# The “Value Menu” Competition in the Fast Food Industry

## Introduction

The consumption of fast food in the US has become a social and cultural component of the modern lifestyle. Fast food stores have become quite popular especially in the urban areas in recent times due to the convenience and enticing offers that have been introduced. However, a large proportion of the society is reeling from the negative health effects of too much consumption of fast foods. The introduction of value menu has driven a substantial amount of traffic in these quick-service restaurants as people queue to get a piece of their delicious treats for lunch or as a quick snack. Due to these value menus, more people are opting for the easier option of buying fast food at an affordable price instead of opting for the more cumbersome home cooked meals. The trend of fast food consumption has become a modern necessity in the busy environment of today’s modern world. However, the problem arises with the increased concerns of more people leading an unhealthy lifestyle and succumbing to serious ailments as a result of consistent fast food consumption. Hence, fast food consumption is quite convenient and saves people a lot of time. However, the health risks associated with fast foods should also be considered before indulging too often. Therefore, this paper aims to sufficiently weigh the benefits and disadvantages of consuming fast foods in order to come up with an alternative that enables the modern person to achieve some sort of balance.

## Literature Review

Fast food may be described as the epitome of instantaneous indulgence. Additionally, fast food has become quite affordable and provides the modern individual a relief from the hustle of meal preparation. To top it all off, consumers of fast food enjoy a plethora of great tasting meal choices. However, there are negative consequences associated with the rampant consumption of fast foods. Fast food has been linked to negative health effects and overspending too. Therefore, it is important to consider the evidence presented for and against the mass consumption of fast food to determine a worthwhile course of action.

## The Convenience of Fast Food Consumption

The modern, fast-paced society has created a lot of strain on the amount of time available to take care of even basic requirements such as food consumption. Therefore, over the years, enterprises offering consumers what has come to be known as fast food s have developed into popular global stores offering a simpler solution to feeding. These stores have gradually increased urban centers across the globe to capture the attention of the busy individuals looking to get a quick, satisfying teat. Malhan, Dalala and Khatri (2016), acknowledge the importance of the introduction of the fast food in urban centers as they provide the advantages of convenience, economy, time-saving, accessibility and even a source of comfort food. The consumption of fast food has come to replace the culture of home-cooked meals progressively. Additionally, Jekanowski, Binkley, and Eales (2001) provide useful knowledge in how fast food has become a social and culturally defining element of modern urban lifestyle. The study successfully illustrates the factors that have led to the exponential demand for fast food. These factors include a standard menu, consistent quality of meals and the ease in access to fast food due to the placement of fast food-stores within reach of major roads or city centers. Further, the research by Jekanowski et al. (2001) establishes that with the development of infrastructure in the recent past, there has been an increase in the ease of access to fast food. The study can effectively relate the growth in infrastructure and increased access to fast food which increases the demand due to the reduction in time and transport cost used to retain.

## Health Concerns of Fast Food

The increase in fast food consumption has been highly associated with negative health effects. The nutritive content of fast food contains elements that are more likely to cause health concerns when taken in large quantities. Fast foods are high in carbohydrates, unhealthy fats, sodium, and added sugar which are associated with vascular diseases, diabetes, and obesity. Additionally, fast foods are rich in calories while offering very little nutrition in return. Therefore, undesired weight gain is an issue of concern among fast-food takers especially those associated with a relatively sedentary lifestyle. Moreover, fast food lacks the recommended dietary fiber that is vital for a healthy gut. Generally, fast food contains highly processed materials that do not provide the body with the necessary nutrition required and the result over time is usually quite catastrophic.

Richards, Patterson and Hamilton (2007) study indicate the highly addictive contents of fast foods such as the simple sugars and fats. Third, it should be noted that due to the overwhelming health concerns associated with fast foods, it becomes more expensive to treat illnesses that arise from unhealthy eating. Treating vascular diseases, diabetes and even recovering from excessive weight gain is quite an expensive affair as compared to leading a healthy lifestyle where one prepares healthy home-cooked meals. Therefore, fast food consumption is more expensive in the long run as compared to home cooked food.

## Fast Food is Expensive

Additionally, in terms of expense, it may be argued that fast food, in the long run, is more expensive. First, despite the value meals and menus which appear relatively affordable, it is important to realize that these are usually baits for customers to consume even more expensive foods. Choi (2012) in the article on Smart Spending notes that the attractive offers on most fast food chains are usually dangled to attract customers to buy more expensive items with greater margins. Additionally, value menus as noted by Choi (2012), have become increasingly regarded as unfulfilling, requiring them to spend more. In the article on Price Control in Franchised Chains by Tuttle (2014), it is clear from the remarks of the franchises that the value meals are not the best products for business because of the razor-thin margins. Second, due to the addictive components of fast foods, it is easier for people to spend more than they probably intended to.

## Conclusion

In general, we may argue that despite the convenience of fast foods through easier access and cheaper costs, it would be best to avoid consuming a lot of it because of the alarming health effects associated with its consumption. It may appear to be a cheaper and easier option in the short term but the price to pay for developing a culture of consuming fast foods is quite high in my opinion. Although, some may argue that fast food stores have also become more health conscious and are providing healthier alternatives, the bulk of the fast foods are generally of lower quality. Probably the most considerable concern with the fast foods is the highly processed nature of the foods which cannot be compared to consuming more whole and natural foods. In my opinion, a customer does not get value for his money by opting for fast foods because of the compromised nutritive content as well as the associated negative health effects. Therefore, people should be more conscious of their health when considering fast foods and only leave it as an alternative for occasional treats. By doing so, they can still indulge in the delicious fast foods occasionally but keep their health in check by consuming healthier options regularly.

## References

Choi, C., (2012). Smart spending: the secrets of the value menu. *Yahoo Finance*.

Jekanowski, M.D., Binkley, J.K., & Eales, J., (2001). Convenience, accessibility and the demand for fast food. *Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics*, 26(1):58-74.

Malhan, D., Dalal, S. & Khatri, P., (2016). Fast food: rising demand, pros, and cons. *International Journal of Research in Finance and Marketing*, 6(11): 140-145.

Richards, T.J., Patterson, P. M. & Hamilton, F. S., 2007. Fast food, addiction, and market power. *Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics*, 32(3): 425-447.

Tuttle, B. (2014). Fast food chains are desperate to kill the dollar menu. Time.