

McDonald's: the causes and effects of popularity of fast food restaurants essay

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The Causes and Effects of Popularity of Fast Food Restaurants

The Causes

The use of fast food restaurants has become more popular universally. For the last thirty years, there has been a constant annual increase of 6.8% in the consumption of fast food. Fast food establishments have grown over this period to exceed the table service restaurants. Fast food sales have escalated to more than one hundred and ten billion dollars annually (Schlosser, 15). Change in lifestyle is mainly responsible for these changing trends.

Time-saving food products which include fast foods have gained popularity as a result of hectic lifestyles. Longer working days and the increasing tendencies for both spouses to hold full-time demanding jobs have led to decreased time for families to prepare and sit for home-cooked meals. People demand quick meals. Due to the increasing hectic time plans, consumers do not have time to prepare or wait for meals to be prepared in restaurants. Fast food meals offer the more attractive alternative because they are already prepared. Consumers can just pick them up and they have the choice of eating them at home or even in the office. Fast foods also do not require to be served in dishes which pose an extra challenge for already exhausted individuals. To respond to this need within the market, fast food restaurants have invented innovative ways of marketing time-saving products.

Fast food restaurants offer a wide variety of food. The individual client can choose what they want. This makes it possible for different members of the family to enjoy different meals at a sitting as opposed to cooking at home. Fast food chains have also increased the variety of foods ensuring that they cater for individual palates. Fast food restaurants vary their meals ensuring that clients have a wide variety to choose from. If this was to be done in an ordinary home setting, it would be too expensive and time consuming.

Fast food restaurants are convenient.

Fast food restaurants are always expanding in places where people live or do other activities, therefore increasing their outreach. McDonald which is a very popular fast food restaurant has more than seven hundred outlets within Wal-Mart (Schlosser, 21). This ensures convenience for the customers and it is usually timesaving for customers to combine eating with other activities like shopping or laundry. This enhances the appeal of fast food restaurants as opposed to service restaurants. Fast-food restaurants have also constructed drive through outlets ensuring customers who are on the move have the convenience of purchasing meals while on transit.

Fast food is less expensive than meals from table service restaurants or even home cooked meals. This entices a larger clientele than the table service restaurants. Fast food restaurant encourage off premise consumption which allows the customer more convenience. Most of the fast food restaurants have drive through services allowing customers to place their orders and get their food within a very short time. The total annual sales from service restaurants match those from the fast food restaurants despite the fact that

the meals in service restaurants are expensive and they have more seating capacity (Schlosser, 16). This depicts that the fast food restaurants attract more clients than the service restaurants. Describe the size and structure of the food retailing sector

Fast foods are usually more delicious than other meals. With fast food, the client always knows what they are getting in terms of the taste of the specific foods while food served in service restaurants may vary depending on the chef and the restaurant themes. Fast food restaurants therefore allow the customers constancy in meals. The fast food outlets ensure that their outlets are within reach for the customer allowing increased popularity as well as increasing their sales.

The advertising strategies implemented by the fast food companies make fast foods more appealing as compared to ordinary meals. Children and teenagers opt for these meals based on the advertisements. Fast foods are also more filling ensuring that less time is spent eating. Due to the lack of strict supervision children and teenagers will opt for fast food meals as opposed to home cooked or service restaurant meals. The presence of nutritional information on most of these fast food packages make the consumers feel that they are making the right dietary choices (Schlosser, 43).

The Effects

Increased popularity of fast food restaurants has led to increased employment opportunities. The expansion of fast food outlets has resulted to an increased workforce. The fast food outlets offer employment to millions of Americans.

In addition, fast food outlets support advertisement companies and entire agricultural organizations which supply them with fresh produce.

Changes in lifestyle have led to an increased supply of energy foods and also a decreased energy outlet. Consumption of fast food coupled with physically inactive lifestyles has been shown to lead to obesity, diabetes, heart disease, high cholesterol, hypertension and cancer. This has resulted to increased healthcare costs (Schlosser, 60). Policies have had to be formulated to ensure that the healthcare offered has remained relevant to the needs of the society. There is increased consumption of fast foods by minority groups and the poor Americans leading to increased concerns over the rising trend of lifestyle diseases (Schlosser, 62)

Too much fast food consumption has led to a detrimental effect on the health of Americans. Fast foods are mainly high energy laden foods. Most of the fast foods are deep fried. Fast food restaurants have developed selling strategies which encourage clients to purchase more food for less money. This has encouraged over eating and resulted to increased rates of obesity. Despite the fact that fast foods are higher energy laden foods as opposed to healthier alternatives, people tend to consume the same or even more quantities. This leads to extremely high energy meals which when coupled with a physically inactive lifestyle may result in obesity. There is an increasing number of obese people in America with more than half of the entire adult population classifying as clinically obese. More than a quarter of children in America are also clinically obese (Schlosser, 162)

Fast foods are also laden with a lot of sugar and salt which has been related to type 2 diabetes. The recommended daily salt intake is 2,400 milligrams (Schlosser, 136). This can be achieved by consuming one fast food meal. Fast foods have been related with creating insulin resistance in the American population resulting to increased diabetes. The prevalence of diabetes has increased annually with the increase in popularity of fast foods. In countries like Spain where the fast food culture has not taken root, the prevalence of diabetes and obesity is lower (Schlosser, 142).

Diabetes has become a major concern in America. Juvenile diabetes is on the rise (Schlosser, 170). Researchers have related this worrying trend with the change in diet among the youth. The availability of high sugar, carbonated drinks and foods within the schools has been blamed for an increase in lifestyle diseases within the youth.

Fast food restaurants use lower quality produce in preparing their food. Fast foods also lack essential vitamins and minerals. Fast food meals are marketed based on what the customers want to eat. They largely lack fruits and vegetables which contain essential vitamins that protect the body from diseases. Fruits and vegetables also contain antioxidants which play a significant role in fighting cancer. Over reliance on fast foods is likely to result in nutritional disorders and increased types of cancers. When fast foods are consumed in moderation and together with fruits and vegetables by a physically active individual, they do not pose serious health risks.

In conclusion, fast food restaurants have increased their popularity among the American population due to the increasing demands in today's life. Fast

food restaurants offer diverse foods at a relatively cheap price and the food is cooked to satisfy individual palates. Their convenient locations and the fact that they serve precooked foods, allow the consumers to save ample time. The effects of this increased popularity are diverse. Fast food restaurants have led to the closure of many service table restaurants though they have also offered the American population millions of jobs. Their effect on the health of the American population is worrying with the increased trends in lifestyle diseases. Fast foods and the decreased physical activity in majority of the American population have been responsible for the increase in the myriad of lifestyle diseases that has escalated within the population. There is increased prevalence of diabetes, high cholesterol, cancer, hypertensive individuals and obesity within the American population. Any attempts in the introduction of healthy foods in the fast food restaurants have been met with rejection as most Americans still opt for the less healthy alternatives. With the current attempts to provide effective healthcare for all citizens, policy makers need to use preventive strategies to ensure that most of these lifestyle diseases which form the bulk of healthcare concerns are eliminated. There is therefore need for an intensive regulation in how the food in fast food restaurants is prepared as well as a need for consumer awareness to ensure that people have a variety of delicious healthy alternatives that are still affordable and convenient.

REFERENCE

Schlosser Eric. *Fast Food Nation: What the All-American Meal Is Doing to the World*. London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2004, 12-178.

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