

# Fast Food Purchase Behaviour In Botswana: An Exploratory Study

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## INTRODUCTION

The fast-food industry has expanded rapidly in developing countries as the number of people eating meals outside their homes increases. For instance, more families are eating outside their homes in India, and as a result, the fast-food industry is growing by 40 percent annually (Goyal and Singh, 2007). The growth of the fast-food industry has fuelled research into fast food purchase behaviour. An investigation into fast food purchase behaviour in various cultural contexts provides clues regarding what actions a manager should take to increase patronage or repeat purchase in today's highly competitive business environment ((Barber et al., 2010; Roberts-Lombard, 2009). A remarkable number of previous studies that have investigated fast food purchase behaviour in developing countries have concentrated on Asia (Baek et al., 2006; Goyal and Singh, 2007; Kivela, 1997; Yoon et al., 2008). Little is known about consumer perceptions of fast food purchase behaviour in Africa, especially Botswana. However, the consumption of fast foods has increased Botswana's cities and towns as fast-food chains open outlets in the country's shopping centres and malls (Setshogo, 2009). In Botswana, fast-food chains include well-known brand names such as Kentucky Fried Chicken, Steers, Wimpy, Debonairs Pizza, Nandos and Chicken Licken.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- (1) To investigate consumers' perceptions of fast food restaurants in Botswana with respect to health, convenience, price, and service;
- (2) To explore whether consumer perceptions of fast food restaurants vary according to gender, age and education.

## FAST FOOD PURCHASE BEHAVIOUR

Consumers form perceptions of different fast-food restaurants in terms of a set of attributes and also ascribe different levels of importance to each attribute (Aksoydan, 2007). Previous studies have identified food quality, cleanliness, service, location and hygiene as the most important attributes and promotional incentives, new experiences, comfort level and facilities as the least important in fast food purchase behaviour (Auty, 1992; Kivela, 1997; Oyewole, 2007). Past research has also shown that the perceived importance of attributes of fast-food restaurants differ from country to country. In support of this, Kara et al, (1997) reflected that service delivery, friendliness of staff, variety of menu, speed of service, nutritional value, cleanliness were perceived as important attributes by frequent fast food buyers in the United States. Frequent fast food consumers in Canada considered seating facilities, cleanliness, nutritional value, friendliness of staff, and variety of the menu as critical in the choice of fast-food restaurants. Thus, speed of service was important in the United States, while seating facilities were emphasized in Canada. Additionally, both Koreans and Filipinos viewed price as the most important attribute (Baek et al., 2006). Brand name came second, followed by food-related attributes (high quality, variety in the menu, and enough serving), and hygiene-related factors (speed of service, cleanliness, and ambience) respectively in Korea, while for the Filipinos, food-related factors emerged second, and brand name was the least important attribute.

Although existing findings are instrumental in the understanding of fast food purchase behaviour, until recently, little empirical research has been devoted to the analysis of fast purchase behaviour in Southern Africa. This lack came as a surprise, since the fast-food industry in Africa is faced with the need to develop appropriate marketing strategies to

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cope with the growing number of people who eat out (Mburu and Paulos, 2010) and challenges of globalization as well as increased competition (Roberts-Lambard, 2009). In fact, a few available current studies examined fast food purchase behaviour in South Africa. For instance, Roberts-Lambard (2009) demonstrated that fast-food restaurants emphasize customer relationship management. It was also found that there is a high in-take of fast food among young adults in South Africa (Van Zyl and Marais, 2010). The South African young adults also stressed that time limitations, convenience, and taste were the key reasons for purchasing fast food. The only notable study based on Botswana focused on attributes influencing the purchase of in retail store cooked food (Mburu and Paulos, 2010). Specifically, consumers in Botswana considered food taste, customer service, food prices, food variety, food smell and waiting time as critical when purchasing in-retail store food.

## **HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT**

The attributes of fast food purchase behaviour that have been investigated also vary from one study to another (see, for example, Auty, 1992; Kivela, 1997; Meyers and Wallace, 2003). Thus, four attributes which have been commonly proposed in previous studies were selected for the purpose of this study. The attributes are: Health, Convenience, Price and Service.

✿ **Health :** Fast food has been linked with a variety of negative health effects such as obesity, cardiovascular diseases, cancer (Yoon et al., 2008) and food-borne illnesses (Knight et al., 2007). These negative health effects are often associated with the nutritional contents of fast foods, hygiene-related attributes of fast-food restaurants and the failure to create awareness about the nutritional value of fast foods. Research into the nutritional contents of fast food has demonstrated that fast foods have problematic dietary factors such as high saturated fats, low fibre content, a high amount of calories, and low calcium (Paeratakul et al., 2003; Yoon et al., 2007). Additionally, consumers held negative perceptions about the nutritional value of fast foods, as they perceived fast foods as unhealthy and mal-nutritious (Mburu and Paulos, 2010; Schroder and McEachern, 2005; Yoon et al., 2008). However, consumers who reported eating fast foods regularly were less concerned about the nutritional contents of fast foods (Akbay et al., 2007; Yoon et al., 2008) and had a low intake of bread and cereals, dark-green vegetables, fruits and juices, milk and legumes (Paerakarakul et al., 2003). There is also a high concern towards food hygiene in the fast-food industry. Hygiene-related factors such as food quality and taste, cleanliness, workstation sanitation, and food preparation have been considered as very critical in the decision to purchase from fast-food restaurants (Akbay et al., 2007; Aksoydan, 2007; Oyewole, 2007). In Botswana, healthy and clean eating has become increasingly important due to the spread of HIV/AIDS (Mburu and Paulos, 2010). Thus, it is hypothesized that :

**H1: Consumers in Botswana are more likely to perceive fast foods as unhealthy.**

✿ **Convenience:** Convenience has been identified as a key distinguishing factor of fast-food restaurants (Goyal and Singh, 2007; Meyers and Wallace, 2003; Park, 2004). As noted by Lee and Ulgado (1997), fast-food restaurants live up for their name '*fast*' - in that they provide consumers the opportunity to access quick meals. Previous research into motivations for eating out in fast-food restaurants has proposed several dimensions of convenience. For instance, fast-food restaurants have been perceived to be superior in terms of specific dimensions of convenience such as not having to plan ahead, no preparation, no clearing and food being prepared by another person (Darian and Cohen, 1995). Thus, it is hypothesized that:

**H2: Consumers in Botswana are more likely to perceive fast food restaurants as convenient.**

✿ **Price :** Fast-food restaurants are perceived as a cheaper option for eating out (Schroder and McEachern, 2005) since naturally, consumers do not expect to spend too much money on something that they do not spend much time on (Lee and Ulgado, 2007). Additionally, in a cross-cultural comparison of fast-food restaurants' selection criteria, price emerged as the most important factor in both Korea and Philippines (Baek et al., 2006). However, fast food is not considered cheap in Asian countries (Baek et al., 2006; Lee and Ulgado, 2007) and Botswana (Mburu and Paulos, 2010). Thus, it is hypothesized that:

**H3: Consumers in Botswana are more likely to perceive fast food as expensive.**

✿ **Service:** A study that investigated the role of corporate identity cues in South African fast-food restaurants confirmed that customer service is the most important factor in the choice of fast-food restaurants (Van Heerden et al.,

2000). Lee and Ulgado, (1997) suggested that when consumers make their evaluation of service quality, they generally consider the service provider's dimensions of tangibles (physical facilities and equipment), reliability (ability to perform promised service accurately), responsiveness (willingness to help customers and provide prompt service), assurance (knowledge, courtesy and ability to inspire trust and confidence) and empathy (caring and individualized attention to customers). The degree of importance that consumers attach to the various key dimensions tends to differ from one country to another. For instance, quick service, kindness of employees, and facilities emerged as the most important attributes for patronizing fast-food restaurants in Korea (Park, 2004). Assurance was perceived to be a critical dimension of fast-food restaurants in the United States while in Korea, reliability, and empathy were considered more important (Lee and Ulgado, 1997). In addition, Koreans perceived fast foods negatively in terms of tangibles, reliability, empathy, responsiveness and assurance than consumers in the United States. Given that African countries portray collectivistic values as in the case of Korea, it is hypothesized that:

**H4: Consumers in Botswana are more likely to perceive the service of fast food restaurants as poor.**

✿ **Age and Fast Food Purchase Behaviour:** Kivela (1997) revealed that quality of food was perceived to be the most important variable in the choice of fast-food restaurant across all ages; except for the middle-aged group (35 to 44 years). Ambience was considered to be important by young consumers (25 to 34 years) and middle-aged consumers. Older consumers (35 to 44 years) emphasized on quality of food, ambience, comfort, prestige and prompt handling of complaints. Similarly, according to Aksoydan (2007), cleanliness of facilities was found to be important for younger consumers (25 years or less), while cleanliness of food was important for those whose ages fell in the following categories: 26 to 29 years and 35 or more years. For those in the age group 30 to 34 years, the most important attribute was cleanliness of the nails of the service personnel. Oyewole (2007) demonstrated that young (25 years or less) consumers placed more importance on availability; middle-aged consumers (26 to 45 years) considered ease of complaint, while older consumers (45 years or more) were more concerned about courtesy. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

**H5: Consumer perceptions of fast food restaurants with respect to (a) health, (b) convenience, (c) price and (d) service in Botswana will vary according to age.**

✿ **Gender and Fast Food Purchase Behaviour :** Although some studies have reported no gender differences between males and females with respect to their perceptions of factors that influence fast food purchase behaviour (Aksoydan, 2007), males in South Africa indicated availability as the core reason for purchasing fast food than females (Van zyl and Marias, 2010). In Botswana, males attached more importance to waiting time, crowding at checkout counters, while females emphasized food prices and area layout (Mburu and Paulos, 2010). Females in Korea also perceived fast foods as unhealthy than males (Yoon et al., 2008). Similarly, females in United States emphasized on hygiene and reliability, courtesy, communication, health consciousness and ease of complaints than males (Oyewole, 2007). Thus, it is hypothesized that :

**H6: Consumer perceptions of fast-food restaurants with respect to (a) health, (b) convenience, (c) price and (d) service in Botswana will vary according to gender.**

✿ **Education and Fast Food Purchase Behaviour :** According to Van Zyl and Marias (2010), those with a high level of education were more concerned about health than those with a low level of education (secondary and primary schooling). Similarly, college graduates placed more emphasis on hygiene and reliability, courtesy and child friendly, while those who had below college qualification were more concerned about availability. Thus, it is hypothesized that :

**H7: Consumer perceptions of fast food restaurants with respect to (a) health, (b) convenience, (c) price and (d) service in Botswana will vary according to education.**

## RESEARCH METHOD

The current study utilized a survey research design, using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered to the general public by the researchers in person. Respondents were solicited from their place of work in the capital city, Gaborone, as this method has a potential to yield a higher response rate. Consumers in Gaborone were targeted since capital cities contain a sizeable number of urban consumers who are a major target market for fast-food restaurants (Kara et al., 1997). Capital cities also offer consumers a new and faster pace of life, which in turn,

influences them to explore quicker meal solutions for their shortened lunch hours. A convenience sample of 200 respondents was targeted from the general public, which was consistent with previous studies about fast food restaurants conducted in other parts of the world (Akabay et al., 2007; Goyal and Singh, 2007; Kara et al., 1997). The questionnaire used to collect data contained thirty-eight items that were previously used to measure the selected attributes of fast food purchase behaviour. In particular, in order to measure the health aspect of fast-food restaurants, eleven items were adapted from previous studies (Schroder and McEachern, 2005; Oyewole, 2007). Convenience was measured using twelve items that were adapted from a study by Lee and Ulgado (1997). Five items adapted from Lee and Ulgado (1997) and Akabay et al., (2007) were used to measure price. Ten items were adapted from the study by Lee and Ulgado (1997) to measure service offered by fast-food restaurants. In the current study, consumers were asked to indicate their viewpoint on the attributes of fast-food restaurants, using a five-point scale: 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree (Akabay, et al, 2007; Goyal and Singh, 2007). The questionnaire also contained questions on gender, age and education.

## RESULTS

The analysis of demographic characteristics of the sample is presented in Table 1. The Table 1 shows that the sample was dominated by middle aged (26 to 35 years) females, who had attained a first degree.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample		
	Frequency	Percent
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	84	46.2
Female	98	53.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Age</b>		
18 to 25 years	59	32.2
26 to 35 years	76	41.5
36 years and more	48	26.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Education</b>		
No formal education	4	2.2
Secondary	25	13.7
Certificate	13	7.1
Diploma	35	19.1
First Degree	85	46.4
Graduate Degree	21	11.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>100.0</b>

✿ **Dimensionality of Fast Food Purchase Behaviour:** Exploratory factor analysis with a varimax rotation was conducted on the thirty-eight items of fast food purchase behaviour. Eigen-values greater than 1 were used in selecting which factors to retain. Additionally, only items that loaded .40 or more on a particular factor were retained. Six items were deleted, as they had factor loadings of greater than .40 in more than one factor. The remaining thirty-two items produced ten factors with eigen-values greater than 1, and a total variance explained of 61.26%. The ten factors were labelled as follows: *Hygiene, Empathy, Comfort of facilities, Availability, Nutritional value, Unique experience, Price, Reliability, Social outing and Nutritional awareness.*

Then, Cronbach Alpha was used to test for the reliability of the retained factors. The reliabilities were as follows: *Hygiene* ( $\alpha = .73$ ), *Empathy* ( $\alpha = .68$ ), *Comfort of facilities* ( $\alpha = .60$ ), *Availability* ( $\alpha = .53$ ), *Nutritional value* ( $\alpha = .56$ ), *Unique experience* ( $\alpha = .52$ ), *Price* ( $\alpha = .60$ ), *Reliability* ( $\alpha = .56$ ), *Social outing* ( $\alpha = .51$ ), *Nutritional awareness* ( $\alpha = .41$ ). Two additional items loaded under factors labelled as *Nutritional value* and *Reliability* were deleted due to low

Table 2: Dimensions of Fast Food Purchase Behaviour			
Retained Factors	Factor Loadings	% of Variance	Means (SD)
<b>Factor 1: Hygiene</b>		16.78	
There is hygienic preparation of foods in fast food restaurants.	.71		2.86 (.88)
Fast food restaurants are clean.	.71		3.01 (.93)
Employees of fast food restaurants have neat appearance.	.70		3.30 (.93)
Fast foods restaurants are air conditioned and hence provide a comfortable environment.	.64		3.10 (1.14)
<b>Factor 2: Empathy</b>		7.90	
Employees of fast food restaurants are never too busy to respond to customers' requests.	.73		2.70 (1.02)
Fast food restaurants do not keep customers waiting for a long time, as compared with other restaurants.	.62		3.04 (1.12)
Employees of fast food restaurants have the knowledge to answer all customers' questions.	.61		2.73 (1.07)
Employees of fast food restaurants provide their service at the time they promised to do so.	.42		2.98 (.95)
<b>Factor 3: Comfort of Facilities</b>		6.51	
The menu at fast food restaurants is easy to read.	.69		3.47 (1.01)
It is easy to find parking near fast food restaurants.	.65		2.57 (.97)
Only quality ingredients are used when preparing fast foods.	.62		2.74 (.91)
<b>Factor 4: Availability</b>		5.28	
Fast food restaurants have operating hours convenient to all customers.	.64		3.59 (1.13)
Fast food restaurants provide ready-to-eat meals.	.63		4.10 (.87)
Fast food restaurants are situated in convenient locations.	.62		3.63 (.91)
<b>Factor 5: Nutritional value</b>		5.19	
Fast foods are unhealthy.	.66		3.51 (1.01)
Fast foods provide good nutritional value (reserved coded)	-.63		3.67 (.99)
<b>Factor 6: Unique Experience</b>		4.58	
Fast food restaurants are visited when seeking a change from home cooked foods.	.65		3.40 (.75)
Fast food restaurants encourage you to eat more than you need.	.65		3.24 (1.21)
Fast food restaurants are visited as a treat for the children.	.60		3.30 (1.04)
When I have little time to cook home-cooked foods, I visit fast food restaurants.	.41		3.67 (1.06)
<b>Factor 7: Price</b>		4.39	
Fast food restaurants offer food at lower prices as compared to other restaurants.	.81		2.97 (1.12)
Prices of fast foods are affordable.	.62		3.15 (1.03)
Fast foods are of good value for the money.	.56		2.89 (.92)
<b>Factor 8: Reliability</b>		3.83	
Fast food restaurants perform the service right the first time.	.68		2.96 (.85)
Fast food restaurants have their customers' best interests at heart.	.47		2.96 (.90)
<b>Factor 9: Social Outing</b>		3.55	
Prices of fast food restaurants are important in my decision to visit fast food restaurants.	.71		3.45 (1.08)
When outing with family and friends, I usually visit fast food restaurants.	.67		3.46 (1.15)
Fast food restaurants can be visited when celebrating special occasions.	.60		3.67 (1.06)
<b>Factor 10: Nutritional awareness</b>		3.26	
Fast food restaurants should provide nutritional information of the food they sell.	.82		Not calculated
I am concerned about fast foods because of health problems such as obesity.	.54		

Note: 1 = Strongly Disagree 5 = Strongly agree



inter item correlations. In addition, due to low reliability, nutritional awareness was not included in further reliability. However, the stringent criterion of achieving a reliability of .70 or better was not applied in this study because valid and reliable multiple measures of the selected attributes of fast-food restaurants have not been fully developed in the existing literature. As noted by other related studies (Barber et al., 2010), reliabilities of .50 to .60 are acceptable in the early stages of research. The results are shown in Table 2.

✳ **Hypothesis Testing:** In order to test hypotheses H1 through to H4, a combined mean of each attribute was computed and the results are presented in Table 3. A combined mean of 3 or less represented a negative perception with respect to a particular attribute, whereas, a combined mean of greater than 3 was indicative of a positive perception. However, since the items for Nutritional value were negatively worded (See, Table 2), a combined mean score of greater than 3 was perceived as denoting a negative perception, while a combined mean score of 3 or less represented a positive perception. Results show that consumers in Botswana hold negative perceptions for fast-food restaurants with respect to health, price and service. In particular, consumers perceived fast-food restaurants as providing unhealthy and expensive meals, with inadequate hygiene and facilities, limited empathy and unreliable service. However, fast food consumers held positive perceptions about convenience in terms of location, time of operation, social interaction and a unique atmosphere. Thus, H1 through to H4 were supported.

Table 3: Hypotheses Testing Using Descriptive Statistics		
Hypotheses	Attributes	Mean (SD)
H1: Consumers in Botswana are more likely to perceive fast foods as unhealthy.	<b>Health</b>	
	Hygiene	3.07 (.73)
	Nutritional value	3.57 (.91)
H2: Consumers in Botswana are more likely to perceive fast food restaurants as convenient.	<b>Convenience</b>	
	Availability	3.78 (.70)
	Unique Experience	3.41 (.66)
	Social outing	3.52 (.78)
H3: Consumers in Botswana are more likely to perceive fast food as expensive.	<b>Price</b>	3.00 (.78)
H4: Consumers are more likely to perceive the service of fast food restaurants as poor.	<b>Service</b>	
	Comfort of Facilities	2.93 (.76)
	Empathy	2.87 (.74)
	Reliability	2.96 (.73)

In order to test hypotheses H5 through to H7, ANOVA and t-tests were used. ANOVA results presented in Table 4 show that age has a significant effect on consumer perceptions about availability ( $F(2, 180) = 5.11, p = .007$ ). An investigation of between-group differences using t-tests revealed that young consumers (18 to 25 years) and middle-aged consumers (26 to 35 years) perceived fast foods as providing greater convenience through availability than older consumers (36 years or more). Additionally, gender affects consumer perceptions about the nutritional value of fast foods ( $t = -1.69, p = .09$ ) as females perceived fast foods more unhealthy than males. However, education did not have any significant effect on any of the key attributes of fast-food restaurants. Thus, only H5b and H6a are supported.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Results of this study have shown that consumers in Botswana hold negative perceptions about the health aspects of fast-food restaurants (i.e., hygiene, nutritional value), price and service offered and positive perceptions about the key dimensions of convenience such as availability, the unique atmosphere and social interaction. Consumers in Botswana demonstrated negative perceptions about hygiene, nutritional value, price and service and positive perceptions about convenience were consistent with previous related past studies (Akbay et al., 2007; Kara et al., 2007; Lee and Ulgado, 2007; Mburu and Paulos, 2010; Paeratakul et al., 2003). Findings also revealed females held stronger negative perceptions about the nutrition value of fast foods than males. As noted by Yoon et al., (2008) females tend to have more interest in nutrition and thus, would perceive fast foods as less healthy and nutritious than males. Young and

Table 4: Age and Gender on Attributes of Fast Food Restaurants					
Key Attributes	Age			F-test	Sig.
	18-25 years, n = 59	26-35years, n = 76	≥ 36 years, n = 48		
Health					
Hygiene	3.10 (.68)	3.12(.69)	2.93 (.82)	1.06	.35
Nutritional value	3.66 (.81)	3.61 (.95)	3.39 (.97)	1.34	.27
Convenience					
Availability	3.82 (.63)	3.92 (.63)	3.52 (.82)	5.11	.007**
Unique Experience	3.44 (.68)	3.37 (.65)	3.46 (.64)	.36	.70
Social Outing	3.58 (.78)	3.42 (.76)	3.59 (.75)	.98	.38
Price	3.09 (.72)	2.88 (.80)	3.04 (.75)	1.28	.28
Service					
Comfort of Facilities	3.00 (.77)	2.86 (.69)	2.99 (.88)	.58	.56
Empathy	2.80 (.76)	2.94 (.67)	2.80 (.84)	.83	.44
Reliability	2.94 (.80)	3.03 (.66)	2.83 (.75)	1.10	.35
	Gender				
	Males (n = 84)	Females (n = 98)	t (df = 180)	Sig. (2-tailed)	
Health					
Hygiene	3.13 (.72)	3.01 (.69)	1.26	.21	
Nutritional value	3.44 (.96)	3.67 (.86)	-1.69	.09*	
Convenience					
Availability	3.74 (.72)	3.82 (.69)	-.76	.45	
Unique Experience	3.43 (.67)	3.41 (.65)	.26	.79	
Social Outing	3.59 (.83)	3.47 (.73)	1.02	.31	
Price	3.05 (.75)	2.96 (.78)	.79	.43	
Service					
Comfort of Facilities	2.91 (.78)	2.96 (.73)	.70	.49	
Empathy	2.90 (.75)	2.83 (.74)	-.41	.68	
Reliability	2.93 (.76)	2.98 (.71)	-.52	.61	
Note: The Levene's tests for equality of variances for both the ANOVA and t- tests were not significant, thus the homogeneity of variance has not been violated.					
** $p \leq .05$ , * $p \leq .10$					

Middle-aged consumers also perceived fast-food restaurants as providing greater convenience through availability than older consumers. This corresponds with previous studies that have shown that fast food is especially popular among young consumers who visit fast-food restaurants twice per week on average (Paeratakul et al., 2003; Van Zyl and Marias, 2010).

Overall, the current study implies that fast food marketing strategies need to be based on a sound understanding of consumer perceptions of fast foods restaurants. Developing unique marketing strategies is important for fast food restaurants as competition intensifies. In Botswana, competition does not only come from within the fast food industry, there is mounting competition from in retail store cooked food and food prepared by street vendors. It is vital that the management of fast food restaurants in Botswana reinforce consumers' positive perceptions of convenience while amending negative perceptions of fast food outlets with respect to health, price and service. For instance, fast food managers need to intensify efforts of improving the hygienic standards, which could be achieved by ensuring hygienic preparation of food; cleanliness in the restaurants, and that only quality ingredients are used in the preparation of fast foods. In addition, managers need to constantly review their prices and focus more attention on

improving service delivery. The Ministry of Health could also sensitize consumers on the health threats of fast food consumption as well as carry out routing inspections with the fast-food restaurants. Similarly, the Department of Trade and Consumer affairs may use the findings to influence policy on educating consumers about the right for information about the nutritional value of fast foods.

This study has some limitations that serve as future research avenues. Data collected from this study was on consumer perceptions of attributes of fast-food restaurants in general. Thus, future research could examine the differences of perceptions of attributes of specific fast-food restaurants. In addition, the study could be replicated by collecting data in fast-food restaurants during or after consumption.

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