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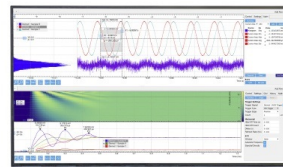
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# Generation Z's Purchase Intention of Fast Food: Influential Factors Unveiled in Kluang, Johor

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**Abstract.** Fast food industry is mushrooming in Malaysia due to the increasingly demand from consumers. Consumption of fast food has become a climate, where it is particularly popular with Generation Z. Generation Z is defined as a digitally driven demographic cohort, whose possessing a broad diversity of taste, favouritism, and behaviour. Having a clear knowledge on how Generation Z makes purchase decision can help to unveil the key determinants impacting their choices. If the influential factors can be determined, fast food marketers can devise pertinent approaches in taping the market share. This study is conducted to investigate the factors affecting generation Z's purchase intention towards fast food industries in Kluang, Johor using the survey method. Twenty variables that may trigger the Generation Z's purchase intention of fast food were sorted out by literature and interview. Questionnaire, confirmed by Cronbach's Alpha test had been distributed to 400 respondents. Descriptive statistical tests was used to analyse respondent profile. Exploratory factor analysis performed had summarized 7 core factors for the Generation Z's fast food purchase intention: service quality, food value and restaurant environment, food quality, price, promotion attractiveness, humanic clues, and health and marketing. These findings give Kluang's fast food marketers crucial insights pertaining the Generation Z's purchase intention.

## INTRODUCTION

Fast food is known as a mass produced food with several menu choices meant for the commercial resale. The center tenet of fast food lies on the high speed of customer service with an affordable price. Consumption of fast food is prevalent everywhere in the world as many have viewed it as their basic daily needs. Due to a hectic lifestyle as a result of rapid urbanization, people opt for fast food over a home-cooked culinary meal, and this is of especially apparent among the dual-earner couples with children [1]. The significant growth of fast food industry in Malaysia is largely due to the government's effort in promoting the western fast food industry as one of the measurements to increase the country's economy under the 9<sup>th</sup> Malaysian plan [2]. The fast food industry is experiencing a terrific expansion, where it has acquired its popularity at the fastest pace in comparison to other food categories to present [3]. In Malaysia, A&W, Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), Mc Donald's, Pizza Hut and Kenny Rogers Roasters, to mention a few, are the famous fast food restaurants originated from United State [4]. Generation Z people who born between years 1995-2012 and they have intensive exposure to the era of digital technologies such as internet, smart phones, laptop, web, and digital media. Generation Z is always marked as the cohort of youngster who regularly consume fast food over home-cooked meal because of convenience and great taste of fast food [5]. Generation Z is considered as the most influential purchasers. Fast food industry in Kluang is experiencing a terrific growth over the

years. However, little information is available on factors affecting the fast food purchase intention among Generation Z. This study aims to investigate the key factors that impact the Generation Z's purchase intention of fast food in Kluang. Rising number of competitive challenges are indisputably pose a threat to all business. Having a good knowledge on the key factors of purchase intention enables the fast food industry in Johor to set effective strategies to attract Generation Z to continue purchasing fast food.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Fast Food**

Fast food industry has grown swiftly in decade of years. Consumption of fast food has emerged as a trend and it is popular among adults and children. To fulfil every single individual's eating habits, numerous fast food franchises have been established in Malaysia, and Kluang is of no exception. Fast food is available anytime of the day with lower price in comparison to dining at restaurants. Ministry of Health Malaysia addressed fast food as a kind of food that is required in high quantities, and it is sold in the fast food restaurants which adhered strictly to the standardized procedures and make full use of electronic and print media to promote the services. Fast food is high in fat, sugar and sodium, and most of the fast food items have food additives [6]. While fast food can be prepared in a shorter time than that of the home cooked meals, excessive consumption of fast food will cause health problem. The risk of bad condition heart disease, diabetes, and high blood pressure increase due to consumption of fast food [7].

### **Generation Z**

Generation Z is a cohort of people who born between years 1995 to 2012 in which they are highly educated, technologically, innovative and creative [8]. Generation Z members are frequently considered as individuals who being creative, multi takers and instant indulgence. In terms of social life, these youngsters are actively communicated, get associated and mingle themselves into a group of peers who share the same interest such as fashion trend, music, electric gadget, video games and food [9]. Generation Z has high awareness on security, and thus, friends or peers have significant influence on Generation Z's purchase decision.

### **Purchase Intention**

Purchase intention is classified as a component cognitive behaviour on how the individual wants to buy a specific brand. Variables, such as consideration and expectation in purchasing a brand can be used to evaluate consumer purchase intention [10]. In addition, the terms purchase intention can be described as the preference of consumer to purchase the product or service and then customer will purchase the product after evaluation [11]. Customer feels satisfied if they receive a product with a superb quality. Empowerment, innovation, and attitude among employee are the keys of delivering an excellent service. In purchase intention, organizational employees play an important role as they have direct influence upon their consumers in making purchase decision. Purchase intention has a primary responsibility in business which be able to build profitable relationship with customers. Therefore, employers frequently produce a new production and focus on quality by upgrading their services or packaging from time to time in order to preserve existing customers which are considered as the most significant target in businesses [12].

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Data Collection and Data Analysis**

Questionnaire survey was used in this study as it is cheap and practical for collecting data from a large sample. Target respondents are Generation Z who are dwelling in Kluang to study their purchase intention towards fast food. As a guideline, the samples of 30 or less than 500 are recommended for the research [13]. A total of 400 respondents

were sampled using the convenience sampling technique. The survey data were analysed using SPSS software. Descriptive analysis and exploratory factor analysis were performed for analysing the survey data.

## Questionnaire Development

Questionnaire was prepared in bilingual, English and Malay languages to facilitate respondents to answer the survey forms. The questionnaire was designed after in-depth literature review and it was separated to two sections. The first section was the questions regarding Generation Z demographic information. Notice that these variables were identified from literature search and interview. A five point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) were adopted for the second section. The reliability of the Questionnaire had been confirmed by Cronbach's Alpha test with alpha value of 0.878.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Descriptive Statistics and Analysis

Information on the respondent's background is investigated. Demographic variables are tabulated in Table 1. The number of male respondents is lesser than the female respondent in this survey. All respondents are from Generation Z whose age ranging from 7 to 24 years old.

**TABLE 1.** Summary of demographic profile.

Demographic	Classification	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	139	35.0
	Female	261	65.0
Age	7-12 years old	4	1.0
	13-18 years old	158	39.5
	19-24 years old	238	59.5
Race	Malay	375	93.8
	Chinese	12	3.0
	Indian	13	3.2
Fast Food Consumption Frequency	1-2 times weekly	284	71.0
	3-4 times weekly	98	24.5
	5-6 times weekly	15	3.8
	Daily	3	0.7
Preference Choice of Fast Food Restaurant	KFC	136	34.0
	McDonald's	157	39.2
	Domino's Pizza	26	6.4
	Pizza Hut	27	6.8
	Marrybrown	18	4.5
	Subway	19	4.8
	A&W	11	2.8
others	6	1.5	
Fast Food Dining Experience Among Family Member	Yes	366	91.5
	No	34	8.5
Expenditure on Fast Food weekly	Less than RM25	194	48.5
	RM26-RM50	151	37.8
	RM51-RM100	52	13.0
	More than RM100	3	0.7

The age group from 19 to 24 years old has the highest number of respondents, 238 respondents that constitutes 59.5% of the samples. Kluang is a Malay dominated town, and thus, it is justifiable that majority (93.8%) respondents for this survey are Malay. Indian and Chinese respondents merely take up 3.0% and 3.2%, respectively. Besides, 284 respondents (71.0%) consume fast food for 1 to 2 times per week, followed by 98 respondents (24.5%) for 3 to 4 times per week, and 15 (3.8%) for 5 to 6 times per week. Only 3 respondents (0.7%) consume fast food daily. The most

favourite choice of fast food restaurant among Generation Z is McDonalds, dominating 39.2% respondents. KFC, Pizza Hut, Domino's Pizza, Subway, Marrybrown, A&W, and others category are tailing behind McDonalds with 34.0% ( $n = 136$ ), 6.8% ( $n = 27$ ), 6.4% ( $n = 26$ ), 4.8% ( $n = 19$ ), 4.5% ( $n = 18$ ), 2.8% ( $n = 11$ ), and 1.5% ( $n = 6$ ), respectively. The statistics show that 91.5% ( $n = 366$ ) family members consume fast food while 34 respondents' family members never consume fast food, which attributes 8.5% of the total respondents. Largest share of respondents ( $n = 194$ ) at 48.5% have spent less than RM25 on fast food in a week time.

## Exploratory Factor Analysis

Factor analysis is a prevalently used data summarization techniques. It helps researcher to diminish many individual variables into a few numbers of factors for a more precise interpretation. In this research, factor analysis was performed to sort out the key influential factors of the fast food purchase intention among Generation Z from Kluang. A total of 20 variables are considered where their mean score and ranking are shown in Table 2.

**TABLE 2.** Mean Score and Ranking for 20 variables affecting purchase intention towards fast food.

Rank	Variables	Mean	Rank	Variables	Mean
1.	Attractive advertisement influences my choice in purchasing fast food.	4.0425	11.	I can save time by ordering online fast food than dine-in.	3.5550
2.	There is a variety of food options on the menu of fast food meal.	3.9775	12.	I prefer buying fast food due to their delivery service.	3.5100
3.	Food value in fast food influences me to purchase fast food.	3.9450	13.	Fast food gives me a sense of joy while eating.	3.4725
4.	Fast food restaurants have a good presentation in terms of packaging and services.	3.8900	14.	The staffs of fast food restaurant are friendly and courteous.	3.4600
5.	A delicious taste is the reason I purchase fast food.	3.7900	15.	I agree that fast food service is much more convenient than dine-in.	3.4225
6.	Fast food restaurants maintain the staff personal hygiene in preparing food.	3.7350	16.	I love the fast food item that offered during the festive season/limited time only.	3.3650
7.	Interior decoration and design of restaurants encourage generation Z to consume fast food.	3.7000	17.	The food offered by the fast food restaurants is safe to consume.	3.2700
8.	I feel by ordering fast food online ease me to do other works.	3.6600	18.	Fast food is a favourable and cheap food compared to home-made food.	3.27
9.	The price of fast food is affordable and acceptable by the customer.	3.6225	19.	I eat small portions of fast food in order to keep my diet.	3.2575
10.	The last fast food meal I had was worth the price.	3.5800	20.	I will purchase certain meals because of the free items that come along with the meals.	3.2225

The appropriateness of data must be confirmed before proceeding with the factor analysis. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy for the 20 variables is found to be 0.839, exceeding the threshold of 0.5 [14]. Meanwhile, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is 0.000, implying the presence of statistically significant association between variables. These 20 variables are clubbed into 7 factors produced by the principal component factor analysis based on a varimax rotation. These 7 core factors explain 61.7% of variance (Table 3), slightly more than the 60% requirement for satisfactory construct validity [15]. The 7 core factors are labeled as Factor 1: Service Quality, Factor 2: Food Value and Restaurant Environment, Factor 3: Food Quality, Factor 4: Price, Factor 5: Promotion Attractiveness, Factor 6: Humanic Clues, and Factor 7: Health and Marketing (Table 3).

**TABLE 3.** Factor profile.

	Factors Loadings	Variance explained (%)s	Cumulative Variance explained (%)
<i>Factor 1: Service Quality</i>		13.257	13.257
I can save time by ordering online fast food than dine-in.	0.827		
I prefer buying fast food due to their delivery service.	0.793		
I feel by ordering fast food online ease me to do other works.	0.701		
I agree that fast food service is much more convenient than dine-in.	0.698		
<i>Factor 2: Food Value and Restaurant Environment</i>		10.984	24.241
Interior decoration and design restaurants encourage Generation Z to consume fast food.	0.764		
Fast food gives me a sense of joy while eating.	0.706		
Food value in fast food influences me to purchase fast food.	0.572		
A delicious taste is the reason I purchase fast food.	0.534		
<i>Factor 3: Food Quality</i>		9.427	33.668
There is a variety of food options on the menu of fast food meal.	0.793		
Fast food restaurants have a good presentation in terms of packaging and services.	0.705		
<i>Factor 4: Price</i>		8.210	41.878
Fast food is a favourable and cheap food compared to home-made food.	0.741		
The last fast food meal I had was worth the price.	0.623		
The price of fast food is affordable and acceptable by the customer.	0.595		
<i>Factor 5: Promotion Attractiveness</i>		7.268	49.146
I love the fast food item that offered during the festive season/limited time only.	0.788		
I will purchase certain meals because of the free items that come along with the meals.	0.781		
<i>Factor 6: Humanic Clues</i>		6.811	55.957
The staffs of fast food restaurant are friendly and courteous.	0.740		
Fast food restaurants maintain the staff personal hygiene in preparing food	0.682		
<i>Factor 7: Health and Marketing</i>		5.713	61.671
I eat small portions of fast food in order to keep my diet.	0.812		
Attractive advertisement influenced my choice in purchasing fast food	0.616		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy	0.839		
Bartlett's test of sphericity	1860.437		
Df	190		
Sig.	.000		

## Exploratory Factor Analysis

### *Factor 1: Service Quality*

Factor 1 on service quality accounts for the highest percentage of the total variance explained, i.e. 13.257% and thus, is the most influential factor. Food delivery service acquires its ground for all business over the year. Fast food industry provides delivery services to homes to give conveniences to consumer. To stay competitive, smaller scaled fast food restaurants also follow suit in providing delivery services with the help of food delivery intermediaries like Food Panda, Grab Food, Delivery.com, etc [16]. Consumers prefer to opt for online services due to its conveniences, user-friendly, and great online experiences [17]. Consumers view online shopping as an useful purchasing method since it able to save time and reduce efforts to buy outside. By online services, customers can compare prices by browsing different websites and companies that offer a lower price. Technology advancement has eased customer in comparing prices thus proving useful for buyers buy product at a lower cost [18]. Besides, fast food apps offer a variety of choices for the menu and highly convenience to consumers especially for working people who stay outside of city area [19].

### *Factor 2: Food Value and Restaurant Environment*

Factor 2 regards to food attributes, i.e., taste and physical environment of restaurant. It explains 10.984% of the variance. Food value can be categorized into convenience (food is cooked and consumed easily), and taste (food is appealing to the senses when consuming). Past studies have showed that consumers will prefer a certain food when they are repeatedly exposure to the taste [20]. Taste plays a crucial role to give a positive sensory effect and senses of joys towards consumers. Physical environment can be elucidated as tangible and intangible constituents that exist either internally or externally from a restaurant. Interior designs, decorations, floor cleanliness, and other facilities given by a restaurant are particularly crucial for enticing consumers to buy the food [21]. They also claimed that a restaurant environment also contributes positively towards the consumers' degree of purchase intention.

### *Factor 3: Food Quality*

Factor 3 tailors for 9.427% of the variance. Food quality is a primary element that influences purchase intention in fast food industry [12]. Food quality is defined as the quality traits of food that is accepted by consumers including the external factors like appearance, flavor, and texture [22]. It was reported that food quality has a series of characteristics which can be merged as a single variable [23]. These characteristics are the variety of food, menu design, food presentation (packaging), food safety, freshness of food, etc. Since food quality is one of the core components in triggering one's purchase intention, the food marketers, especially fast food restaurants are advised to furnish good quality of food from the aspects of fresh ingredients, attractive packaging, taste quality, variety and proper freshness to their customers [24]. Food supply chain must be efficient to achieve an excellent quality flow of food. Preparation and processing of food must be monitored so that the food quality standard is able to fulfil customer's satisfaction while keeping their values in the long run.

### *Factor 4: Price*

Factor 4 is about price and it constitutes 8.21% of the total variance explained. Price is a vital component in a low cost strategy in the purchase decision making [25]. It has been shown that the food price is one of the key criterions for assessing customer purchase intention in the fast food restaurant [26]. Product with affordable prices may lead consumer to purchase it. Thus, fast food restaurant managers should constantly review the pricing issue which has a direct influence on customers' purchase intention. Necessary price adjustments will enable fast food restaurant to stay competitive and to improve its performance in long term [26]. A study by Aliman and Othman [27] has further consolidated the fact that price is an important attribute in purchasing. Fast food restaurants often use penetration

pricing strategy when selling their menu item to consumers. Lowered price may attract more consumers to purchase the fast food [12].

#### *Factor 5: Promotion Attractiveness*

Factor 5 is for promotion attractiveness which has a significant influence on customer decision making. This factor explains 7.268% of variance. The word of promotion is associated with human psychological thinking, as it is connected to certain products or food which are worthy to consume [28]. Besides, promotion is a term used to depict communication in business for product or services to its customers [29]. Promotion can be categorized into advertising, sales promotion (free item), personal selling, direct marketing, and public relation. Several approaches have been implemented by the fast food restaurants to promote and attract customers. To illustrate, KFC introduces special menu for a limited time to promote its business. McDonald's is one of the fast food restaurants that offers free toy to consumers with any purchase of its Happy Meals product.

#### *Factor 6: Humanic Clues*

Factor 6 is about the behaviour, performance and appearance of the employees, and so it is addressed as humanic clues. This factor accounts for 6.811% of the variance. Body language, and voice tone are humanic clues where employee friendliness has a significant impact on customers' impressions towards its fast food organizations service [30]. It was demonstrated that courteous, knowledgeable, and efficient service providers by employees contribute to a superior service [31]. A good employee who serves a friendly smile, provides a heartfelt greeting and meets customer needs tends to affect customer's service experience. Awareness towards food safety, especially hygiene practice has increased drastically among consumer in purchase decision making [32].

#### *Factor 7: Health and Marketing*

A total of 5.713% of the variability is contributed by Factor 7. Factor 7 covers individual choices based on health or attractive advertisement in decision making of purchasing fast food. Fast food is regularly marketed through television advertisements by using animation and favourite cartoon characters to attractive young aged customers [33]. Media like newspaper, magazines, billboards, radio or cinemas are effective platforms used by the fast food industry to attract people to purchase fast food. Research indicated that advertising through internet, magazines, product packaging, and digital media platform is the main culprit that lures young people into consuming unhealthy food [34]. On the bright side, there are consumers who prefer to eat a small portion or size serving in order to keep their diet. Fast food chains can take this opportunity to create a new and healthy menu based on vegetables that target at those consumers who intend to keep their diet by consuming fast food. Fast food restaurant such as McDonald's has made the most progress in lessening its portion size and discontinues of Supersize sodas, and French Fries since 2004 while Wendy's discard some ambiguous terms in describing its products, for example, changes medium French fries to small, biggie to medium, and great biggie to large [35].

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This study has unveiled the key determinants impacting the Generation Z's purchase intention towards the fast food in Kluang, Johor. The results found that the 7 factors comprising the service quality, food value and restaurant environment, food quality, price, promotion attractiveness, humanic clues, and health and marketing are the core drivers to purchase fast food among the Generation Z. Among these 7 factors, service quality, food value and restaurant environment, and food quality appeared to be the three most important influential factors, which constituted 33.7% of total variance explained. Service quality is the main driver for Generation Z in purchasing the fast food in Kluang, Johor. Purchase intention in the market field is no doubt the crucial part in order to determine the success of any business. The findings of this study can assist the fast food marketers to improve their performance by concentrating



on the identified key factors in order to satisfy consumer needs under the competitive environments. Future research can be made to compare the factors affecting purchase intention of several different generations, like Generation X versus Y. A larger target of population should be performed for future research to increase the precision of the results.

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