, respectively. Gunday (2023) in a study carried out in India among youths, discovered that most clients are reported to be willing to pay more for higher-quality food

and menu improvements. In addition, the study revealed that the food courts can increase sitting capacity and implement other marketing techniques to draw in more customers, but employee comfort remains a primary priority.

In Africa, an online survey study by Atanda & Dane (2020) carried out in Nigeria among 322 students reported that a lot of options, convenience, and lack of time/ inaccessibility of cooking space were the main causes of consumption of fast food. A cross-sectional survey conducted in Nigeria by Etuk et al. (2022) pointed out that the selection of fast food by consumers was therefore found to be significantly influenced by the tangibility, reliability, assurance, responsiveness, and empathy of the service. Shebl et al. (2021) analytical-descriptive research, carried out in Egypt among 425 customers noted that customers' income influenced the choice of fast food purchased in the restaurant. This study further revealed that the location of the restaurant was an important influence on the selection of fast food restaurants to buy food. Fungai (2017) case study conducted in Zimbabwe found out food quality, price, location, the physical setting of the restaurant, the brand name, and the image of the restaurant were the main factors influencing the repurchase of fast food.

In Kenya, a descriptive research, design study by Wambui et al. (2019) carried out in the Nairobi Central Business District, Kenya among 325 customers, noted that product and service consumption was highly influenced by the price of the food items, convenience, and the quality of food. According to a descriptive correlational research, a study carried out by Njagi (2019) among 90 customers in Nairobi fast food restaurants, reported that 36.4% ate fast food because it is convenient to them. The study further noted that there was a moderate extent of purchase intention on psychological factors that influenced consumer-buying behavior of junk food.

2.3.3 Socio-cultural factors influencing fast food buying behavior.

Socio-cultural factors such as peers, family, friends, beliefs, customs, myths, language, rituals, and traditions that affect buying behavior (Kotler et al., 2018). Because of their heightened sensitivity to social dynamics and the need for acceptability, younger customers are more impacted by the opinions of their peers while making purchases. There are several forms this impact takes, but one of the most obvious is peer pressure. Some young people may feel pressured to buy things that their peers are buying, even if such things don't really suit them. For example, if a group of friends often eats at a certain fast food joint because of its hip menu, an individual would feel pressured to join them, which would strengthen their group's devotion to that brand. During the teen and early adult years, the desire to find one's place in society and make friends is at its peak. Because purchasing habits shape one's social identity, consumers tend to choose companies that are well-liked by others in one's social circle (Kotler et al., 2018). People who want to be associated with a "cool" or fashionable fast food brand may seek it out. Peer influence impacts purchase decisions, as shown by the correlation between food choices and social identity. When it comes to the power of word of mouth, friends are just as influential as anybody else. A person's decision to try a new product or restaurant may be greatly influenced by positive recommendations from their peers. For instance, when one buddy raves about a new burger spot, it could make the rest of the group want to give it a go since they assume that their friend's opinion speaks volumes about the establishment's quality and appeal. As an additional factor, group activities often affect what guests eat. Friends usually decide on a fast food joint as a group when they go out, perhaps because it's cheap, convenient, and easy to get there (Kotler et al., 2018). Because people identify the brand with good times and pleasant social interactions, this shared experience strengthens their loyalty to the brand. Sharing meals and making decisions as

a family shapes preferences that stick with us into adulthood, like going out to fast food joints. This highlights the important role that families play in influencing consumer preferences and purchasing behaviors. In a similar vein, friends have a significant impact on consumers' purchase decisions via word of mouth, especially when it comes to meals during social events. Buying behavior is greatly influenced by personal views and values, which are in turn molded by cultural backgrounds. As a result, buyers tend to purchase items that correspond with their ethical standards, including sustainable or healthy solutions. Traditional practices and cultural standards shape eating habits by dictating what is considered appropriate to eat at special occasions like holidays (Kotler et al., 2018). Language influences product marketing and consumer understanding, which in turn impacts purchase choices, and cultural myths and narratives boost brand appeal by impacting perceptions of authenticity (Kotler et al., 2018). Finally, customers may choose certain fast food selections for religious observances or special events, as dictated by rituals related with food intake.

A cross-sectional survey carried out among 220 college students in Pakistan by Sadia et al. (2021) indicated that friends and the rising popularity of fast food, were the key factors influencing Fast Food Consumption among Pakistani college students, this was despite of them being aware of the detrimental consequences of fast food on their health. Banik et al. (2020) cross-sectional study among 518 metropolitan college students in Bangladesh reported that almost half of the participants ate food with their friends. This study further noted that the majority ate fast food if it tasted well and it was convenient for them. Anitharaj (2018) in an analytical and empirical study conducted in India revealed that university students bought fast food during social gatherings like parties and for taste adventure however advertisements were pointed out to have not as much of an effect on the intake of fast foods.

This trend highlights how social activities may influence people's eating choices since they bring people together and create a feeling of community. Fast food is a popular choice among young people seeking a social experience in these types of situations because of its accessibility, diversity, and the sense of community it fosters (Anitharaj ,2018). In addition, the research emphasized that students' fast food intake was heavily influenced by their taste exploration. Fast food is appealing to many students because it is convenient and offers a wide variety of menu items and tastes that they may try. Millennials and Gen Zers are especially drawn to the idea of culinary exploration since they love trying out different flavors when they eat out. People are more willing to try new foods, which reflects a larger trend in consumer behavior toward taste exploration. Notably, Anitharaj's research also indicated that the impact of marketing on these students' consumption of fast food was minimal. Peer interactions and social experiences seem to have a greater impact on this population than standard advertising tactics(Anitharaj ,2018). Students don't seem to let advertising influence their eating selections as much as the local social context and the accompanying gastronomic experiences (Anitharaj ,2018). What this shows is that marketing messages are no longer the primary driver of food consumption choices; rather, personal and societal considerations are taking center stage.

Bohara et al. (2021)) cross-sectional study carried out in Pokhran Valley, Nepal among 538 adolescent students, acknowledged that friends were the main reason for eating out because there was a high number of fast food intake when they were together. Trips also influenced the purchasing behavior of the students this is because a lot of student bought junk food, snacks and sweets. According to Kabir et al. (2018) qualitative study conducted in Bangladesh found out students eating behavior was influenced by societal factors such as their peers and friends. Students with many friends within the campus/

residence halls were found out to have parties in well-known restaurants. According to a cross-sectional study by Hu et al. (2017) carried out in China among 4595 university students reported that a chance to meet up with friends and improving on diet were the main causes for eating out. In United Kingdom Gilmour et al. (2020) pointed out that parents unlike classmates influenced teens purchase intention. In an Iranian cross sectional study by Rouhani et al. (2018) they supported that more than half of the participants eat fast food with their families compared to their friends. However, Garay-Quintero et al. (2018) reported that in Bogota, Colombia, religious affiliation and a person's beliefs limited buying behavior. Garay-Quintero et al. (2018) found that consumers' religious affiliation and personal values significantly affected their purchasing behavior, especially when it came to food purchases, in a research they performed in Bogotá, Colombia. Dietary restrictions or preferences are often influenced by people's religious activities and beliefs, according to the study's authors. Consider how certain faiths dictate what kind of food adherents are allowed to eat and how this could affect consumer choices (Garay-Quintero et al., 2018). This exemplifies the power of firmly held religious and cultural ideals to influence consumer behavior, since people tend to shun things that don't align with their moral or spiritual principles. In addition, the research found that health-conscious practices were significantly associated with purchase intent. People who put their health and wellbeing first are more likely to shop with an eye on selecting foods that will have a positive impact on their bodies. Many countries are seeing a rise in health-conscious eating, and this consciousness might cause people to choose things that they believe are better for them, such as organic or natural food items. The significance of educating consumers and the need for firms to be forthright about their goods is highlighted by the effect of health consciousness on purchasing habits (Garay-Quintero et al., 2018). In addition, practices like fasting have an even greater

impact on consumers' propensity to buy. Consumer habits may change in societies where fasting is prevalent, whether as a religious or health-related practice. This may show up as a reduction in food purchases or a preference for foods that are compatible with fasting. The research also found that people's perceptions of food and drink had a major impact on their propensity to buy (Garay-Quintero et al., 2018). The cultural or health advantages that consumers identify with certain meals may either increase or decrease their attractiveness to them. The study further noted that habits such as health awareness and fasting, food and beverage image affect purchase intention due to customs.

In Africa, according to Atanda & Dane (2020) in an online survey study in Nigeria reported that the participants ate fast food with their classmates. The study further revealed an increase in fast food intake in Nigerian university students. Nwantu et al. (2021) study done in three Nigerian Universities noted that the majority of students thought that cultural factors were very important in influencing their consuming decisions. Furthermore, the results showed that cultural factors have a significant impact on fast food eating habits. Fungai (2017) case study conducted in Zimbabwe revealed that negative word of mouth could affect fast food purchase intention of customers.

In Kenya, in a descriptive correlation research, design carried out in Nairobi Kenya by Njagi (2019) reported that friends were the main influences of junk food eaters followed by social groups.

2.4 Conceptual framework

This conceptual framework was founded on the black box model of consumer buying behavior. The independent variables that include personal factors, psychological factors, and socio-cultural factors are described as buyer's characteristics as well as the environmental factors such as economical, demographic, and socio-cultural according to this model. These characteristics influence the decision-making process of a consumer.

This study dependent variable (fast food buying behavior) was explained as the buyer response according to the black box model, which entails product choice, purchase timing, purchase amount, brand choice and dealer choice. A consumer buying behavior will depend on the buyer characteristics and the environmental factors, which for the case of this research is summarized under personal, psychological, and socio-cultural factors. Knowledge about the product and government policies was the intervening variables for this research study.



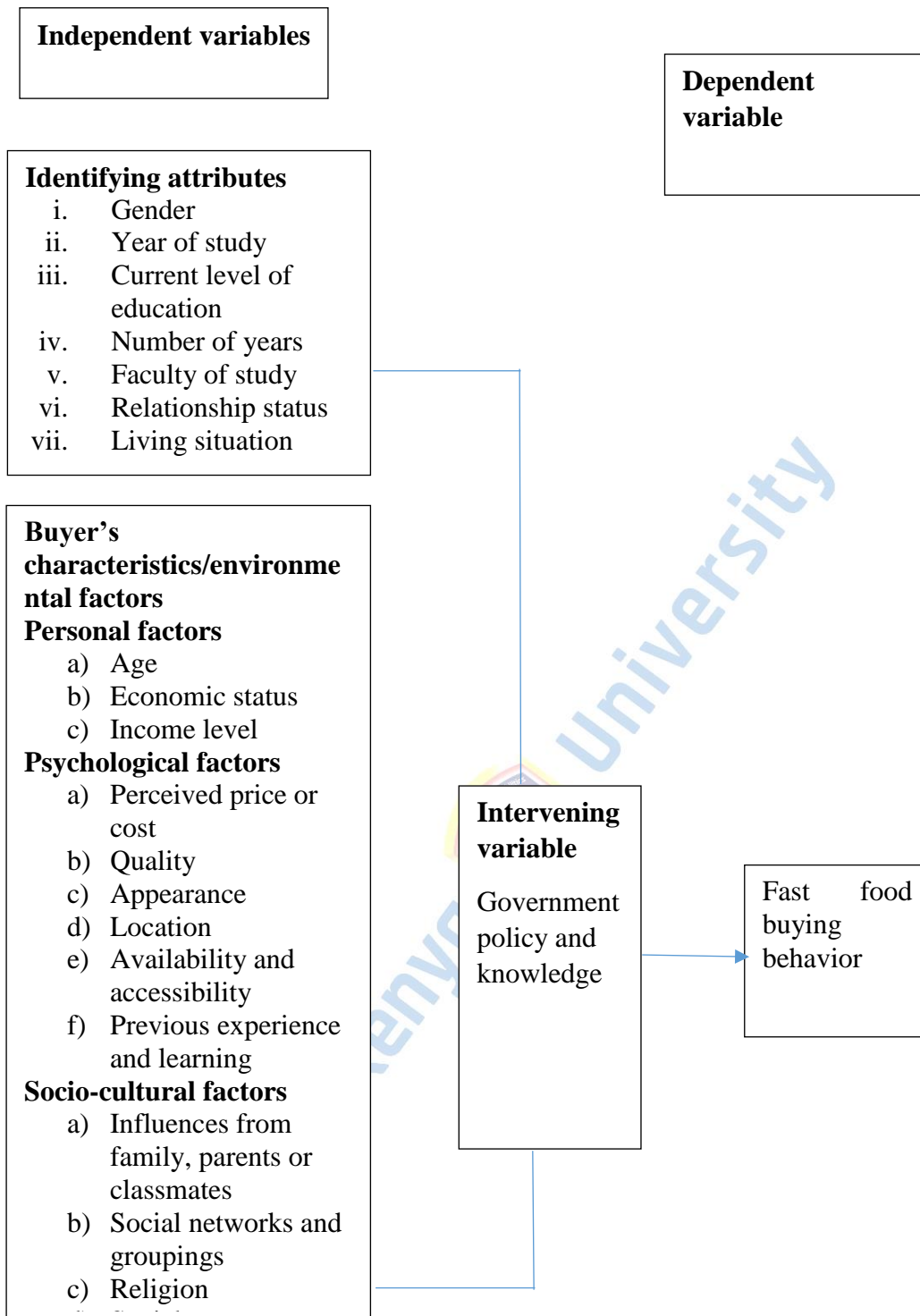


Figure 2 Conceptual underpinning

2.5 Literature review recap

This narrative literature has reviewed several studies on fast food buying behavior among university students. Majority of the studies noted that age greatly influenced fast food buying behavior. Moreover, young adults aged less than 30 years ate fast food in a higher number compared to the older people. At the same time, majority of single people were identified purchase fast food frequently. However, there was a gap of literature.

Under psychological factors, majority studies revealed that the convenience and availability of fast food eating-place within the university and delicious food influenced their buying behavior. In other studies, price of the food, hygiene of the restaurant and staffs and sales promotion were reported to influence their buying behavior. However, one study pointed out that students were health conscious about what they eat thus affecting their purchase intention.

Regarding socio-cultural factors, university students revealed that they ate fast food with their friends. In addition, student enjoyed consuming fast food during social gathering and parties. Moreover, family mostly their parents influenced students buying behavior towards fast food. However, there was gap of literature in among African countries as there were a few studies carried out.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology used in the study. The chapter starts by providing information on, research design,

3.2 Research Methodology

A quantitative approach was adopted. A quantitative methodology uses deductive reasoning by use of an existing theory to generate statistics regarding a research phenomenon. This study used the black box model of consumer buying behavior to make inferences about fast food buying behavior among Mount Kenya University students. The researcher used an etic epistemology and a realist ontology to describe fast food buying behavior. To see things from the outside, objectively, is the goal of etic epistemology. Quantitative data was collected by the researcher and analyzed through descriptive, inferential statistics then a conclusion was made, and the researcher gave a recommendation based on the findings found in the research.

3.3 Research Design

This was a cross sectional analytical research design. An analytical preference survey was adopted. This observational study looks at an event or phenomenon at a snapshot in time. This study, therefore, described fast food buying behavior among Mount Kenya University students at a single point in time. The goal was to find correlations, not causes and effects, between the variables (individual characteristics, mental health, and social and cultural influences) and the dependent variable (consumption of fast food). Different analytical tests were used to analyze data and draw inferences about the associations and the level of statistical significance between the dependent (fast food buying behavior) and independent (personal, psychological, and socio-cultural factors) variables.

3.4 Location of the Study

The study site was Mount Kenya University (MKU), main campus. It is situated along General Kago Road, near Thika town, in Kiambu County it is approximately 45 kilometers from Nairobi. MKU Thika campus comprise of twelve faculties namely, Faculty of Hospitality, Tours and Travel, Faculty of Business and Economics, Faculty of Nursing, Medical Faculty, Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences, Clinical Medicine faculty, school of Education, Public Health faculty, school of Pharmacy, Faculty of Social Sciences and Faculty of Engineering & the Built Environment. MKU offers certificate, diploma, bachelor's and postgraduate (postgraduate diploma, masters, and PhD) courses through regular (day), weekend and Open, Distance and Electronic Learning (ODEL) mode. The research location was chosen at Mount Kenya University (MKU) because of its varied student population, which allows for a representative sample to examine the purchase behavior of young people when it comes to fast food.

3.5 Variables

3.5.1 Dependent variables

Fast food buying behavior.

3.5.2 Independent variables

- i. Individual determinants (age, economic status, income level)
- ii. Psychological factors (perceived price, cost, quality, appearance, location, availability and accessibility, previous experience and learning)
- iii. Socio-cultural factors (family, parents, classmates, social networks and groupings, religion and social status)

3.6 Target population

Bachelors, Diploma and Certificate students enrolled in Mount Kenya University, Thika campus were targeted to participate in this study. Having 19136 regular students as of November 2021 (Records from registrar registrations).

Bachelors, Diploma and Certificate students at Mount Kenya University, Thika campus under day mode program, those who agreed to take part in the study, those who were 18 years and above and had no health issues that would limit them from participating were included. This study excluded Bachelors, Diploma and Certificate students at Mount Kenya University, Thika campus under day mode program unwilling to participate in the study, those less than 18 years and those who had health issues that limited them from participating.

3.7 Sampling Procedures and Techniques

Sample estimation was conducted using Cochran formula (1963). This is recommended for a population more than 10,000. This was a best fit for this study as the total population of Mount Kenya University regular students as of November 2021 was at 19,136 (Records from registrar registrations).

$$N_o = (Z^2 pq) / e^2$$

N_o is the preferred sample size

Z^2 is the root-mean squared deviation for normal distribution (1.96)

P is the preferred attribute percentage (50%)

Q is the percentage without the preferred attribute, expressed as (1-p)

e^2 = the margin of error

$$N_o = \frac{(1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{0.05}$$

$$= 384$$

A 10% non-response rate will be calculated and added into the desired sample as indicated.

$$(10/100) \times 384 = 38.4$$

$$38 + 384 = 422$$

The final sample size was 422 students

3.8 Sample Population

Random and non-random sampling techniques were used. First, a stratified sampling technique was used to group study participants into twelve strata based on their schools. By classifying responses by academic year, stratified sampling ensured representation throughout all academic years, enabling first-year and fourth-year students to compare viewpoints. A proportionate sample was calculated for each stratum (Table 3.1). In the next stage of sampling convenience sampling was applied. Due to the nature of the obtainability of students convenience sampling was used. To assure school representation and address practical limitations like time and student availability, stratified and convenience sampling were used. In the university, students are always moving from one class to the other making it difficult to find them in one place, the selection of study participants was done where they will easily be found.

Sample allocation

The sample was allocated proportionately considering the size of the school. Table 3.1 below shows the allocation

Table 1 sample allocation per school

Schools	Population per school (n)	Proportion (n/N)	Sample size per school (n/N) X 422
School of Hospitality, Travel and Tourism Management	810	0.04	17
School of Social Sciences	2907	0.15	63
School of Computing and Information	1762	0.09	39
School of Education	4355	0.23	97
School of Pure & Applied sciences	1020	0.05	21
School of Business & Economics	4264	0.23	97
School of Nursing	279	0.02	8
School of Pharmacy	364	0.02	8
School of Public Health	726	0.04	17
School of Clinical Medicine	974	0.05	21
School of Engineering, Energy &The Built Environment	845	0.04	17
Medical of School	812	0.04	17
Total population	19136 (N)	1	422

3.9 Construction of Research Instruments

A self-administered questionnaire was used. This study tool consisted of five parts. The first part included questions regarding study participant data like age sex, education level, relationship statute, faculty, living conditions, and occupation. The second section

investigated fast food buying behavior with the purpose of identifying the commonly bought fast food, frequency, type, and source of fast food purchased. The third, fourth and fifth sections were Likert scale questions on a scale of five, where strongly agree was denoted as one and strongly disagree as zero, to investigate how personal, psychological, and sociocultural factors influence buying behavior. The questions aimed to address how these factors influence customers' decision to buy fast food, where they buy fast food, and the kind of fast food they buy.

3.10 Testing for Validity and Reliability

3.10.1 Validity

This is the ability of an instrument to accurately test or provide results that reflect, the true findings it is supposed to evaluate. This was ascertained through two steps; face validity where my university supervisors assisted in validating the instruments. Step two was the pretesting of research instruments by carrying out a pilot study among students enrolled for studies in Gresta University. This assisted in measuring consistency and identifying omissions, or any additional information required in answering the research questions.

3.10.2 Reliability

Reliability is the magnitude of how a research instrument produces the same outcome over time. To ensure this, all external sources of variation were minimized, and only applicable variables of the study were measured. A pilot study was carried out and Cronbach's alpha coefficient test was used to evaluate how reliable the questionnaire was. A score of 0.7 was obtained, more was considered adequate, and a value less than 0.7 was deemed unreliable. Research instruments were pre-tested among 42 (10 % of the sample size) students undertaking their studies at Gresta University in Thika, Kiambu County, Kenya. This was done to ascertain whether the targeted audience was to give genuine

responses, if the questions were well understood, check whether the question addressed the research objectives, and remove ambiguous questions.

Table 2 Reliability statistics

	No of item	Alpha(x)
Personal factor	8	.707
Psychological factor	21	.868
Socio-culture factor	19	.867

3.11 Data collection methods and procedure

This process commenced with the recruitment of study participants (students) through convenience sampling. The researcher confirmed the inclusion criteria. Then an informed consent was sought from t

he students. Upon giving consent the students were enrolled for the study and requested to fill in the study instrument to generate quantitative data. The process continued until the desired sample size was achieved for each stratum.

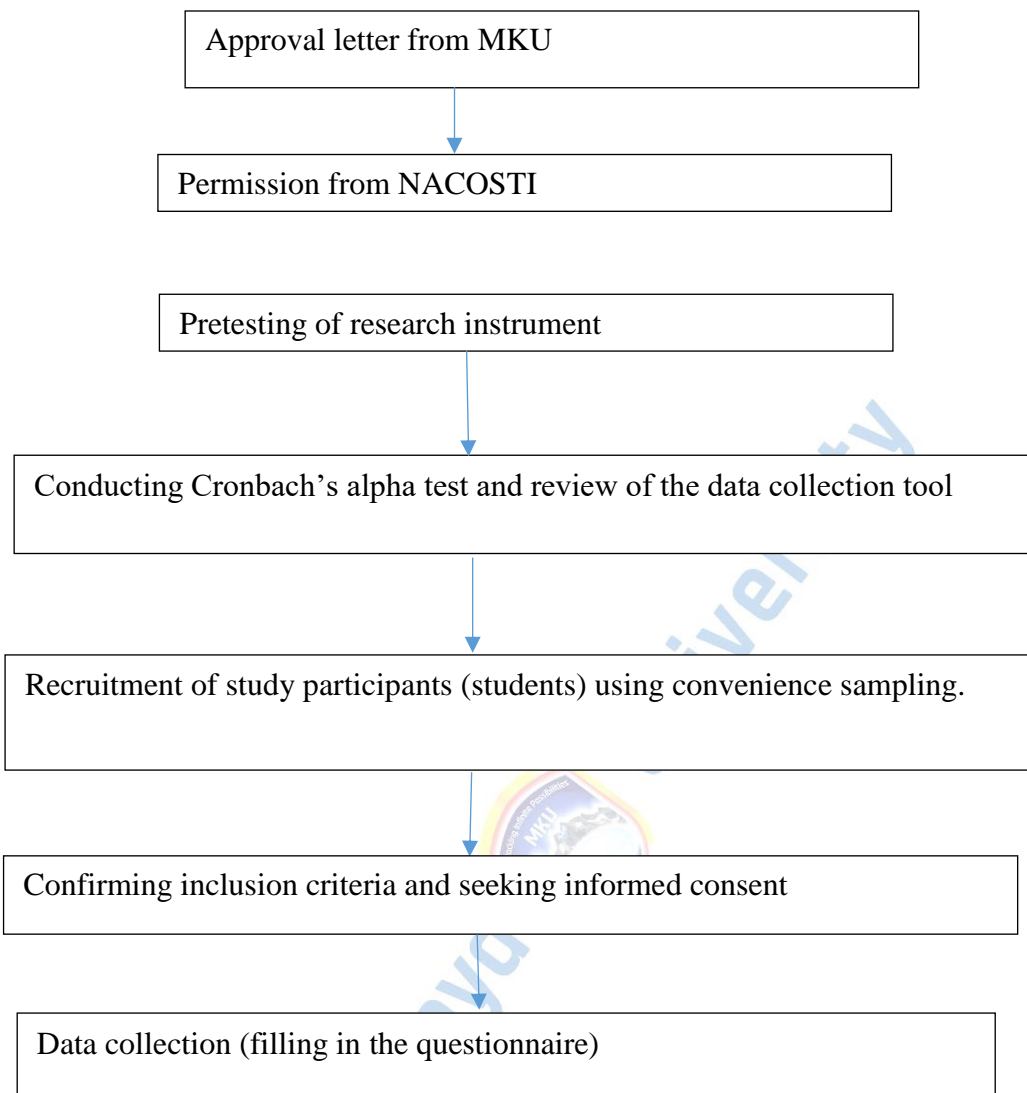


Figure 3 Data collection flow chart

3.12 Data Analysis Techniques and Procedures

The research cleaned data during data collection. Before entering the data in SPSS for analysis, it was checked for comprehensiveness. Mean, modes, medians, percentages, and standard deviation were calculated to provide descriptive statistics of fast food buying behavior. This data was displayed in tables and figures. Descriptive statistics, Chi-square tests, correlation, and regression analysis were utilized in SPSS to discover fast food purchase behavior variables. For Likert scale questions, where 5= Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neutral, 2=Disagree, and 1=Strongly Disagree, a mean score of 1.00 to 1.80

was considered as a strongly disagree response, 1.81 to 2.60 meant disagree, 2.61 to 3.40 represented neutral responses, 3.41 to 4.20 meant agree, and lastly, 4.21 to 5.00 represented strongly agree responses. Using multiple hierarchical regressions, inferential statistics was carried out to test the strength and direction of the relationship between the independent (personal, psychological, and socio-cultural factors) and the dependent variable (fast food buying behavior). The chi-square test (X^2) was used to test the association between demographic variables and fast food buying behavior. A probability value of 0.05 or less indicated a statistically significant association between variables.

3.13 Ethical considerations

The researcher sought out an ethical clearance certificate from the Mount Kenya University Institutional Ethics and Review Committee (MKU IERC). Further, the researcher applied for a research permit from the National Council for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). Authority to conduct the research at Mount Kenya University was sought from the office Dean of the School of Postgraduate. Written informed consent was sought (Appendix 1). Confidentiality and privacy were maintained during data collection, analyses, and presentation of results. A consent form was issued to respondents detailing the aim of the research.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The chapter starts by providing information on the study's response rate, then sociodemographic information about the respondents, findings on fast food behavior among the respondents, findings on personal factors influencing fast food behaviors, and findings on psychological factors influencing fast food behaviors. The chapter ends by presenting findings on sociocultural factors influencing fast food behaviors.

4.2 Research presentations, interpretations and discussions

This research study aimed to determine the determinants of fast food buying behavior among Mount Kenya University students in the Thika campus. Mitchell et al (2021), state that the number of returned questionnaires divided by the total number of surveys originally delivered is the survey response rate. In this regard, four hundred and twenty-two (422) students participated in this study. Out of this a total of four hundred and twenty-two (442) questionnaires were completed and returned leading to a 100% response rate. Table 3 below shows the summary of the responses per school.

Table 3: A response Rate Table

Schools	Sample size per school	Returned questionnaires	% Response
School of Hospitality, Travel and Tourism Management	17	17	100%
School of Social Sciences	63	63	100%
School of Computing and Information	39	39	100%
School of Education	97	97	100%
School of Pure & Applied sciences	21	21	100%
School of Business & Economics	97	97	100%
School of Nursing	8	8	100%
School of Pharmacy	8	8	100%
School of Public Health	17	17	100%
School of Clinical Medicine	21	21	100%
School of Engineering, Energy &The Built Environment	17	17	100%
Medical of School	17	17	100%
Total population	422	422	100%

4.3 Discussion of Individual objective results

4.3.1 Social demographic characteristics of the respondents

The study site was Mount Kenya University (MKU), main campus. The study targeted students attending college education on the main campus Thika. Table 3 below illustrates the sociodemographic composition of those who participated.

Table 4: Social demographic factors of the respondents

			Fast	Food	Buying
			Behavior		
	Frequency	Percentage			
Gender of the respondents			χ^2	df	P-Value
Female	277	65.6	4.44	2	<0.001
Male	145	34.4			
Total	422	100.0			
Year of study of the respondents			χ^2	df	P-Value
First year	18	4.3	4.21	3	0.13
Forth year	208	49.3			
Second year	68	16.1			
Third year	128	30.3			
Total	422	100.0			
Age of the respondents			χ^2	df	P-Value
18-25	330	78.2	42.1	3	0.00
26-30	47	11.1			
More than 30	45	10.7			
Total	422	100.0			
Marital status			χ^2	df	P-Value
Married	64	15.2	42.1	3	0.00
Single	358	84.8			
Total	422	100.0			
Education status			χ^2	df	P-Value
Degree	367	87	48.2	1	0.213
Diploma	55	13			
Total	422	100.0			

Regarding gender, the majority 277 (65.6%) of the respondents were females and the rest 145 (34.4%) were males. Additionally, a Chi-square test was carried out to assess whether there was any significant statistical association between gender and fast food behavior among the respondents at a 95% confidence level. According to the data shown in Table 3, a statistically significant correlation was observed between gender and fast food behavior ($\chi^2=4.44$, $df=2$, $P<0.001$). Further, the odds of buying and consuming fast food for female to male the likelihood of occurrence were 1.25 times higher, with an adjusted odds ratio (AOR) of 1.25 and a 95% confidence interval (CI) ranging from 1.2 to 3.2. This implies that female students were 1.25 times more inclined to purchase and eat fast food in comparison to their male counterparts.

These results are consistent with findings from research done in different settings. For instance, a research study carried out by Grzymisławska et al. (2020) showed differences between genders concerning eating behavior, food choice, and nutritional strategy. In the study, the researcher revealed that women showed a higher level of confidence in the need to maintain a healthy diet, took more proactive measures to control their body weight, and were more inclined to eat in social or stressful circumstances. Additionally, they often expressed unhappiness with their eating practices, which suggests that they were under more social pressure to limit the enjoyment that comes with eating. Men, on the other hand, were mostly driven by the enjoyment of eating and tended to choose rich, savory meals. They had a higher frequency of consuming sugary snacks while watching TV, a greater tendency to utilize nutritional supplements, and a more regular habit of visiting fast food restaurants.

In addition, a research conducted by Le et al. (2023) aimed to investigate the relationship between the intake of unhealthy foods and depression in young individuals, revealed that gender had a role in deciding whether a person consumed healthy or unhealthy food. In

the study, males were more likely to consume unhealthy food compared to their female counterparts.

In this study out of the 422 research participants, 330 (78.2%) were aged 18-25 years, followed by 47 (11.1%) aged 25-30 years, and 45 (10.7%) were aged more than 30 years. Further Chi square test was run to determine if there was any significant statistical relationship between age and fast food behavior among the respondents at 95% confidence level. As can be seen in Table 4.1 there was a significant relationship between age and fast food behavior ($\chi^2=42.1$, $df=3$, $P=0.000$). Further analysis found that the odds of buying and consuming fast food for respondents younger than 30 years the likelihood was 2.26 times higher (Adjusted Odds Ratio: 2.26, 95% Confidence Interval [1.1–3.1]). This implies that a younger student (below 30 years of age) were 2.26 times more likely to buy and eat fast food compared to their older (above 30 years) counterpart.

This result agrees with that of a research by Na et al. (2021) that looked at the variables impacting fast food customers' self-order kiosk behavior and how the gap between people's chronological and cognitive ages served to limit it. The study found that younger people were inclined to order and devour fast food when contrasted with their age-old predecessors. This could be because older people pay closer attention to the dangers fast food provides to your health than younger individuals.

Moreover, the majority 367 (87%) of the research participants were degree students and the rest 55 (13%) were diploma students. A Chi-square test was run to establish if there was any statistically significant link between education enrollment and fast food behavior among the respondents at 95% confidence level. As can be seen in Table 4. failed to show any statistically noteworthy association between education enrolment and fast food behavior ($\chi^2=482$ $df=1$, $P=0.213$). In parallel research in Egypt by Kesheck et al. (2022)

that sought to measure how often university students eat fast food, found the year of enrollment as having no effects on fast food behavior.

Regarding marital status, the majority 355 (84.8%) of the research participants were singles and only 64 (15.2%) were married. None of the study participants were divorced or separated. Also, a Chi-square test was run to see whether there was a statistically significant correlation between marital and fast food behavior among the respondents at 95% confidence level. As shown in Table 4.1 there was a significant association between marital status and fast food behavior ($\chi^2=422.3$, $df=1$, $P<0.001$). In addition, there was a 1.23-fold increase in the likelihood of fast food consumption and purchase among respondents whose marital status was single, as compared to those whose marital status was married (95% Confidence Interval [1.0-2.1]). This implies that a single-marital status student was 1.23 times more inclined to buy and devour fast food than their married students' counterparts. A research study by Kesheck et al. (2022) carried out in Egypt, set out to determine how often university students eat fast food, and it revealed that marital status had some effects on fast food behavior. This might be because married students tend to be older, which could make them more aware of the potential dangers of fast food for their health. Beyond that, they may pay greater attention to the need for a balanced diet for their loved ones.

In terms of the level of study, the majority 208 (49.3%) of the students were in their fourth year of study in the university, followed by 128 (30.3%) in their third year, 68 (16.1%) in their second year and 18 (4.3%) in their first year. A Chi-square test was run to determine if there was any significant statistical correlation between education enrollment and fast food behavior among the respondents at 95% confidence level. As can be seen in Table 4.1 there was no significant relationship between year of education enrolment and fast food behavior ($\chi^2=423$ $df=3$, $P=0.13$). these findings are similar to studies done

elsewhere. For instance, in the study by Kesheck et al. (2022) year of study had no bearing in determining whether a respondent bought fast food or not.

Further, 133 (30.1%) of the respondent were from the School of Education, followed by 115 (26%) from the school of Business and Economics, 45(10.2%) School of Computing and Information, 34 (7.7%) School of Social Sciences, 23 (5.2%) public health, 19 (4.3%) Hospitality, Tours and Travel, 18 (4.1%) Nursing, 17 (3.3%) Medical School, 15 (2.3%) Pure and Applied Sciences, 12 (2.7%) Clinical medicine, 14 (3.2%) Pharmacy, 2 (0.5%) Engineering & the Built Environment. A Chi-square test was run to find out if there was any statistically significant link between education enrollment and fast food behavior among the respondents at 95% confidence level. There was no significant connection between fast food consumption behavior and educational enrolment, according to Table 4.1 ($\chi^2 = 4.12$, $df = 10$, $p = 0.313$).

4.1.2 Living Situation

Regarding the living situation, the majority of the respondents reside in rented houses. The distribution of living situations is shown in Figure 4.1 below

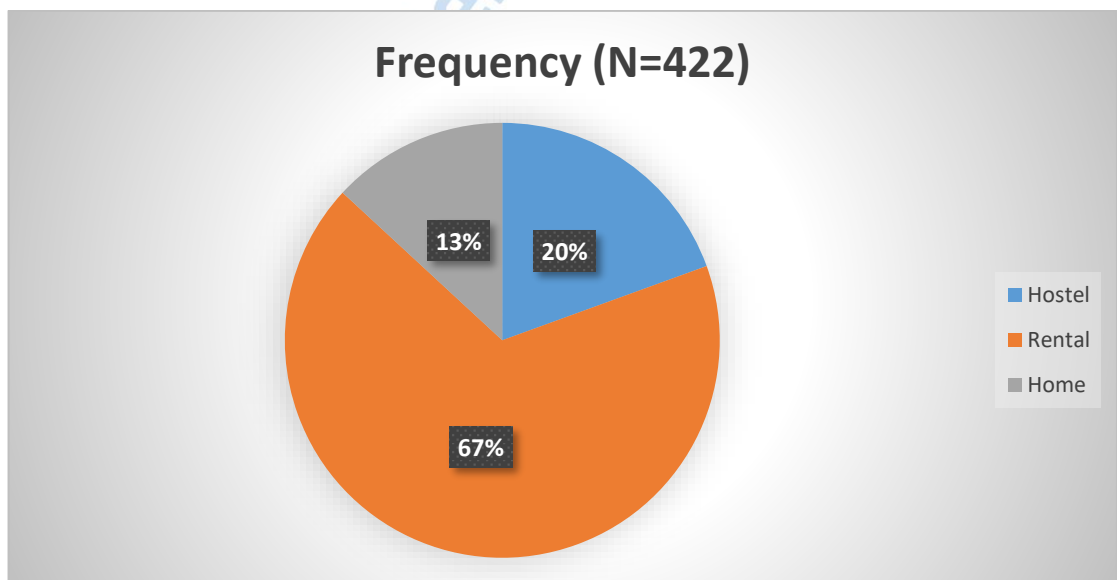


Figure 3: Distribution of respondents living situation

To determine whether the living situation was statistically related to fast food behavior, the Chi-square test was done at 95% level of confidence. The result returned a statistically significant result ($\chi^2=410$, $df=2$, $P=0.02$). Moreover, to determine the likelihood of engaging in fast food behavior among the respondents, respondents were classified as living in the hostel and living outside the hostel (home, rented house). The odds of buying and consuming fast food for respondents living in students' hostels to those of respondents living outside the university (home and rented hostels) Its 1.13 times greater (with a 95% confidence interval of 2.0-2.6 and an adjusted odds ratio of 1.13). This indicates that, in comparison to students living off-campus, individuals living in university hostels were more prone to buy and eat fast food.

4.3.2 Fast Food Buying Behavior.

How often people buy fast food, when they usually buy it, and if they have ever bought it were all questions used to gauge the consumption habits of the sample. The majority bought fast food on a weekly basis 213 (48.2%). 131 (29.6%) bought fast food daily, 68 (15.4%) on special occasions/festivals and 30(6.8%) purchased fast food once a month. Close to three-quarters 331 (74.9%) of the students purchased fast food after midday. The rest bought fast food at dusk 61 (13.8%), at night 30 (6.8%) while only 20 (4.5%) bought fast food in the morning.

To further evaluate the potential statistical significance of the correlation between the respondents' sociodemographic variables and their purchasing habits, a Chi-square test was performed with a 95% confidence level. On top of that, we checked for a statistically significant correlation between respondents' gender and their fast food habits using a 95% confidence level Chi-square test. There was a strong correlation between gender and fast food habit, as seen in Table 4.1 ($\chi^2 = 4.44$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.001$ Also, with an adjusted odds ratio of 1.25 and a 95% confidence interval of [1.2-3.2], the likelihood of females

purchasing and eating fast food was 1.25 times greater than men. This means that compared to male students, female students were 1.25 times more inclined to buy and eat fast food.

Concerning the kind of fast food that is purchased by the respondents, the majority 297 (67.2%) bought different kinds of food at different times. The two common kinds of fast food purchased by students were French fries/chips 297 (10.6%) and Smocha 284 (10.1%). Students also frequently bought soft drinks 299 (8.1%), ice cream 216 (7.7%), biscuits 212 (7.5%), cakes 206 (7.3%), smokies 195 (6.9%), and mandazi 181 (6.4%). Sandwiches were the least purchased kind of fast food 15 (0.5%).

Further respondents were requested to indicate where they purchased the fast food. In regard to this, street food vendors were the most common place of fast food purchase 345 (25.3%), followed by supermarkets 241 (17.7%), restaurants 212 (15.5%) and cafe 212 (15.5%), Pizza in 135 (9.9%), Chicken inn 117 (8.6%) and KFC 103 (7.5%).

Moreover, respondents were requested to indicate the reasons for the choice of place where fast food is purchased. On this, the majority of the respondents 273 (32.9%) identified the pricing of food as the main reason, 254 (30.6 %) pointed to quality, 158 (19.0%) were influenced by the location of the place, while 135 (16.2%) were influenced by the quality of service. 11 (1.3%) of the respondents were influenced by the convenience of the fast food joint

Many studies have explained the growing number of fast food consumers. For example, Atkins and Bowler (2021) found that consumers' increasingly hectic lives, as well as the prevalence of two-income households with children, are fuelling the need for convenient meal options. Another element that contributes to the growth in fast food consumption is the increase in the number of meals eaten per day, which is in line with contemporary

living. In addition, people in big cities are always on the go, therefore they need ways to eat fast since their lunch periods are so limited (Hanson, 2002).

4.3.3 Personal Factors and Fast Food Buying Behavior.

The first objective of the study was to determine the influence of personal factors on fast food buying behavior among Mount Kenya University students in Thika campus Kiambu County, Kenya. To determine whether there was a significant correlation between personal characteristics and fast food buying behavior, a Chi-square test was used. The table below displays the outcomes.

Table 5: Chi test on Personal Factors and Fast Food Buying Behavior

	X²	df	P-value
My age influences my decision to buy fast food	2.4	4	0.001
My age influences where I buy fast food	6.3	4	0.001
My age influences the kind of fast food I buy	2.2	4	0.001
My marital status influences my decision to buy fast food	3.2	4	0.21
My marital status influences where I buy fast food	3.6	4	0.001
My marital status influences the kind of fast food I buy	3.4	4	0.001
My source of funds influences my decision to buy fast food	3.2	4	0.003
My source of funds influences where I buy fast food	2.3	4	0.001
My source of fund influences the kind of fast food I buy	3.7	4	0.213

Further, to demonstrate this a Hierarchical Multiple Regression analysis model was run with fast food behavior consumption as the dependent variable and all the 7 respondents' personal attributes being entered at different levels. Table 4.3 below show the regression model results

Table 6: Hierarchical Multiple Regression analysis of Personal Factors influencing Fast Food Buying Behavior

Model Summary										
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics		df1	df2	Sig. Change	F
					R Square Change	F Change				
1	.02 ^a	.02	.02	.41516	.02	3.10	1	439	.005	
2	.085 ^b	.005	.009	.41412	.027	3.21	1	438	.004	
3	.085 ^c	.01	.010	.41459	.037	1.21	1	437	.003	
4	.095 ^d	.132	.132	.41471	.169	2.741	1	436	.001	
5	.113 ^e	.013	.013	.41440	.182	1.655	1	435	.002	
6	.127 ^f	.016	.016	.41417	.198	1.478	1	434	.005	
7	.163 ^g	.027	.011	.41243	.225	4.688	1	433	.001	

- a. Predictors: (Constant), age of the respondents
- b. Predictors: (Constant), age of the respondents, sex
- c. Predictors: (Constant), age of the respondents, sex, education
- d. Predictors: (Constant), age of the respondents, sex, education, relationship
- e. Predictors: (Constant), age of the respondents, sex, education, relationship, level of study
- f. Predictors: (Constant), age of the respondents, sex, education, relationship, level of study, faculty of study
- g. Predictors: (Constant), age of the respondents, sex recoded, education, relationship, level of study, faculty of study, living situation

From Table 5 above, the age variables entered in the first step accounted for 0.2 % of variation on Fast Food Buying Behavior. This change was significant ($R^2 = 0.02$, $F(439) = 3.10$, $p = .005$). Adding sex to the model the change in R^2 went up from 0.02 to 0.027. This change was significant ($R^2 = 0.01$, $F(1,436) = 3.21$, $p = .004$). At step 2, the model therefore, accounted for 2.7% of the variation on Fast Food Buying Behavior.

Adding education to the model, the change in R^2 went up from 0.0227 to 0.037. This change was significant $R^2 = 0.01$, $F(1, 437) = 2.741$, $p = 0.003$. hence the model at this stage explained 3.7% of the variation on fast food behavior. Then at the next stage respondents' relationship status was added to the model the change in R^2 went up from 0.037 to 0.169. This change was significant $R^2 = 0.132$, $F(1, 437) = 1.21$, $p = 0.001$.

Effectively, at this stage, the model accounted for 16.9% of variation on Fast Food Buying Behavior.

At the next step level of respondents' study was added to the model. The change in R^2 went up from 0.169 to 0.182. This change was significant $R^2 = 0.013$, $F(1, 435) = 1.655$, $p = 0.002$. Effectively, at this stage, the model accounted for 18.2% of variation on variation on fast food behavior. In the next step faculty of study was added to the model the change in R^2 went up from 0.182 to 0.198. This change was significant $R^2 = 0.016$, $F(1, 434) = 1.478$, $p = 0.005$. In the final step living situation was added. At this step the change in R^2 went up from 0.198 to 0.225. This change was significant $R^2 = 0.027$, $F(1, 433) = 14.413$, $p = 0.0001$. at this stage, the model accounted for 19.8% of variation on variation on fast food behavior These results suggest that personal attributes influence fast food behavior. Overall, relationship status contributed most in explaining the variation in fast food behavior.

As can be seen from the model above, multiple personal factors influenced respondent's fast food behavior. The findings of this study align with those of other research studies. For example, Agarwal & Guirat (2017), found that factors influencing buying behavior included social, personal, psychological, and cultural factors. In recent years, fast food buying trends have changed as customers are more health-conscious and are inclined to more healthier diets (Ghoochani et al., 2018; Gogoi, 2020). Further, the COVID-19 pandemic affected fast food purchase intentions with most people tending to eat home-cooked meals due to the limited fast food outlet options (Athar et al., 2021; Liewin & Genoveva, 2021).

Moreover, there exists mixed evidence on how personal factors influence fast food buying behavior among university students. Tam et al. (2017) & Whatnall et al. (2020) noted that undergraduates aged less than 25 years and those who are single bought fast

food more frequently ranging from daily to 2-3 times a week compared to their counterparts. Friends, classmates, social networks, and social gatherings and parties were the most reported socio-cultural reasons of fast food buying behavior among university learners (Anitharaj, 2018; Atanda & Dane, 2020)

Also, a research looking at the variables that influence and patterns of fast food consumption among South Asian college students was done by Saha et al. (2022). According to their research, college students eat more fast food because of factors such as price, convenience, accessibility, availability, atmosphere, and location.

4.3.5 Psychological Factors and Fast-Food Buying Behavior

The second objective of the study was to determine the psychological factor that influence fast food buying behavior among Mount Kenya University students in Thika campus Kiambu County, Kenya.



Table 7: Chi square test on Psychological Factors and Fast Food Buying Behavior

Psychological Factors	Fast food buying behavior		
	X²	df	P-value
The location of fast food joints influences my decision to buy fast food	6.4	4	0.001
The location of fast food joints influences where I buy fast food	3.2	4	0.002
The location of fast food joints influences the kind of fast food I buy	4.2	4	0.44
Accessibility and availability of fast food restaurants influence my decision to buy fast food	4.6	4	0.002
Accessibility and availability of fast food restaurants influence where I buy fast food	3.4	4	0.001
Accessibility and readiness of fast food restaurants influence the kind of fast food I buy	5.2	4	0.002
Perceived taste influences my decision to buy fast food	5.2	4	0.004
Perceived taste influences where I buy fast food	4.8	4	0.002
Perceived taste influences the kind of fast food I buy	2.4	4	0.001
Perceived cost influences my decision to buy fast food	5.2	4	0.01
Perceived cost influences where I buy fast food	5.2	4	0.002
Perceived cost influences the kind of fast food I buy	6.8	4	0.002
My perception of health risks and reward influence my decision to buy fast food	6.4	4	0.01
My understanding of my health risks and rewards influence where I buy fast food	3.2	4	0.01
My awareness of health risks and rewards influences the kind of I buy junk food	3.2	4	0.04
The appearance of the facility influences my decision to buy junk food	4.8	4	0.002
The appearance of the facility influences where I buy fast food	6.4	4	0.02
The appearance of eating place influences the kind of fast food I buy	5.2	4	0.26
I usually buy fast food due to lack of time	5.2	4	0.44
I usually buy fast food due to lack of cooking resources	4.8	4	0.21

As can be seen from Table 6 On running the Chi square test, safe for the appearance of eating place lack of time, and lack of cooking resources, the majority of items on psychological elements returned a statistically significant Chi square test.

Further to demonstrate this a Hierarchical Multiple Regression analysis model was run with fast food behavior as the dependent variable and all the 7 respondents' psychological attributes being

entered at different levels. Table 7 below shows the regression model results.

From Table 7 below, at step 1 Location of the fast food joint was added to the model $R^2 = 0.09$, $F(3, 438) = 1.384$, $p = 0.0001$ and it explained 0.9% of the variation in fast food behavior. In step 2 accessibility and availability of fast-food restaurant items were added into the model which led to a notable change: $R^2 = 0.02$, $F(3, 435) = 1.384$, and $p = 0.02$. At this level, the model explained 2% of the variation in fast food buying behavior. At step three Perceived taste was added into the model. There was a significant change $R^2 = 0.039$, $F(3, 435) = 1.126$, $p = 0.0002$ and it explained 3.9% of the variation of fast food buying behavior. At step 4 Perceived cost. at this stage the model. There was a significant $R^2 = 0.062$, $F(3, 429) = 0.69$, $P = 0.002$,. The model at this stage explained 6.2% of the variation in fast food buying behavior. Then health awareness of risks and rewards was added at step five. There was a significant change $R^2 = 0.101$, $F(3, 426) = 1.4526$, $p = 0.0003$. At this stage, the model explained 10.1% of the variation in fast food buying behavior. At step 6 the appearance of the facility was added to the model. There was a notable shift, as shown by the following: $R^2 = 0.151$, $F(3, 423) = 1.808$, and $p = 0.002$ and at this stage, the model explained 15.1% of the variation in fast food buying behavior. The inclusion of the time variable in Step 7 caused a significant change with $R^2 = 0.201$, $F(3, 422) = 4.809$, and $p = 0.003$. As of right now, the model explains 20.1% of the variance in fast food consumption. An addition of the cooking resources convenience variable to the model in Step 8 resulted in a statistically significant change with ($R^2 = 0.251$), ($F(3, 421) = 0.132$), and ($p = 0.001$ \). Currently, the model accounted for 25.1% of the variance in fast food consumption. Finally, at step 9 convenience was added into

the model. There was a significant change $R^2 = 0.303$, $F(3, 420) = 0.420$, $p = 0.001$ at this stage the model explained 30.3% of variation on fast food buying behavior. These results suggest that psychological factors have some influence on fast food buying behavior. In this study, the psychological factors explained up to 30.3% of fast food buying behavior.

Table 8 Hierarchical Multiple Regression analysis of Psychological Factors influencing Fast Food Buying Behavior

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics			Sig. Change	F
					Change	Square	df1		
1	.097 ^a	.009	.003	.41533	0.009	1.384	3	438	.008
2	.104 ^b	.011	-.003	.41645	0.02	.215	3	435	0.02
3	.136 ^c	.019	-.002	.41627	.039	1.126	3	432	0.001
4	.153 ^d	.023	-.004	.41671	0.062	.696	3	429	0.001
5	.162 ^e	.026	-.008	.41751	.101	.452	3	426	0.03
6	.197 ^f	.039	-.002	.41633	.0151	1.808	3	423	0.02
7	.223 ^g	.050	.007	.41447	.201	4.809	1	422	0.004
8	.223 ^h	.050	.005	.41490	.251	.132	1	421	0.01
9	.229 ⁱ	.053	.005	.41479	0.303	1.206	1	420	0.001

a) Location of fast food joint

b) Location of fast food. Accessibility and availability of fast food restaurants

c) Location of fast food. Accessibility and availability of fast food restaurants

Perceived taste

d) Location of fast food. Accessibility and availability of fast food restaurants

Perceived. Perceived cost

e) Location of fast food. Accessibility and availability of fast food restaurants

Perceived. Perceived cost understanding of my health risks and rewards

f) Location of fast food. Accessibility and availability of fast food restaurants Perceived. Perceived cost understanding of my health risks and rewards the appearance of the facility

g) Location of fast food. Accessibility and availability of fast food restaurants Perceived. Perceived cost understanding of my health risks and rewards The appearance of facility lack of time

h) Location of fast food. Accessibility and availability of fast food restaurants Perceived. Perceived cost understanding of my health risks and rewards The appearance of facility lack of time, lack of cooking resources convenience

i) Location of fast food. Accessibility and availability of fast food restaurants Perceived. Perceived cost understanding of my health risks and rewards. The appearance of facility lack of time, lack of cooking resources convenience

Findings in the current study compares well with findings of studies done elsewhere. Tam et al. (2017) & Whatnall et al. (2020) noted that female students bought fast food more than males. On the contrary, Atanda & Dane (2020) reported that male students bought fast more often (daily) compared to female students in Nigeria due to convenience. Perceived cost, taste, quality, nearness of the restaurant or fast food joints to the university and awareness of accessibility and availability of fast food joints near the university are some of the psychological factors influencing students fast food buying behavior (Akhter, 2017; Atanda & Dane, 2020; Banik et al., 2020). Atanda & Dane (2020) indicated that lack of cooking premises led to purchase of fast food by students.

4.3.6 Socio-cultural Factors and Fast Food Buying Behavior

The third objective of the study was to examine how sociocultural factors influence fast food buying behavior among Mount Kenya University students in Thika campus Kiambu County, Kenya. To do this in a Likert scale, questions relating to sociocultural factors

were asked. To determine whether sociocultural variables have a statistically significant impact on fast food purchase behavior, a Chi-square test was conducted. What follows is a thorough description of the link between food purchase behavior (the dependent variable) and sociocultural characteristics (Table 8).

Table 9 Chi-square test on Socio-cultural Factors and Fast Food Buying Behavior

Factor	X²	df	P-value
My classmates influence my decision to buy fast food	6.4	4	0.001
My classmates influence where I buy fast food	3.2	4	0.002
My classmates influence the kind of fast food I buy	4.2	4	0.44
My friends influence my decision to buy fast food	4.6	4	0.002
My friends influence where I buy fast food	3.4	4	0.001
My friends influence the kind of fast food I buy	5.2	4	0.002
My social status or networks influence my decision to buy fast food	5.2	4	0.004
My social status or networks influence where I buy fast food	4.8	4	0.002
My social status or networks influence the kind of fast food I buy	2.4	4	0.001
My family influences my decision to buy fast food	5.2	4	0.01
My family influences where I buy fast food	5.2	4	0.002
My family influences the kind of fast food I buy	6.8	4	0.002
My parents influence my decision to buy fast food	6.4	4	0.01
My parents influence where I buy fast food	3.2	4	0.01
My parents influence the kind of fast food I buy	6.4	4	0.001
My religious affiliation influences my decision to buy fast food	3.2	4	0.002
My religious affiliation influences where I buy fast food	4.2	4	0.44
My religious affiliation influences the kind of fast food I buy	4.6	4	0.002
I usually buy fast food in during social gatherings, like parties, weddings	3.4	4	0.001

As can be seen from Table 8 above. On running the Chi-square test, all items on sociocultural factors returned a significant test result as shown in the table above.

Further analysis was done to demonstrate the influence of these factors using a Hierarchical Multiple Regression analysis model. This was run with fast food behavior as the dependent variable and all the 7 respondents' socio-cultural attributes being entered at different levels. Here are the findings of the regression model: Table 9.

Table 10: Hierarchical Multiple Regression analysis of socio-cultural factors Influencing Fast Food Buying Behavior

Model Summary

Model R	R Square	Adjusted Square	RStd. Error the Estimate	Change Statistics				
				ofR Change	SquareF Change	df1	Sig. Change	
1	.123 ^a	.015	.008	.41444	0.015	2.256	3	437.001
2	.208 ^b	.043	.030	.40995	0.045	4.212	3	434.004
3	.220 ^c	.049	.029	.41019	0.074	.824	3	431.001
4	.240 ^d	.058	.031	.40967	0.105	1.368	3	428.002
5	.264 ^e	.070	.037	.40849	0.142	1.825	3	425.003
6	.287 ^f	.083	.043	.40706	.0.185	1.999	3	422.001
7	.289 ^g	.084	.042	.40730	0.227	.502	1	421.004

Predictors:

- a. classmates influence
- b. classmates influence., friends influence
- c. classmates influence., friends influence, social status or networks
- d. classmates influence., friends influence, social status or networks, family influences.
- e. classmates influence., friends influence, social status or networks, family influences, parents influence
- f. classmates influence., friends influence, social status or networks, family influences, parents influence, religious affiliation
- g. classmates influence., friends influence, social status or networks, family influences, parents influence, religious affiliation, social gathering

From the Table 10 above, to demonstrate the influence of socio-cultural factors influencing fast food behavior various predictor were entered at different stage. Predictor classmates influence was entered at step 1. In these results showed that here was significant change $R^2=0.008$, $F(3,437)=2.256$ $P=.001$. At step one the model explained 1.5% of variation on fast food behavior. friends influence predictor variable was entered at step 2. The findings showed a notable shift with coefficients of determination (R^2) of 0.030, $F(3, 444)$ of 0.212, and p-value of 0.004. The model accounted for 4.5% of the variance in fast food behavior at this level. Further social status or networks predictor

variable was added to the model at step 3. Results showed a significant change with $R^2=.029$, $F(3,443)=0.824$, $p=0.001$. At this stage the model explained 7.4% of variation on fast food behavior. At step four, predictor variable family influence was entered into the model. The result should some significant change. $R^2=.031$, $F(3,428)=1.368$, $p=.002$. With addition of the family influence predictor variable the model explained 10.5% of the variation on fast food behavior among the respondents.

This was followed by adding parental influence to the model at stage 5. The results showed a significant change with $R^2=.037$, $F(3,425)=1.825$, $P=.003$. In addition, at stage 5 the model explains 14.2% of the variation of fast food behavior among the respondents.

Moreover, the religion predictor variable was added at stage 5. In this, the results showed a significant change with $R^2=.043$, $F(3,422)=1.999$, $p=.0001$. With this addition, the model explained 18.5% variation on fast food behavior among the respondents. These results imply that socio-cultural factors influence fast food behavior.

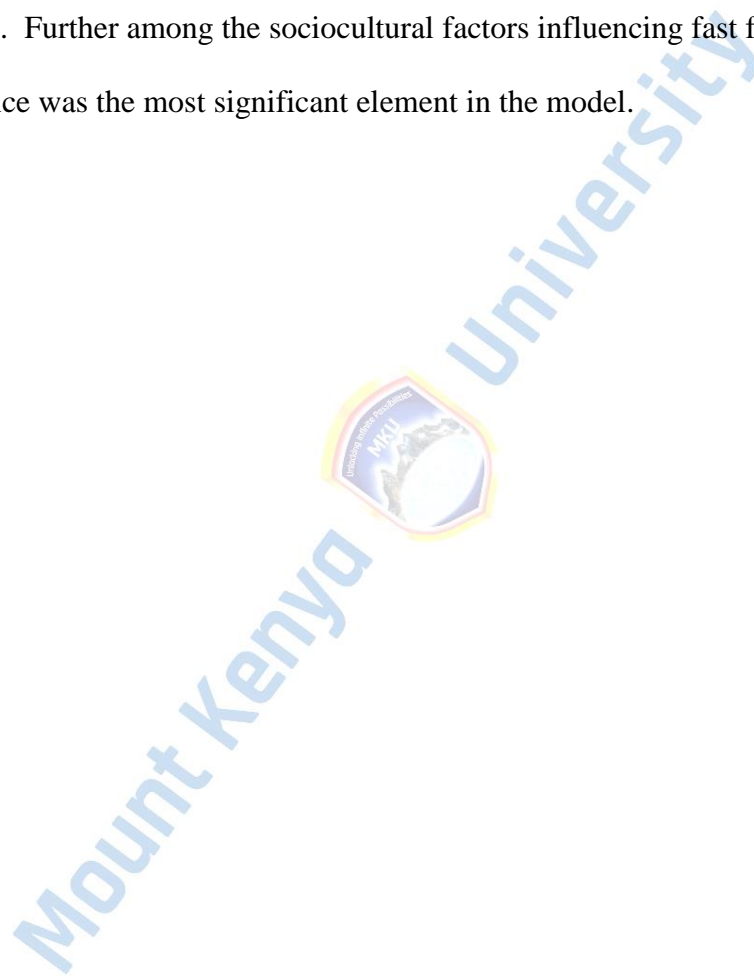
From Table 9, it can be seen that that all the socio and cultural elements had a contribution in the model. These findings are similar to studies done elsewhere. Consider the following: research on consumer behavior in less developed economies (Chowdhury et al., 2017; Khaniwale et al., 2017; Lai et al., 2017; Sangroya et al., 2019) shows that price, religious orientation, and cultural factors are often considered by consumers.

In addition, several studies have shown that fast food intake is impacted by a variety of sociocultural variables. When looking at how often people eat fast food, Park et al. (2019) discovered that variables including age, income, education, household size, number of children, consumer attitudes towards fast food pricing, health concerns, and kid preferences had a big role. Eating out also allows customers to fulfil their needs for social connection, enjoyment, entertainment, time savings, and mood alteration, according to

research by Finkelstein (2017). Some respondents reported feeling a surge of excitement, joy, and overall well-being when indulging in the study's featured cuisine and dining establishments.

Contribution of the study

In this study, cumulatively, compared to all other factors entered in the regression model, psychological factors contributed most (30.1%) of variation on fast food behavior among the respondents. Further among the sociocultural factors influencing fast food behavior, parental influence was the most significant element in the model.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Based on the research, this chapter provides a summary, draws findings, and gives suggestions. The chapter begins with presenting the summary after which conclusions are provided. Based on the conclusions, the chapter ends by presenting recommendations

5.2 Summary of Findings

The purpose of this research study was to determine the determinants of fast food buying behavior among Mount Kenya University students in Thika campus. A perfect 100% response rate was attained by the research venture. With more women than men buying and eating fast food, the results showed that gender does influence fast food consumption. Female students were 1.25 times more likely to purchase and eat fast food than their male colleagues.

Moreover, the study found that younger people were more inclined to buy and eat fast food compared to older students. Further analysis indicated that those under the age of 30 had a 2.26-fold higher likelihood of purchasing and consuming fast food compared to those over the age of 30.

Furthermore, to determine whether there was a statistically significant correlation between respondents' marital status, living circumstances, and fast food eating habits, a 95% confidence level Chi-square test was performed. Fast food eating habit was shown to be significantly related to marital status. (Further, the odds of buying and consuming fast food for respondents in single marital status for married marital status years was 1.23. Moreover, the odds of buying and consuming fast food for respondents in living in students' hostels to those of respondents living outside the university (home and rented hostels) was 1.13 times.

In regard to the influence of personal factors on fast food buying behavior among Mount Kenya University students in Thika campus Kiambu County, Kenya. A Hierarchical Multiple Regression analysis model was run with fast food behavior consumption as the dependent variable and all the 7 respondents' personal attributes being entered at different levels. The model showed that multiple personal factors influenced respondent's fast food behavior with personal factors in the model accounting for 19.8% of variation on variation on fast food behavior

In regard to psychological factor influencing fast food buying behavior among Mount Kenya University students in Thika campus Kiambu County, Kenya, a Hierarchical Multiple Regression analysis models was run with fast food behavior as the dependent variable and all the 7 respondents' psychological attributes being entered at different levels These result suggested that psychological factors have some influence on fast food buying behavior. In this study, the psychological factors explained up to 30.3% of fast food buying behavior.

Finally, the third objective of the study was to determine the socio-cultural factor influencing fast food buying behavior among Mount Kenya University students in Thika campus Kiambu County, Kenya. To demonstrate this a Hierarchical Multiple Regression analysis model was run with fast food behavior as the dependent variable and all the 7 respondents' socio-cultural attributes being entered at different levels. In this. the results showed that the model explained 18.5% variation on fast food behavior among the respondents. The implication of thus results is that socio-cultural factors have an influence on fast food behavior. Cumulatively, personal factors, psychological factors and socio-cultural factors explained

5.3 Conclusion

The purpose of this research study was to determine the determinants of fast food buying behavior among Mount Kenya University students in Thika campus. In this regard, the study collected and analyzed data on various factors influencing fast food behavior including personal factors, psychological factors, and socio-demographic factors.

In regard to personal factors influencing fast food buying behavior among Mount Kenya University students in Thika campus Kiambu County, Kenya. The study found that regarding whether gender had a bearing in fast food consumption, more females than males bought and consumed fast food. Fast food consumption and purchase was 1.25 times more likely among females than men (Adjusted Odds Ratio: 1.25, 95% Confidence Interval [1.2-3.2]).

This implies that a female student were 1.25 times more likely to buy and consume fast food compared to their male counterpart. Further analysis found that the odds of buying and consuming fast food for respondents younger than 30 years was 2.26 times (AOR: 2.26, 95% CI [1.1–3.1]).

Moreover, the odds of buying and consuming fast food for respondents in single marital status and for married marital status years was 1.23 times (AOR: 1.23, 95% CI [1.0–2.1]). This suggests that, in comparison to their married peers, students whose marital status was single were 1.23 times more likely to buy and eat fast food.

When comparing respondents residing in university hostels to those living outside of the institution, such as at home or in leased lodgings, the chances of buying and eating fast food were 1.13 times greater (Adjusted chances Ratio: 1.13, 95% Confidence Interval [2.0-2.6]). Findings from the research highlight the significance of personal characteristics in explaining fast food consumption patterns.

In regard to psychological factors, influencing fast food buying behavior among Mount Kenya University students in Thika campus Kiambu County, Kenya, various statistical showed a significant statistical relationship between student's psychological attributes and intake of fast food. The study concluded that psychological characteristics are important contributors to fast food behavior.

Finally, regarding socio-cultural factors, influencing fast food buying behavior among Mount Kenya University students in Thika campus Kiambu County, Kenya, various statistics showed a significant statistical relationship between student's sociocultural attributes and intake of fast food. The study therefore concluded that socio-cultural characteristics are important contributors to fast food behavior.

5.4 Recommendation for Practice

Institutions of higher learning should run campaigns to raise awareness about the negative health effects of eating fast food and the alternatives available to them. These initiatives may provide students with the knowledge they need to prioritize their health depending on their financial resources. Universities should provide financial wellness programs that teach students about budgeting and cost-effective meal planning because of the significant impact that money has on students' decisions to eat at fast food restaurants. These initiatives equip students to eat healthily despite budgetary restrictions.

Moreover, fast-food restaurants should provide and advertise healthier menu alternatives that students find appealing and affordable. Students may be encouraged to choose better food choices if they are reminded that these options are readily available to them. Keeping in mind the impact of first impressions, fast food establishments should always be spotlessly clean and inviting. Students' fast-food experiences may be influenced by the cleanliness and aesthetic attractiveness of eating places, increasing the likelihood that they will choose healthier options.

Universities should support student-initiated programs that educate students on the benefits of adopting better lifestyles and eating habits. Promoting and maintaining improved dietary habits might be facilitated by peer support programs, student-led courses, or clubs.

5.5 Recommendations for further research in this field of study

- i. Future researchers to investigate how relationship status influences fast food buying behavior among students.
- ii. Investigate how the campaigns that are done on healthy feeding habits affect the uptake for these fast foods.
- iii. Analyze the potential of applications, wearables, and digital tools for tracking and bettering University students' nutrition.
- iv. Researchers should consider studying how one's faith influences fast food buying behavior.
- v. Researchers to explore whether there is a relationship between one's course and the rate of fast food buying behavior.
- vi. Research needs to be done around how fast food chains adapt to the tastes and demographics of college students.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Informed Consent

Hey,

I am Ruth wambui, a student pursuing a master's degree from Mount Kenyatta University. My study topic is “**Determinants of Fast Food Buying Behavior among Mount Kenya University Students in Thika Campus Kiambu County, Kenya**”.

Aim

The intends to examine how personal, socio-cultural, and psychological factors influence fast food buying behavior among Mount Kenya University students in Thika campus, Kiambu County, Kenya.

Procedure

You are being requested in a survey to document your opinion on how personal, socio-cultural, and psychological factors influence buying behavior. You will not be forced to engage or respond to any question. You may stop taking part or responding to questions at any point without fear of reproach or rebuke.

Risks

If you opt to participate in this study, you will face no harm.

Benefits

If you take part in this study, you will assist the fast food industry in Kenya to understand the buying behavior of their customers mostly the young adult's study in the University.

Confidentiality

Necessary measures will be used to ensure your personal data is kept private and merely shared for academic reasons.

Withdrawal

If you feel you do not want to continue responding to the interview questions, feel free to do so without fear of reprimand.

Contact information

You can use the following contacts in case of any question or clarification regarding the study. Ms. Ruth Wambui on 0716602543 or Dr. Mary at marymutisya@gmail.com or Prof. Odhuno eodhuno@mku.ac.ke

Statement by participant

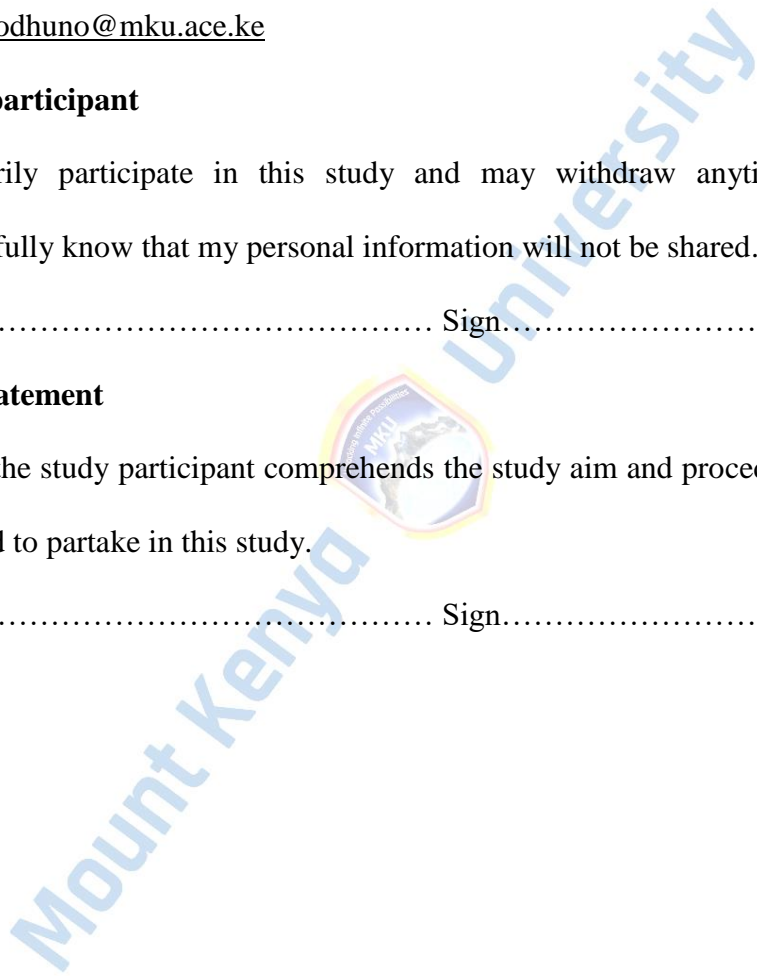
I will voluntarily participate in this study and may withdraw anytime with no repercussion. I fully know that my personal information will not be shared.

Date..... Sign.....

Investigator statement

I, confirm that the study participant comprehends the study aim and procedures and has not been coaxed to partake in this study.

Date..... Sign.....



Appendix 2: Questionnaire

Part A: Individual Characteristics

1. Sex Female [] Male []
2. Age [] (Indicate your age also tick the appropriate category)
- Below 18 [] 18 -25 []
- 25-30 [] More than 30 []
3. Education
- Certificate [] Diploma [] Degree []
4. Relationship status Married [] Single [] Divorced [] Separated []
5. Level of study
- Year one [] year two [] year three [] year four []
- Year five []
7. Faculty of study
- A) Hospitality, Tours and Travel [] B) Medical School []
- C) Education [] D) clinical medicine []
- E) Public Health [] F) Nursing []
- G) Pharmacy [] H) Pure and Applied Sciences []
- I) Social Sciences [] J) Business and Economics []
- K) Engineering & the Built Environment [] L) Computing and Information []
8. Living situation
- A) Hostel [] B) Home []
- C) Rental house [] D) With a relative []

Part B: Fast Food Buying Behavior

8. Do you buy fast food?

A) Yes [] B) No []

9. Indicate your fast food purchase frequency.

A) Daily [] B) Weekly [] C) Monthly [] D) On special occasions/festivals []

10. What kind of fast food do you buy? (Tick all appropriate)

A) French fries/chips []

B) Piazza []

C) Kebab []

D) Fried chicken []

E) Smokies []

G) Smocha (smokies and chapatti) []

H) Sausage []

I) Eggs with kachumbari []

J) Sandwiches []

K) Hotdogs []

L) Ice cream []

M) Soft drinks/soda []

N) Biscuits and cookies []

O) Mandazi []

P) Cakes []

Q) Sweets/candies []

R) Samosas []

11. Where do you buy your fast food?

A) Street food vendors []

B) Pizza inn []

C) KFC []

D) Chicken inn []

D) Supermarket []

E) Cafe []

F) Restaurants []

12. What time do you usually purchase fast food?

A) At dawn []

B) After midday []

C) At dusk []

D) Middle of the night []

13. Why do you purchase a particular fast food?11 (Tick all appropriate)

A) Location [] B) Price [] C) Quality [] D) Services [] E) Any other []

Part C: Personal Factors Influencing Fast Food Buying Behavior

Kindly tick (√) the most appropriate answer. Key: Strongly Disagree (Sd) = 1, Disagree (d) = 2, Neutral (n) = 3, Agree (a) = 4, and Strongly Agree (Sa) = 5

SNo	Factor	Sd	d	n	a	Sa
1.	My age influences my decision to buy fast food					
2.	My age influences where I buy fast food					
3.	My age influences the kind of fast food I buy					
4.	My marital status influences my decision to buy fast food					
5.	My marital status influences where I buy fast food					
6.	My marital status influences the kind of fast food I buy					
7.	My source of funds influences my decision to buy fast food					
8.	My source of funds influences where I buy fast food					
9.	My source of fund influences the kind of fast food I buy					

3

Part D: Psychological Factors Influencing Fast Food Buying Behavior

Kindly tick (√) the most appropriate answer.

SNo	Factor	Sd	d	n	a	Sa
10.	Location of fast food joints influence my decision to buy fast food					
11.	Location of fast food joint influence where I buy fast food					
12.	Location of fast food joint influence the kind of fast food I buy					
13.	Accessibility and availability of fast food restaurants influence my decision to buy fast food					
14.	Accessibility and availability of fast food restaurants influence where I buy fast food					
15.	Accessibility and readiness of fast food restaurants influence the kind of fast food I buy					
16.	Perceived taste influences my decision to buy fast food					
17.	Perceived taste influences where I buy fast food					
18.	Perceived taste influences the kind of fast food I buy					
19.	Perceived cost influences my decision to buy fast food					
20.	Perceived cost influences where I buy fast food					
21.	Perceived cost influences the kind of fast food I buy					
22.	My perception of health risks and reward influence my decision to buy fast food					
23.	My understanding of my health risks and rewards influence where I buy fast food					

24.	My awareness of health risks and rewards influence the kind of I buy junk food					
25.	The appearance of facility influences my decision to buy junk food					
26.	The appearance of facility influences where I buy fast food					
27.	The appearance of eating place influences the kind of fast food I buy					
28.	I usually buy fast food due to lack of time					
29.	I usually buy fast food due to lack of coking resources					
30.	I usually buy fast food due to convenience					

Part E: Socio-cultural Factors Influencing Fast Food Buying Behavior

Kindly tick (√) the most appropriate answer.

SNo	Factor	Sd	d	n	a	Sa
31.	My classmates influence my decision to buy fast food					
32.	My classmates influence where I buy fast food					
33.	My classmates influence the kind of fast food I buy					
34.	My friends influence my decision to buy fast food					
35.	My friends influence where I buy fast food					
36.	My friends influence the kind of fast food I buy					
37.	My social status or networks influence my decision to buy fast food					
38.	My social status or networks influence where I buy fast food					
39.	My social status or networks influence the kind of fast food I buy					

40.	My family influences my decision to buy fast food					
41.	My family influences where I buy fast food					
42.	My family influences the kind of fast food I buy					
43.	My parents influence my decision to buy fast food					
44.	My parents influence where I buy fast food					
45.	My parents influence the kind of fast food I buy					
46.	My religious affiliation influences my decision to buy fast food					
47.	My religious affiliation influences where I buy fast food					
48.	My religious affiliation influences the kind of fast food I buy					
49.	I usually buy fast food in during social gathering, like parties, weddings					

Appendix 3: Introduction Letter



DIRECTORATE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

MHM/2019/49405

27th April, 2022

*The Director, Research Coordination Division
National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation
Utalii House, 8th & 9th Floor
P.O Box 30623- 00100
NAIROBI*

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RUTH WAMBUI NDUNG'U - REGISTRATION NUMBER: MHM/2019/49405


The purpose of this letter is to introduce the above named student who is pursuing Master of Science in Hospitality Management in the Department of Hospitality Management in the School of Hospitality, Travel and Tourism Management.

The title of her research is *"Determinants of Fast Food Buying Behaviour among Mount Kenya University Students in Thika Campus Kiambu County, Kenya."*

She has been cleared by the University's Ethics Review Committee (Certificate attached) and now has to proceed to the field to collect data for her research between April and July, 2022.

Any assistance accorded to her will be highly appreciated.


Thank you.


Dr. Samuel M. Karuga, Ph.D.
Director, Graduate Studies

Mount Kenya University
P.O. Box 342-01000, THIKA
Office of the Director
Graduate Studies

Enc.

Appendix 4: ERC Approval



Mount Kenya University

REF: MKU/ERC/2111 Date: 22 February 2022

TO: RUTH WAMBUI NDUNGU

REG: MHM/2019/49405

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: DETERMINANTS OF FAST FOOD BUYING BEHAVIOR AMONG MOUNT KENYA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN THIKA CAMPUS KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA


This is to inform you that **Mount Kenya University** has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is **1184**. The approval period is **22/02/2022 - 21/02/2023**.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

- i. Only approved documents including informed consents, study instruments, MTA will be used
- ii. All changes including amendments, deviations and violations are submitted for review and approval by **Mount Kenya University**
- iii. Death and life-threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to **Mount Kenya University** within 72 hours of notification
- iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affect the safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to **Mount Kenya University** within 72 hours
- v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions
- vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal
- vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to **Mount Kenya University**

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) <https://research-portal.nacosti.go.ke> and also obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely,




Dr. Peter G. Kirira
Chairman, Mount Kenya University IERC

• The Chairman
Mount Kenya University
Ethics Review Committee
P. O. Box 242 - 0100, Thika

Main Campus, General Kago Road, P.O. Box 342-01000 Thika. Tel: +254 87 2820 000,
Cell: +254 720 790 796, 0709 153 000
Email: info@mku.ac.ke, Web: www.mku.ac.ke

Appendix 5: NACOSTI Permit




REPUBLIC OF KENYA
National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation



**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION**

Ref No: 769645 **Date of Issue: 23/May/2022**


RESEARCH LICENSE



This is to Certify that Miss. Ruth Wambui Ndung'u of Mount Kenya University, has been licensed to conduct research in Kilimamburi on the topic: Determinants of fast food buying behavior among Mount Kenya University students in Thika campus, Kilimamburi county, Kenya, for the period ending : 23/May/2023.


License No: NACOSTI/P/22/17553

Applicant Identification Number
769645



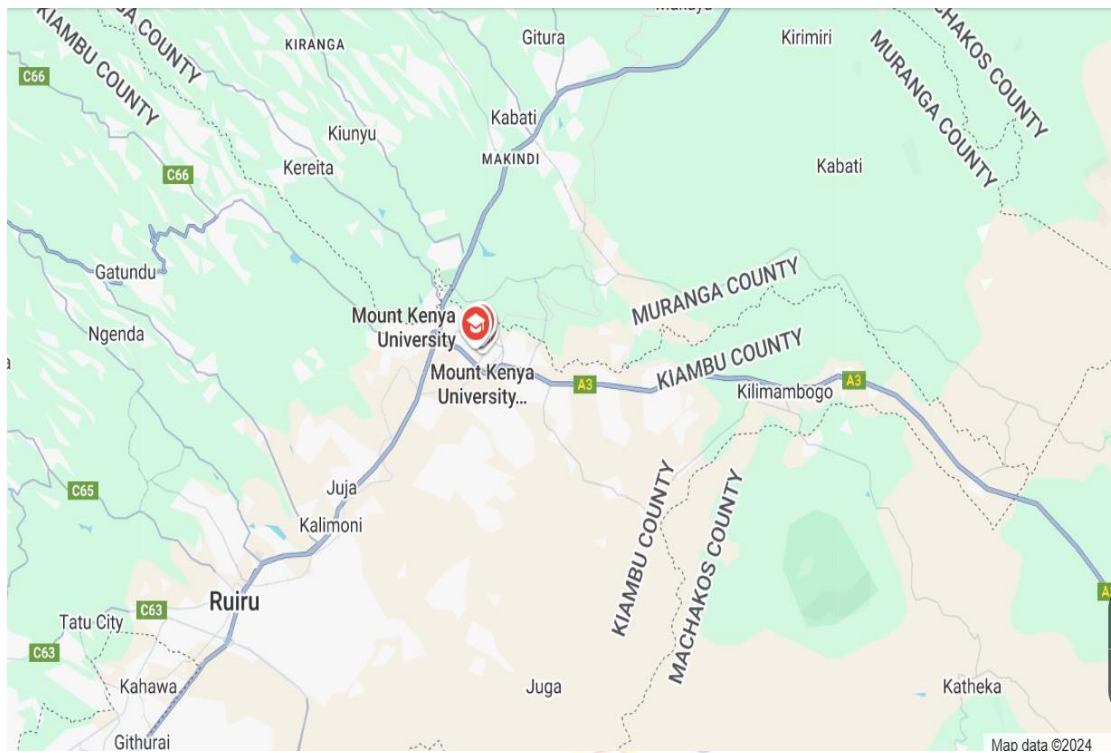
Director General
**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY &
INNOVATION**

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Appendix 6: Map of Mount Kenya University



Appendix 7: Turnitin Report

DETERMINANTS OF FAST FOOD BUYING BEHAVIOR AMONG MOUNT KENYA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN THIKA CAMPUS KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA

by Ruth Wambui

Submission date: 08-Jun-2025 05:10PM (UTC+0300)
 Submission ID: 2694502831
 File name: NDUNGU_RUTH_WAMBUI_8.06.2025.docx (2.06M)
 Word count: 20369
 Character count: 111906



DETERMINANTS OF FAST FOOD BUYING BEHAVIOR AMONG MOUNT KENYA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN THIKA CAMPUS KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA

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