

Exploring Factors Influencing University Students' Consumer Behaviour in Fast Food Restaurants

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationships between perceived convenience, price sensitivity, social influence, and fast-food consumption habits among university students in Malaysia and India, using McDonald's as the study context. A cross-sectional quantitative survey collected responses from 200 university students, comprising 100 respondents from each country. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, Pearson correlations, and multiple linear regression in SPSS. Social influence was the strongest statistically significant predictor of fast-food consumption habits in both India ($\beta = .754$, $p < .001$) and Malaysia ($\beta = .600$, $p < .001$). Price sensitivity was a significant positive predictor in Malaysia ($\beta = .233$, $p = .014$), but not in India ($\beta = .025$, $p = .779$). Perceived convenience was not a significant independent predictor in either sample. These findings highlight the relevance of peer-related factors to students' fast-food consumption and suggest that price sensitivity may have different associations across the two samples. The findings offer insights for food service providers and university stakeholders, although the cross-sectional design and separate country-level analyses limit causal and cross-country inferences.

Keywords: Consumer Behavior; Fast Food Industry; Perceived Convenience; Price Sensitivity; Social Influence; University Students

INTRODUCTION

The fast-food industry has experienced significant growth in recent years, particularly among university students, who represent an important consumer segment. In Malaysia and India, this trend has become increasingly evident as students rely on fast food due to time constraints, academic workloads, and limited financial resources. As students balance their academic responsibilities and social lives, their food choices are often influenced by convenience and affordability rather than nutritional considerations (Halim et al., 2023; Hussein et al., 2025). This reflects a shift in consumption behaviour, whereby practical considerations play a significant role in food-related decision-making.

Beyond providing quick and affordable meals, fast-food outlets have increasingly become social spaces where students gather, interact, and engage in academic and leisure activities. Fast-food chains such as McDonald's are frequently visited by university students because of their accessibility, comfortable dining environments, and consistent service quality. These characteristics position fast-food outlets not only as food service providers but also as social gathering spaces that accommodate students' lifestyles and daily routines (Chai & Cheah, 2024; Tunde et al., 2023).

Previous studies have identified several key factors influencing fast-food consumption behaviour among university students, particularly perceived convenience, price sensitivity, and social influence. Perceived convenience plays an important role, as students tend to prefer food options that are easily accessible and require minimal preparation or waiting time within their busy schedules (Halim et al., 2023). Similarly, price sensitivity is a significant consideration, as students with limited financial resources often prioritise affordable dining options (Hussein et al., 2025). Social influence, including peer behaviour and exposure to digital platforms, may also shape students' preferences and dining decisions, as individuals are frequently influenced by their social environments (Chai & Cheah, 2024).

Despite the growing body of research on fast-food consumption, uncertainty remains regarding which of these factors plays the most prominent role in shaping university students' consumption behaviour. Furthermore, relatively limited attention has been given to university students in Malaysia and India, where cultural, social, and economic conditions may contribute to different consumption patterns compared with those observed in other regions (Hong & Ming, 2023). This research gap highlights the need for an integrated examination of perceived convenience, price sensitivity, and social influence to better understand their relationships with students' fast-food consumption behaviour and identify potential similarities or differences between the two countries.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the influence of perceived convenience, price sensitivity, and social influence on fast-food consumption behaviour among university students in Malaysia and India, using McDonald's as the primary case study. By integrating these factors into a single research framework, the study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' dining preferences and consumption patterns. The findings are expected to contribute to the literature on consumer behaviour in the hospitality industry and provide practical insights for food and beverage service providers in developing strategies that better address students' needs and preferences.

Based on the identified research problem, this study addresses three research questions. First, to what extent is perceived convenience associated with fast-food consumption habits among university students? Second, how are price sensitivity and social influence associated with students' fast-food consumption habits? Third, how do

the observed relationships between perceived convenience, price sensitivity, social influence, and fast-food consumption habits compare between university students in Malaysia and India?

Accordingly, the objectives of this study are to examine the relationship between perceived convenience and fast-food consumption habits, evaluate the associations of price sensitivity and social influence with students' fast-food consumption habits, and descriptively compare the observed relationships among university students in Malaysia and India.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews the existing literature on perceived convenience, price sensitivity, and social influence in relation to fast-food consumption habits among university students. Based on previous research, three hypotheses are developed to examine the associations between these independent variables and fast-food consumption habits. In addition, an exploratory comparison is conducted to examine the relative importance of these factors among university students in Malaysia and India.

Perceived Convenience

Perceived convenience is an important factor influencing consumer purchasing decisions, particularly among university students who often face demanding academic schedules. Consumers may prefer fast food because of its accessibility, quick service, and minimal preparation requirements. Previous research suggests that greater perceived convenience is associated with stronger intentions to purchase fast food (Chowdhury, 2023). Accordingly, students who perceive fast-food services as more convenient may be more likely to develop stronger fast-food consumption habits.

The increasing accessibility of fast-food restaurants has made them a practical dining option for students managing academic responsibilities and other daily activities. Rajmohan et al. (2024) identified convenience, affordability, accessibility, peer influence, and social norms as factors influencing food choices among college students. Their findings suggest that students often prefer fast food because it is readily available and can be purchased quickly. The study also highlights the relevance of behavioural and environmental factors in shaping students' fast-food consumption.

Similarly, Oliveira and Raposo (2024) examined fast-food consumption choices among higher education students in Portugal. Their findings indicate that convenience, accessibility, and opportunities for social interaction contribute to students' dining preferences. Students may choose fast-food outlets because they provide quick meal options during academic activities and convenient spaces for gathering with friends. These findings suggest that perceived convenience and social interaction are relevant considerations in students' fast-food consumption decisions.

Chien et al. (2025) and Chowdhury (2023) also highlighted the importance of convenience and time-saving characteristics in fast-food consumption. Students and younger consumers may prefer fast food because it reduces the effort required for meal preparation and accommodates their daily routines. Furthermore, convenient service channels, including drive-through facilities and food delivery platforms, provide additional accessibility and flexibility. These services enable consumers to obtain meals efficiently, particularly when managing demanding schedules (Oliveira & Raposo, 2024; Rajmohan et al., 2024). Collectively, these findings provide a theoretical basis for examining the

relationship between perceived convenience and fast-food consumption habits among university students.

H1: Perceived convenience is positively associated with fast-food consumption habits among university students.

Price Sensitivity

Price sensitivity refers to the extent to which consumers' purchasing decisions respond to changes in product prices. University students may be particularly sensitive to food prices because of their limited disposable income and financial constraints. Consequently, affordable menu options, promotional offers, and perceived value for money may influence their dining preferences. [Lok et al. \(2026\)](#) highlighted the relevance of price and perceived value in fast-food consumption decisions, suggesting that affordability is an important consideration for younger consumers.

[Salleh et al. \(2023\)](#) examined the influence of food quality, service quality, and price on fast-food purchasing behaviour among consumers in Malaysia. Their findings identified price as an important consideration in purchasing decisions, particularly when consumers evaluate the value offered by food products. For university students with limited budgets, affordable meals and promotional offers may therefore influence their willingness to purchase fast food ([Jian et al., 2021](#)).

Similarly, [Ee and Pillay \(2023\)](#) investigated factors affecting fast-food consumption among students and employees at the UTHM Pagoh campus. Their study identified price as one of the factors associated with fast-food consumption decisions. Affordability and perceived value for money were particularly relevant to consumers with limited financial resources, indicating that price considerations may influence the selection of fast-food outlets and the frequency of consumption.

Previous research has also highlighted the role of pricing strategies in attracting budget-conscious consumers ([Mehrabian et al., 2021](#)). Discounts, value meals, and promotional offers may make fast-food products more financially accessible to university students. Such strategies may influence students' perceptions of affordability and encourage purchasing decisions that align with their available budgets.

[Didarloo et al. \(2022\)](#) further identified a statistically significant relationship between income and fast-food consumption among university students. Their findings suggest that purchasing power is relevant to students' ability to purchase convenience foods. Similarly, [Chai and Cheah \(2024\)](#) discussed the relationship between consumers' financial circumstances and food purchasing behaviour. These findings indicate that students' financial resources may influence how they respond to food prices and promotional offers.

During periods of economic uncertainty and rising living costs, affordability may become an increasingly important consideration in students' dining decisions. Promotional pricing and value-oriented menu options may influence fast-food purchasing behaviour by increasing perceived value for money ([Ee & Pillay, 2023](#); [Salleh et al., 2023](#)). Therefore, the literature provides a basis for examining the direct relationship between price sensitivity and fast-food consumption habits among university students.

H2: Price sensitivity is positively associated with fast-food consumption habits among university students.

Social Influence

Social influence is another factor that may shape fast-food consumption behaviour among university students. Students' dining preferences can be influenced by their peers, social interactions, and exposure to social media content. As eating frequently involves shared experiences, students may consider the preferences and behaviours of their social groups when selecting dining locations. Previous research suggests that peer influence and online marketing can affect consumers' attitudes towards fast food and their purchasing intentions (Mohamed Sadow al., 2024).

Dassanayake (2023) investigated factors motivating fast-food consumption and identified convenience and social influence as important considerations in consumers' behavioural intentions. Peer interactions, group dining experiences, and social activities may encourage consumers to select fast-food outlets as convenient meeting places (Rini et al., 2023). These findings suggest that social influence may contribute to students' fast-food consumption by shaping their dining preferences and social routines.

Similarly, Gligorić et al. (2021) examined the relationship between social interactions and food choices, highlighting the relevance of peers and social environments in shaping eating behaviour. Exposure to peers who frequently consume unhealthy food may be associated with similar dietary choices among students. This suggests that food consumption decisions are not determined solely by individual preferences but may also reflect the behaviours and expectations of surrounding social groups.

Social influence may shape students' dining decisions across different social situations. University students frequently participate in group activities and shared dining experiences, which may encourage them to select fast-food restaurants as social gathering places. These considerations provide a basis for examining the relationship between social influence and fast-food consumption habits among university students.

H3: Social influence is positively associated with fast-food consumption habits among university students.

Comparison of Fast-Food Consumption Behaviour Between Malaysian and Indian University Students

Fast-food consumption habits among university students may vary across countries due to differences in social environments, financial circumstances, and consumer preferences (Saha et al., 2022). Perceived convenience, price sensitivity, and social influence are relevant factors in understanding students' fast-food consumption behaviour. However, the relative importance of these factors may differ between Malaysian and Indian university students.

Comparing these factors across the two countries may provide insights into similarities and differences in students' consumption habits. In the present study, separate multiple linear regression analyses are used to examine the associations between perceived convenience, price sensitivity, social influence, and fast-food consumption habits in Malaysia and India. The resulting standardised regression coefficients are compared descriptively to identify patterns in the relative importance of the predictors.

Although the observed coefficients may differ between the two samples, such comparisons do not establish statistically significant differences between countries without a formal statistical test. Therefore, the cross-country comparison is treated as an exploratory research objective rather than a confirmatory hypothesis.

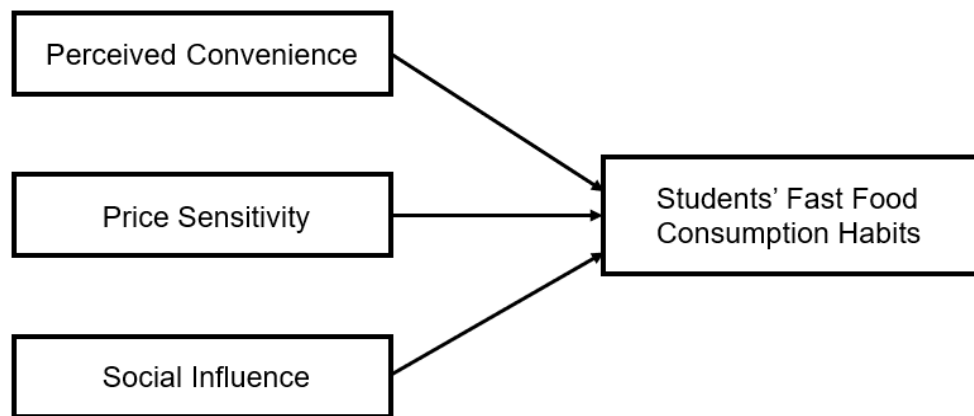
Accordingly, the following comparative research question is proposed:

RQ3: How do the observed regression coefficients and the relative importance of perceived convenience, price sensitivity, and social influence in explaining fast-food consumption habits compare between Malaysian and Indian university students?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the proposed relationships between perceived convenience, price sensitivity, social influence, and fast-food consumption habits among university students. Perceived convenience, price sensitivity, and social influence serve as the independent variables, while fast-food consumption habits represent the dependent variable. The framework provides the basis for testing H1, H2, and H3 using separate multiple linear regression analyses for Malaysia and India.

Figure 1. Research Framework



RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional research design to examine the relationships between perceived convenience, price sensitivity, social influence, and fast-food consumption habits among university students in Malaysia and India. A positivist research paradigm was adopted, as the study focused on examining measurable relationships between the independent and dependent variables through statistical analysis. The cross-sectional design enabled the collection of survey responses at a single point in time and was considered appropriate for investigating associations among the study variables.

Data were collected using a structured online questionnaire administered through Google Forms. The questionnaire items were adapted from previously established research instruments and modified to reflect university students' experiences and consumption behaviour at McDonald's. A five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), was used to measure respondents' agreement with the statements. The questionnaire consisted of five sections. Section A collected demographic information, while Sections B to E measured perceived convenience, price sensitivity, social influence, and fast-food consumption habits, respectively.

Perceived convenience was measured using four questionnaire items adapted from [Husseini et al. \(2025\)](#). The items addressed accessibility, time-saving characteristics,

and delivery service quality. These measures were selected to examine students' perceptions of convenience when purchasing fast food.

Price sensitivity was measured using four items adapted from [Syafiqah et al. \(2018\)](#). The items focused on students' financial considerations and responsiveness to promotional offers and discounts. The wording was adjusted to reflect the relevance of affordability and pricing considerations to university students' fast-food consumption.

Social influence was assessed using four items adapted from [Mohamed Sadom al. \(2024\)](#). The items examined peer influence, social interactions, and the role of fast-food restaurants as social gathering spaces. These measures were intended to capture the social considerations associated with students' fast-food consumption habits.

The dependent variable, fast-food consumption habits, was measured using four items adapted from [Sharhida Zawani et al. \(2021\)](#). The items addressed the frequency and consistency of fast-food consumption and situations associated with students' consumption tendencies. The measurement approach was intended to capture respondents' self-reported consumption habits rather than relying solely on their reported frequency of restaurant visits.

The target population comprised university students in Malaysia and India. The final dataset included 200 valid responses, consisting of 100 respondents from Malaysia and 100 respondents from India. The two country samples were analysed separately to examine the relationships between the three independent variables and fast-food consumption habits within each sample.

Before the questionnaire was administered, a pre-test involving five students was conducted to assess the clarity, comprehensibility, and technical functionality of the survey instrument. The pre-test focused on whether respondents could understand the questionnaire items and complete the online survey without difficulty. Minor adjustments were made to improve the clarity of the questions and their suitability for the study context.

Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were used to summarise respondents' demographic characteristics, fast-food consumption frequency, and the distributions of the study constructs. Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, while Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the bivariate relationships among the variables.

Multiple linear regression analyses were conducted separately for the Malaysian and Indian samples to examine the independent associations between perceived convenience, price sensitivity, social influence, and fast-food consumption habits. The standardised regression coefficients (β) were used to evaluate the relative strength and direction of the predictors within each sample, while statistical significance was assessed at the 5% level ($p < .05$). The coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to evaluate the proportion of variance in fast-food consumption habits explained by each regression model.

Finally, the regression results from Malaysia and India were compared descriptively to address the third research question (RQ3). This comparison focused on the direction, magnitude, and statistical significance of the observed coefficients within each sample. Because no formal statistical test of between-country coefficient differences was

reported, the comparison was interpreted as exploratory and was not used to establish statistically significant differences between Malaysian and Indian university students.

RESULTS

Results From India Respondent Profile

Table 1. Respondent Demographic Profile of Indian University Students (N = 100)

Category	Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	18–21 years	39	39.0
	22–25 years	57	57.0
	Above 25 years	4	4.0
Gender	Male	67	67.0
	Female	28	28.0
	Prefer not to say	5	5.0
Level of Study	Undergraduate	28	28.0
	Postgraduate	72	72.0
Monthly Allowance/Income	No income	43	43.0
	Below ₹5,000	26	26.0
	₹5,000–₹10,000	16	16.0
	Above ₹10,000	15	15.0
Fast-Food Consumption Frequency	Once a month	34	34.0
	2–3 times a month	32	32.0
	Weekly	16	16.0
	More than once a week	18	18.0

Note. N = 100 valid respondents. Percentages are based on the total sample.

Figure 2. Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 100)

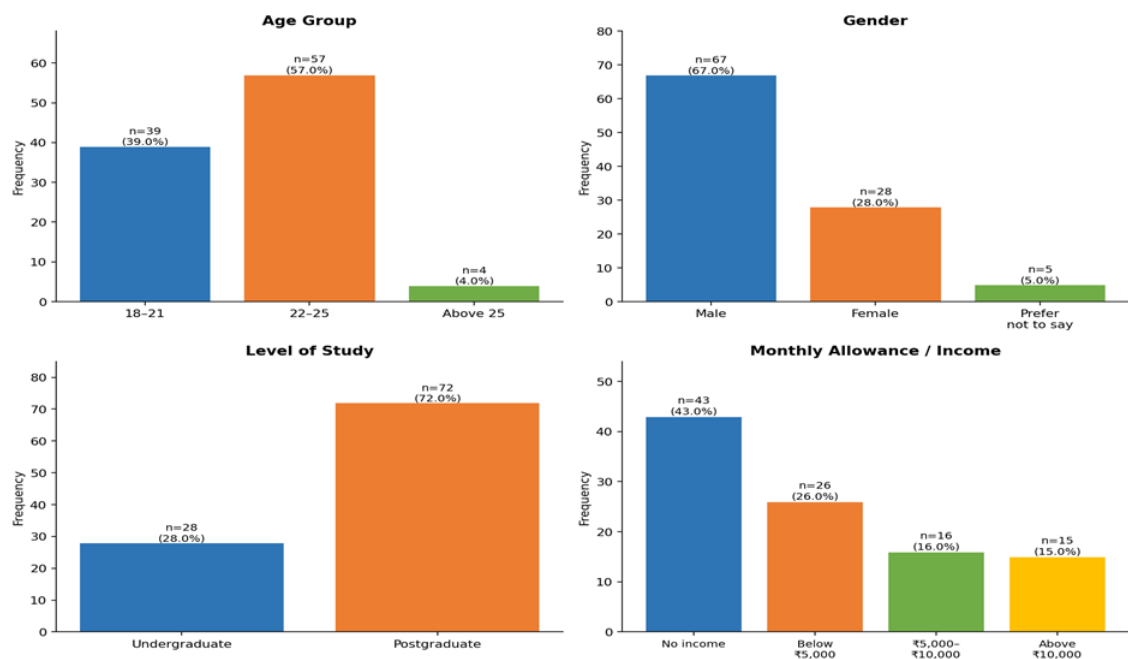


Table 1 and Figure 2 present the demographic characteristics of the 100 Indian university students who participated in this study. Most respondents were male (67.0%, $n = 67$), aged 22–25 years (57.0%, $n = 57$), and enrolled in postgraduate programmes (72.0%, $n = 72$). Regarding monthly allowance or income, 43.0% ($n = 43$) reported having no income, while 26.0% ($n = 26$) received less than ₹5,000 per month. These findings describe the demographic and financial characteristics of the Indian sample.

Fast-Food Consumption Frequency

Table 2. Fast-Food Consumption Frequency (N = 100)

Consumption Frequency	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Once a month	34	34.0
2–3 times a month	32	32.0
Weekly	16	16.0
More than once a week	18	18.0
Total	100	100.0

Note. No respondents selected the “Rarely” category; therefore, it was not included among the valid responses.

Figure 3. Fast-Food Consumption Frequency Among Indian University Students (N = 100)

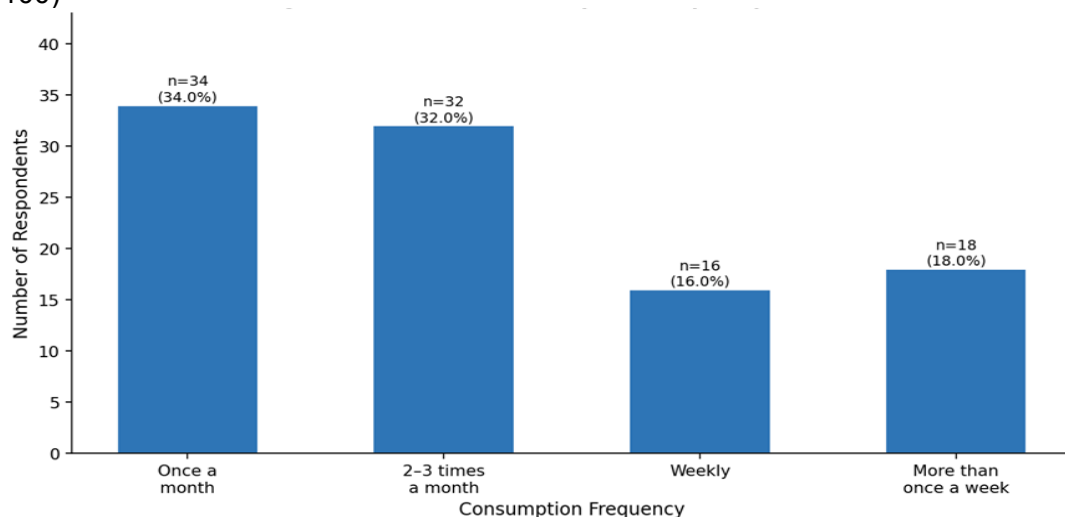


Table 2 and Figure 3 illustrate the frequency of fast-food consumption among Indian university students. The largest proportion of respondents reported consuming fast food once a month (34.0%, $n = 34$), followed by those consuming it two to three times a month (32.0%, $n = 32$). Meanwhile, 16.0% ($n = 16$) consumed fast food weekly, and 18.0% ($n = 18$) reported consuming it more than once a week. Overall, 66.0% of respondents consumed fast food no more than three times per month, while 34.0% consumed it at least once a week. No respondents selected the “Rarely” category.

Descriptive Statistics, Reliability, and Zero-Order Correlations

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach’s Alpha, and Zero-Order Correlations (N = 100)

Variable	1	2	3	4	Mean	SD	Items
1. Perceived Convenience	0.833	—	—	—	3.060	1.023	4
2. Price Sensitivity	0.711***	0.900	—	—	3.140	1.036	4
3. Social Influence	0.664***	0.618***	0.849	—	2.865	1.022	4
4. Consumption Habits (DV)	0.569***	0.526***	0.803***	0.821	2.725	0.921	4

Note. N = 100. Diagonal values represent Cronbach's alpha coefficients. Off-diagonal values represent Pearson's correlation coefficients. SD = standard deviation. ***p < .001 (two-tailed).

Figure 4. Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of Study Constructs (Error Bars = ± 1 SD; N = 100)

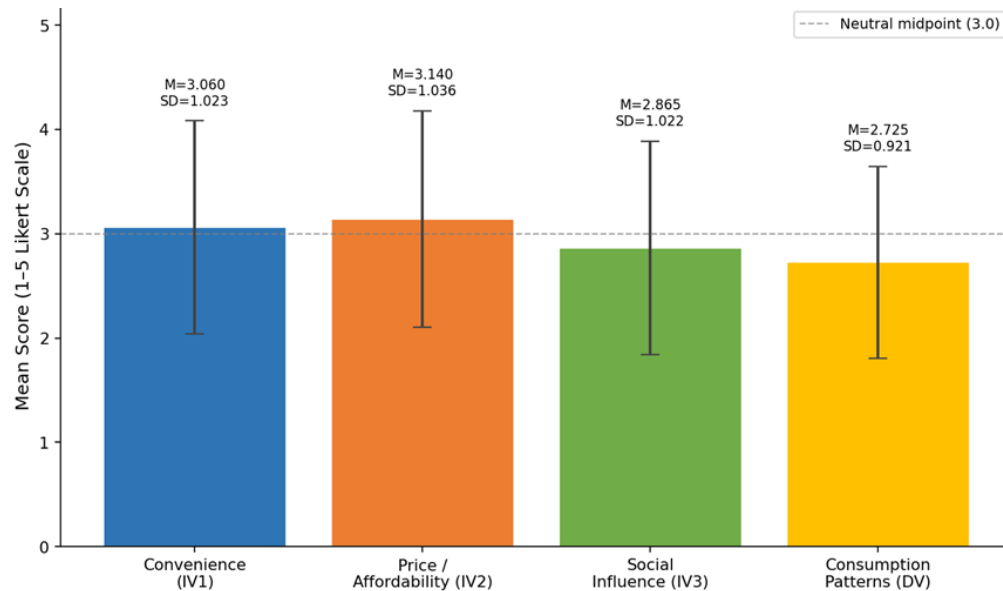


Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics, internal consistency reliability, and Pearson correlation coefficients for the four study constructs. All constructs demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .821 to .900. Price sensitivity recorded the highest mean score ($M = 3.140$, $SD = 1.036$), followed by perceived convenience ($M = 3.060$, $SD = 1.023$), social influence ($M = 2.865$, $SD = 1.022$), and fast-food consumption habits ($M = 2.725$, $SD = 0.921$).

The correlation analysis revealed positive and statistically significant relationships between all three independent variables and fast-food consumption habits ($p < .001$). Social influence demonstrated the strongest positive correlation with consumption habits ($r = .803$), followed by perceived convenience ($r = .569$) and price sensitivity ($r = .526$). Positive correlations were also observed among the independent variables, with coefficients ranging from .618 to .711.

These results indicate that all three predictors were positively associated with fast-food consumption habits at the bivariate level. However, their independent contributions were subsequently examined using multiple linear regression.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between perceived convenience, price sensitivity, social influence, and fast-food consumption habits among Indian university students. The regression diagnostics reported in the study indicated no apparent violations of the assessed assumptions. The Durbin-Watson statistic was 1.965, while correlations among the independent variables were below .80.

Table 4. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis: Predictors of Fast-Food Consumption Habits (N = 100)

Variable	B	SE	t	p	β	Decision
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Intercept	0.571	0.195	2.931	.004**	—	—
Perceived Convenience	0.045	0.085	0.530	.598	0.050	H1 Not Supported
Price Sensitivity	0.022	0.080	0.281	.779	0.025	H2 Not Supported
Social Influence	0.679	0.076	8.930	< .001***	0.754	H3 Supported*

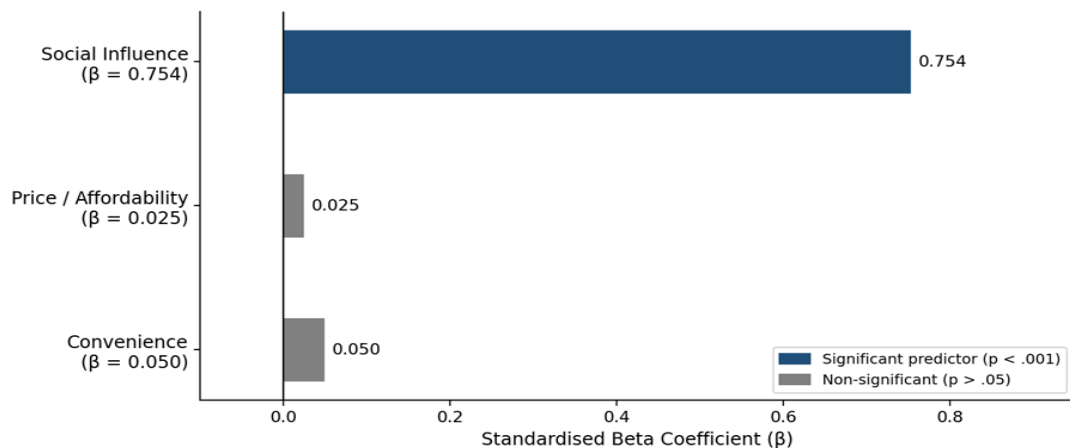
Note. N = 100. $R^2 = .647$; adjusted $R^2 = .636$; $F(3, 96) = 58.605$, $p < .001$; Durbin–Watson = 1.965. B = unstandardised regression coefficient; SE = standard error; β = standardised regression coefficient. Hypothesis decisions were based on $p < .05$.

As shown in Table 4, the overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(3, 96) = 58.605$, $p < .001$, explaining 64.7% of the variance in fast-food consumption habits ($R^2 = .647$, adjusted $R^2 = .636$).

Social influence emerged as the strongest and only statistically significant independent predictor of fast-food consumption habits ($B = .679$, $SE = .076$, $\beta = .754$, $t = 8.930$, $p < .001$). This positive coefficient indicates that higher social influence scores were associated with higher consumption habit scores after controlling for perceived convenience and price sensitivity.

In contrast, perceived convenience ($\beta = .050$, $p = .598$) and price sensitivity ($\beta = .025$, $p = .779$) did not demonstrate statistically significant independent associations with fast-food consumption habits. Therefore, H3 was supported, whereas H1 and H2 were not supported in the Indian sample.

Figure 5. Standardised Regression Coefficients (β) for Predictors of Fast-Food Consumption Habits



Note. Blue = Significant predictor ($p < .001$); Grey = non-significant predictor ($p > .05$).

Figure 5 illustrates the relative magnitudes of the standardised regression coefficients. Social influence recorded the largest positive coefficient ($\beta = .754$), followed by perceived convenience ($\beta = .050$) and price sensitivity ($\beta = .025$). These results identify social influence as the strongest statistically significant predictor in the Indian regression model.

Result From Malaysia

Respondent Profile

Table 5. Respondent Demographic Profile of Malaysian University Students (N = 100)

Category	Response	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	18–21 years	75	75.0
	22–25 years	19	19.0
	Above 25 years	6	6.0
Gender	Female	71	71.0
	Male	29	29.0
	Prefer not to say	0	0.0
Level of Study	Undergraduate	90	90.0
	Postgraduate	10	10.0
Monthly Allowance/Income	No income	31	31.0
	Below RM250	27	27.0
	RM250–RM500	22	22.0
	Above RM500	20	20.0
Fast-Food Consumption Frequency	Once a month	46	46.0
	2–3 times a month	37	37.0
	Weekly	13	13.0
	More than once a week	4	4.0

Note. N = 100 valid respondents. Percentages are presented to one decimal place.

Table 5 presents the demographic characteristics of the 100 Malaysian university students who participated in the study. Most respondents were aged 18–21 years (75.0%, n = 75), followed by those aged 22–25 years (19.0%, n = 19) and above 25 years (6.0%, n = 6). These results indicate that the Malaysian sample was predominantly composed of students in the youngest age category.

Fast-Food Consumption Frequency

Table 6. Fast-Food Consumption Frequency Among Malaysian University Students (N = 100)

Consumption Frequency	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Once a month	46	46.0
2–3 times a month	37	37.0
Weekly	13	13.0
More than once a week	4	4.0
Total	100	100.0

Note. N = 100 valid respondents. Percentages are presented to one decimal place.

Figure 6. Fast-Food Consumption Frequency Among Malaysian University Students (N = 100)

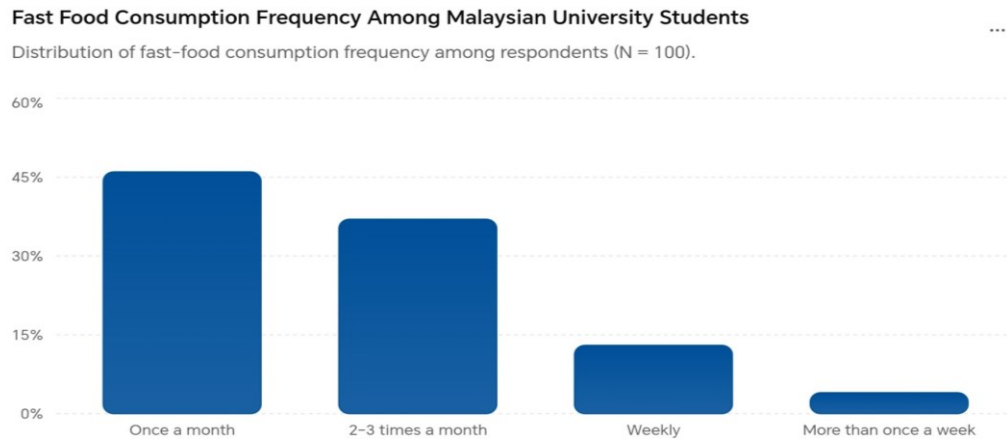


Table 6 and Figure 6 present the frequency of fast-food consumption among Malaysian university students. Most respondents reported consuming fast food once a month (46.0%, $n = 46$), followed by two to three times a month (37.0%, $n = 37$). Meanwhile, 13.0% ($n = 13$) consumed fast food weekly, and 4.0% ($n = 4$) consumed it more than once a week.

Overall, 83.0% of Malaysian respondents reported consuming fast food no more than three times per month, while 17.0% consumed it at least once a week. These findings indicate that monthly consumption was more common than weekly consumption among the surveyed Malaysian students.

Reliability Analysis

Table 7. Reliability Analysis Results (N = 100)

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Perceived Convenience	4	0.868
Price Sensitivity	4	0.847
Social Influence	4	0.907
Students' Fast-Food Consumption Habits	4	0.907

Note. N = 100. All constructs exceeded the commonly accepted Cronbach's alpha threshold of .70.

Table 7 presents the internal consistency reliability of the four measurement constructs. Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from .847 to .907, indicating satisfactory reliability across all constructs. Social influence and fast-food consumption habits recorded the highest coefficients ($\alpha = .907$), followed by perceived convenience ($\alpha = .868$) and price sensitivity ($\alpha = .847$). These results indicate that the measurement scales demonstrated adequate internal consistency for subsequent analyses.

Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Correlations

Table 8. Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach's Alpha, and Zero-Order Correlations (N = 100)

Variable	1	2	3	4	M	SD	Items
1. Perceived Convenience	.868	—	—	—	3.244	0.683	4
2. Price Sensitivity	.586**	.847	—	—	3.297	0.683	4
3. Social Influence	.353**	.461**	.907	—	3.348	0.891	4
4. Fast-Food Consumption Habits	.308**	.487**	.694**	.907	3.465	1.036	4

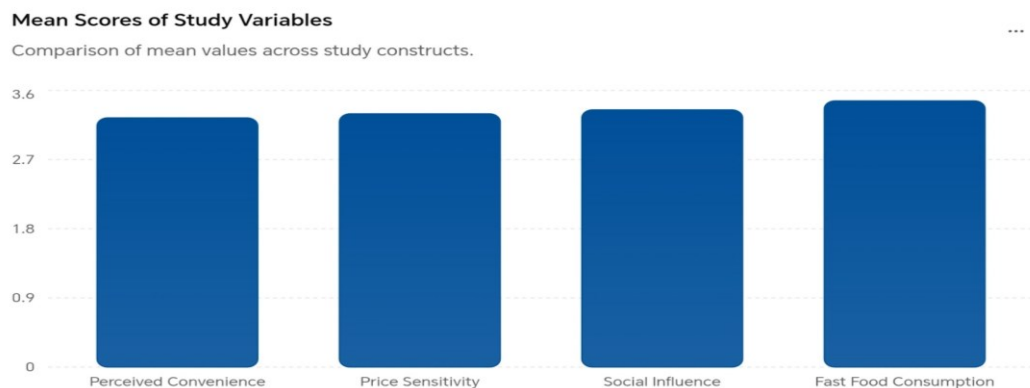
Note. N = 100. **p < .01 (two-tailed). Bold diagonal values represent Cronbach's alpha coefficients. Off-diagonal values represent Pearson correlation coefficients. M = mean; SD = standard deviation.

Table 8 presents the descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficients for the Malaysian sample. Fast-food consumption habits recorded the highest mean score (M = 3.465, SD = 1.036), followed by social influence (M = 3.348, SD = .891), price sensitivity (M = 3.297, SD = .683), and perceived convenience (M = 3.244, SD = .683).

The correlation analysis revealed statistically significant positive relationships between all three independent variables and fast-food consumption habits. Social influence demonstrated the strongest positive correlation ($r = .694$, $p < .01$), followed by price sensitivity ($r = .487$, $p < .01$) and perceived convenience ($r = .308$, $p < .01$).

Significant positive correlations were also observed among the independent variables. Perceived convenience was correlated with price sensitivity ($r = .586$, $p < .01$) and social influence ($r = .353$, $p < .01$), while price sensitivity was correlated with social influence ($r = .461$, $p < .01$). These results demonstrate positive bivariate associations among the study variables.

Figure 7. Mean Scores of Study Variables (N = 100)



Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the independent associations between perceived convenience, price sensitivity, social influence, and fast-food consumption habits among Malaysian university students. The Durbin–Watson statistic was 2.422, while the reported variance inflation factor values were below 2.0 and tolerance values exceeded .10.

Table 9. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis: Predictors of Fast-Food Consumption Habits (N = 100)

Variable	B	SE	t	p	β	Decision
Intercept	2.057	1.307	1.574	.119	—	—
Perceived Convenience	−0.049	0.108	−0.455	.650	−0.040	H1 Not Supported
Price Sensitivity	0.286	0.114	2.511	.014	0.233	H2 Supported
Social Influence	0.564	0.076	7.466	< .001	0.600	H3 Supported

Note. N = 100. B = unstandardised regression coefficient; SE = standard error; β = standardised regression coefficient. Hypothesis decisions were based on $p < .05$.

As presented in Table 9, the overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(3, 96) = 34.359$, $p < .001$. The model explained 51.8% of the variance in fast-food consumption habits ($R^2 = .518$, adjusted $R^2 = .503$).

Social influence emerged as the strongest statistically significant predictor of fast-food consumption habits ($B = .564$, $SE = .076$, $\beta = .600$, $t = 7.466$, $p < .001$). Price sensitivity was also a statistically significant positive predictor ($B = .286$, $SE = .114$, $\beta = .233$, $t = 2.511$, $p = .014$).

In contrast, perceived convenience was not statistically significant after accounting for the other predictors ($B = -.049$, $SE = .108$, $\beta = -.040$, $t = -.455$, $p = .650$). Accordingly, H2 and H3 were supported, whereas H1 was not supported in the Malaysian sample.

Figure 8. Standardised Regression Coefficients (β) for Predictors of Fast-Food Consumption Habits Among Malaysian University Students (N = 100)



Figure 8 illustrates the standardised regression coefficients for the three independent variables. Social influence demonstrated the largest positive coefficient ($\beta = .600$), followed by price sensitivity ($\beta = .233$), whereas perceived convenience recorded a small negative coefficient ($\beta = -.040$). Only social influence and price sensitivity were statistically significant independent predictors in the Malaysian regression model.

Descriptive Comparison Between Malaysia and India

To address the exploratory research question, the standardised regression coefficients were compared descriptively between the Malaysian and Indian samples.

Table 10. Descriptive Comparison of Regression Results Between India and Malaysia

Predictor	India (β)	India (p)	Malaysia (β)	Malaysia (p)
Perceived Convenience	.050	.598	-.040	.650
Price Sensitivity	.025	.779	.233	.014
Social Influence	.754	< .001	.600	< .001

Note. The comparison is descriptive. No formal statistical test of between-country coefficient differences was conducted.

Social influence was the strongest statistically significant predictor of fast-food consumption habits in both India ($\beta = .754$, $p < .001$) and Malaysia ($\beta = .600$, $p < .001$). Price sensitivity demonstrated a statistically significant positive association in Malaysia ($\beta = .233$, $p = .014$), whereas its association was not statistically significant in India ($\beta =$

.025, $p = .779$). Meanwhile, perceived convenience was not statistically significant in either India ($\beta = .050$, $p = .598$) or Malaysia ($\beta = -.040$, $p = .650$).

The regression model explained 64.7% of the variance in fast-food consumption habits among Indian respondents ($R^2 = .647$) and 51.8% among Malaysian respondents ($R^2 = .518$). Although the observed coefficients and model explanatory power differed between the samples, these differences were not formally tested for statistical significance.

Overall, the findings indicate that social influence was the strongest statistically significant predictor in both samples, while price sensitivity was independently associated with fast-food consumption habits only in the Malaysian sample. Perceived convenience did not demonstrate a statistically significant independent association in either country. These findings provide a descriptive comparison of the observed relationships without establishing statistically significant differences between Malaysia and India.

DISCUSSION

Social Influence as the Dominant Predictor of Fast-Food Consumption

Social influence emerged as the strongest predictor of fast-food consumption habits among university students in both India and Malaysia. The standardised regression coefficient was higher among Indian students ($\beta = .754$, $p < .001$) than among Malaysian students ($\beta = .600$, $p < .001$). These findings indicate that social influence was positively and significantly associated with fast-food consumption habits in both samples, even after accounting for perceived convenience and price sensitivity.

The findings are consistent with previous studies by [Tunde et al. \(2023\)](#) and [Dassanayake \(2023\)](#), which highlighted the importance of social relationships and peer influence in university students' fast-food purchasing behaviour. Social interactions, group dining experiences, and gatherings with friends may contribute to students' decisions to consume fast food ([Edeh et al., 2021](#)). In this context, fast-food restaurants such as McDonald's may serve not only as dining establishments but also as social spaces where students meet friends, engage in discussions, and spend their leisure time ([Singh et al., 2023](#)).

The standardised coefficient for social influence was numerically higher in the Indian sample than in the Malaysian sample. However, this descriptive difference does not establish that the association was statistically stronger in India, as no formal test of between-country differences was conducted. One possible explanation is the importance of group-oriented activities and peer interactions within university communities. However, this interpretation should be considered cautiously, as the present analysis did not directly examine cultural orientations or peer approval. Furthermore, the difference between the two regression coefficients does not, by itself, establish a statistically significant difference between countries.

Overall, the findings highlight the consistent importance of social influence in explaining fast-food consumption habits among the surveyed university students in India and Malaysia.

The Influence of Price Sensitivity on Fast-Food Consumption

The findings regarding price sensitivity differed between Malaysian and Indian university students. Among Malaysian respondents, price sensitivity was a statistically significant positive predictor of fast-food consumption habits ($\beta = .233$, $p = .014$). This indicates that

students reporting higher price sensitivity also tended to report higher fast-food consumption habit scores after accounting for perceived convenience and social influence.

This finding is consistent with [Tunde et al. \(2023\)](#), who identified price as an important factor associated with fast-food consumption among Malaysian university students. The relevance of price sensitivity may also be considered in relation to the financial characteristics of the Malaysian sample, in which 31.0% of respondents reported having no income and 27.0% reported a monthly allowance or income below RM250. These characteristics suggest that financial considerations may be particularly relevant when students evaluate fast-food purchasing options. Promotional offers, discounts, and affordable meal choices may therefore be important considerations, although their individual effects were not directly examined in the regression model.

In contrast, price sensitivity was not a statistically significant predictor of fast-food consumption habits among Indian university students ($\beta = .025$, $p = .779$). Although the Indian sample also included respondents with limited financial resources, the regression findings did not provide sufficient evidence of an independent association between price sensitivity and consumption habits after controlling for the other predictors.

Price sensitivity demonstrated a statistically significant independent association with fast-food consumption habits in the Malaysian sample, whereas no statistically significant independent association was observed in the Indian sample. However, this difference in statistical significance should not be interpreted as evidence of a statistically significant difference between the two countries. Nevertheless, this finding does not necessarily indicate that Indian students disregard financial considerations. Price sensitivity was positively correlated with fast-food consumption habits in the Indian sample at the bivariate level, but its association was no longer statistically significant when perceived convenience and social influence were included in the regression model.

Taken together, these findings suggest that price sensitivity is relevant to understanding fast-food consumption habits among Malaysian university students, whereas its independent contribution was not statistically significant among the surveyed Indian students.

The Influence of Perceived Convenience on Fast-Food Consumption

Contrary to expectations, perceived convenience did not emerge as a statistically significant predictor of fast-food consumption habits in either country. Among Malaysian students, perceived convenience recorded a small negative standardised regression coefficient ($\beta = -.040$, $p = .650$). Similarly, among Indian students, perceived convenience exhibited a small positive coefficient ($\beta = .050$, $p = .598$), which was also statistically insignificant.

These findings indicate that perceived convenience did not make a statistically significant independent contribution to explaining fast-food consumption habits when price sensitivity and social influence were included in the respective regression models. Notably, perceived convenience was positively correlated with fast-food consumption habits in both samples at the bivariate level. The absence of statistical significance in the multiple regression analyses therefore suggests that its unique association with consumption habits was limited after accounting for the other predictors.

These results differ from the findings of [Oliveira and Raposo \(2024\)](#) and [Rajmohan et al. \(2024\)](#), who identified convenience as an important consideration in fast-food

consumption. One possible explanation is that convenience has become a common expectation among university students, particularly with the availability of food delivery applications, drive-through services, and accessible fast-food outlets. Consequently, convenience may be perceived as a standard characteristic of fast-food services rather than a factor that independently distinguishes students' consumption habits (Sajjad et al., 2023).

However, this explanation remains tentative because the present study did not directly examine students' expectations regarding delivery services, outlet accessibility, or the perceived availability of convenient alternatives. Differences in geographical context, technological accessibility, and consumer preferences may also contribute to variations between the present findings and previous research.

Overall, the findings suggest that perceived convenience, although positively associated with fast-food consumption habits at the bivariate level, was not a statistically significant independent predictor in either the Malaysian or Indian regression model.

Comparison Between Malaysian and Indian University Students

To address RQ3, this study descriptively compared the relative importance of perceived convenience, price sensitivity, and social influence in explaining fast-food consumption habits among university students in Malaysia and India. The comparison focused on the standardised regression coefficients, their statistical significance within each sample, and the relative ordering of predictors across the two countries.

The findings revealed both similarities and differences between the two samples. Social influence emerged as the strongest predictor in both countries, with standardised regression coefficients of $\beta = .600$ ($p < .001$) in Malaysia and $\beta = .754$ ($p < .001$) in India. These results indicate that social influence consistently demonstrated the strongest positive association with fast-food consumption habits after controlling for the other independent variables.

However, the ranking of the remaining predictors differed between the two countries. Among Malaysian students, price sensitivity ranked second ($\beta = .233$, $p = .014$), followed by perceived convenience ($\beta = -.040$, $p = .650$). Price sensitivity was statistically significant, whereas perceived convenience was not.

Among Indian students, perceived convenience ranked second based on its standardised coefficient ($\beta = .050$, $p = .598$), followed by price sensitivity ($\beta = .025$, $p = .779$). Nevertheless, neither variable demonstrated a statistically significant independent association with fast-food consumption habits in the Indian regression model.

These findings indicate that the ordering of predictors differed between Malaysia and India, particularly in relation to perceived convenience and price sensitivity. Social influence consistently occupied the highest position in both samples, while price sensitivity was a statistically significant predictor only in the Malaysian sample. The differences in predictor rankings provide a descriptive basis for comparing the relative contributions of the three variables across the two countries.

The findings may reflect differences in students' financial circumstances, social environments, and consumption preferences. Malaysian students may place greater emphasis on pricing considerations, whereas social interactions may be particularly relevant to understanding fast-food consumption habits among Indian students. Nevertheless, these explanations should be interpreted cautiously because the study did

not directly test whether the regression coefficients differed significantly between countries.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that social influence was the strongest predictor of fast-food consumption habits in both samples, while price sensitivity exhibited a statistically significant independent association only among Malaysian students. Perceived convenience did not demonstrate a statistically significant independent association in either country. These results provide insights into the similarities and differences in fast-food consumption habits among the surveyed university students in Malaysia and India.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the factors associated with fast-food consumption habits among university students in Malaysia and India, focusing on McDonald's consumers. Social influence emerged as the strongest statistically significant predictor in both India ($\beta = .754$, $p < .001$) and Malaysia ($\beta = .600$, $p < .001$). Price sensitivity was a significant positive predictor in Malaysia ($\beta = .233$, $p = .014$), but not in India ($\beta = .025$, $p = .779$), while perceived convenience was not statistically significant in either sample. These findings highlight the importance of social influence and suggest that the role of price sensitivity may vary across the two student populations, although between-country differences were not formally tested.

From a managerial perspective, fast-food companies may consider social engagement initiatives, group-oriented promotions, and pricing strategies tailored to students' financial circumstances. Educational institutions and policymakers may also incorporate peer influence and nutritional awareness into initiatives promoting healthier eating habits. Overall, this study contributes to the understanding of university students' fast-food consumption behaviour by identifying key associated factors and providing practical insights for marketers, researchers, and policymakers.

LIMITATION

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the sample comprised 200 university students from Malaysia and India, which may limit the generalisability of the results to broader populations. Second, the study focused on three independent variables, namely perceived convenience, price sensitivity, and social influence, without examining other potentially relevant factors such as health consciousness, food quality, and lifestyle preferences. Third, the use of self-administered questionnaires may introduce response bias, while the cross-sectional research design limits the ability to establish causal relationships and examine changes in consumption behaviour over time. Furthermore, the exclusive focus on McDonald's may restrict the applicability of the findings to other fast-food brands and consumer contexts. Future research is therefore recommended to include larger and more diverse samples, additional explanatory variables, multiple fast-food brands, and longitudinal research designs to provide a more comprehensive understanding of fast-food consumption behaviour among university students.

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DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors have declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning the study, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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