

# Factors Influencing Fast Food Spending among Final-Year Accounting Students at Botho University, Maseru Campus, Lesotho

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**Abstract:-** The study examines the spending habits of final-year accounting students towards fast-food, focusing on socioeconomic and psychological variables. Data was collected through structured questionnaires sent via WhatsApp group and emails to 32 students. The research found that desire and individual attitudes significantly influence students' decisions to spend money on fast food, with peer pressure, parental income, and personal preferences being the main factors. Economic factors like promotions and discounts had less impact on overall fast-food purchasing. Bread and potato chips were found to be the most popular and often chosen foods among students, reflecting the trend of university students favouring ready-made meals due to their convenience and fit into busy schedules.

**Keywords:** Promotions, Discounts, Psychological Factors, Convenience, Food Preference, Consumer Behavior.

## I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Spending behavior is an act on how customer utilise their money on purchasing goods and services to satisfy their daily needs and wants, this behavior focuses mainly on the different factors that affects spending such as the personal preferences and the purchasing power (Kumar, 2022). The spending pattern particularly of university students on fast food tends to play a significant role in the food industry as it helps the marketers understand fast food products that are mostly preferred by the masses of students.

### A. Background to the Problem

There has been a growing interest for researchers in understanding the key factors that influences the student spending pattern on fast food consumption. With the increasing inflation rate, it is important to understand the key factors that affect how college students allocate their budget towards fast food spending. This study will explore numerous factors that are influencing student spending on fast food.

The consumer behaviour is a complex field that has captured attention of marketers and scholars alike. It is a well-known fact that the individual buying decisions and behaviours are influenced and shaped by various factors that spread beyond personal preferences such as social influence, economic factors and cultural norms, this has led to the increasing importance of obtaining a thorough understanding of consumer behaviour as a key component of the marketing strategy and business success.

Consumer behavior is essential part of every country's economy, as it assists in understanding how people make decision about what they want to buy, as the world changes, understanding what affects and influence people's decision about what to buy is more important. This study focuses on the spending behavior of Final-year Accounting Students on the consumption of fast food and also examines the study's empirical manifestation within Botho University student community.

According to the study of (Bona, 2017) it was highlighted in the findings that students' demand for fast food can help in reducing unemployment by creating jobs. As this study delve into various factors that shape the student spending pattern on fast food at Botho University Maseru campus, it does not only seek to add to the already existing literature, but also to make contribution to the life of those students.

### B. Problem Statement

The factors that influence the student spending pattern have not been explored thoroughly by the already existing literatures, therefore leaving a very big gap on students in understanding their financial decision making on fast food spending (Tite, 2015). There is also a tendency of overspending by university students that leads to bankruptcy and this practice has been a trend for many years.

Moreover, University students have limited financial knowledge which can lead to negative consequences and poor financial management and this can affect their academic performance. Former finance minister of Malaysia highlighted that money problem may also have some impacts on social issues such as selling drugs and theft (Kurukillam, 2019). This study aims to address the research gap by delving deeper on the factors that affect accounting final-year student spending pattern on fast food.

### C. Research Objectives

#### ➤ Main Objective:

- To understand the key factors that influences fast food spending behavior among Final-year accounting students at Botho University, Maseru Campus.

#### ➤ Secondary Objectives

- To identify the fast-food types that are mostly consumed by Accounting Final-year students.
- To determine the average monthly fast-food spending of Accounting Final-year Students.
- To contribute to the already existing literature on consumer behavior and spending patterns of college students.

### D. Research Questions

#### ➤ This Study Intends to Address the Following Research Questions.

- What are the key factors that influences the spending patterns on fast food among Accounting Final year Students at Botho University, Maseru Campus?
- What factors influences the spending pattern for different fast-food products?
- Which fast foods types are specifically consumed by Final-year accounting students?
- What is the average monthly fast food spending of Accounting Final-year student at Botho University, Maseru campus?

### E. Significance of the Study

The study provided valuable information that will assist the government in allocating the students living allowances wisely and efficiently basing themselves on the findings of student fast-food consumption. Moreover, the findings of this study will help Botho University to be considerate in providing the financial literacy program for students, assisting them in developing the financial management skills and effective budgeting as they enter into the corporate world.

This study will further help the Government of Lesotho in developing the Policy on spending of university students that will foster the collaboration between local business and the universities allowing student to be given discount cards.

### F. Limitations of the Study

Regardless of the significance of this study there are certain limitations that were faced in the process of conducting the study, the very small sample size and the particular selection criteria utilised to choose participants from students. Furthermore, the reliance on the data that is self-reported led to biased or inaccurate respondents' responses therefore failing to capture the real and actual spending behavior.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### ➤ Introduction

A literature review allows the researcher to express and demonstrate his knowledge of the study under review, it also helps the researcher to properly position himself with other theories and researches on the related field. This section of the research is essential as it helps in avoiding duplication of information (Rakotsoana, 2019) .

### ➤ Factors Influencing the Spending Patterns on Fast-Food among University Students.

This section will highlight factors that influence spending patterns on fast-food among university students. Specifically, factors such as peer influence, financial literacy, and parental income will be taken into consideration.

### ➤ Peer Influence

According to (Brown, 2014) students often imitate and conform to the spending habits of their peers to maintain social connection in order to fit in to the lifestyle of their peers. (Gulati, 2017) Indicated that peer influence plays a very crucial role in shaping college students spending patterns on fast food, students often feel the pressure to fit in to the spending behavior of their peers and friends. This social phenomenon can lead to students making food purchases they may have not otherwise considered buying in first place.

Moreover, the study conducted by (Hayhoe, 2000) shares the same view with the study of (Gulati, 2017) by discovering that college students often match the consumption behavior of their peers in order to gain the social acceptance and sense of belonging from their peers. This act can result in student spending on items that are in line with their peer's preferences regardless of taking into account their financial strength.

In addition, the findings of (Mchiza, 2014) discovered that the food choices of South African students were influenced by their peers, and those food choices were based on social norm rather than nutritional needs. (Siebie, 2014) Further highlighted that peer influence played a role in shaping food perception of students as well as their attitude towards certain food types.

Lastly, the study of (Acland, 2012) on the *peer influence and college spending: evidence from field experience*, discovered that when college students were assigned to the group where their friends and peers spent money, they were more likely to increase their spending to fit the spending of their peers as well.

### ➤ *Financial Literacy*

The study conducted by (Volpe, 1998) on Analysis of Personal financial Literacy Among College Students indicated that students with a strong foundation and background in financial literacy are more likely to engage in the responsible spending practice that are aligning with their financial goals. Additionally, (Bona, 2017) highlighted that student spending behavior may be influenced by financial literacy as this factor plays a very important role in shaping student spending behavior by providing them with necessary skills and education on how to make informed decision regarding their finances.

Furthermore, the study of (Jorgensen, 2010) highlighted that financially literate students are better equipped with necessary skills that helps in creating and adhering to the budget, by understanding their financial objectives, students can allocate and utilize their money wisely and effectively and avoid spending on non-essential Items (Walstad, 2010). Similarly, the study of (Remund, 2010) further showed that Students who are financially literate are likely to always consider the future impact of their spending choices on the overall financial stability.

Lastly, it was discovered by (Van Zyl, 2015) that financial literacy is a significant factor in the student's ability to manage their fast-food spending, the study further indicated that students who have high financial literacy are more likely to make better financial spending when it comes to fast food consumption. Additionally, the study of (Riehle, 2017) discovered that students who have high level of financial literacy were less likely to be engaged in the impulsive spending and were more likely to safe for the future.

### ➤ *Parental Income*

Many studies have revealed that the income from parents have significant influence on the spending behavior of students on fast-food, high-income earners families tend to spend more of their income on readily available food compared to the middle and low-income earners families.

A study conducted by (Schmeiser, 2012) on the consumer spending and Economic Stimulus highlighted that student from wealthier families tend to have more access to the financial resource compared to student from poor or low-class therefore allocating a significant portion of their income towards fast-food expenditure. This study further discovered that students from rich families often have a wider range of the choice on the fast-food compared to their counterparts.

Moreover, it was discovered in the study conducted by (Cici, 2016) that students who received income from their parents were more likely to spent their money on personal expenses such as fast-food dining hence they were less likely to be worried about their spending.

Students with greater financial resources are more likely to spend their money on expensive groceries such as premium brands (Webster, 2020), however, the findings from the study of (NANO, 2015) suggested that students from rich

families tend to display poor financial behavior compared to student from poor families hence spending money recklessly towards expensive fast-food meals. (Heck, 1984) Also revealed that students who received a higher amount of pocket money from their parents spends it more on specialized food products.

Indeed, peer influence, financial literacy and parental income plays significant role in influencing student spending behavior on fast food. These factors are operating as a very powerful determining factors on how students allocate funds towards ready-made food consumption, when students see their friends buying certain meal, they often feel obliged to do the same in order to fit in and be part of the crew (peer influence). Students who are financially educated are more budget wise compared to students who are financially illiterate hence they maybe more considerate when making food choices.

### ➤ *Fast Food Types that are Specifically Consumed by Students*

This section aims to explore a brief literature on the fast-food types that are mainly consumed by students at university level, as previous studies showed that there is a wide range of fast-food choices that are consumed by university students and they are mainly shaped by their cultural background and preferences.

Studies that have been conducted thus far in relation to university student fast-food spending have revealed that most student prefers eating Instant food such as sandwiches, noodles and cornflakes as this type of fast-food aligns with their hectic schedules. This type of fast food are the most common types of food that are mainly consumed by college students as they are easy to prepare and suits students' busy schedules (Smith, 2017). Additionally, the study of (Younis, 2018) supports this as the findings suggested that cost and convenience are the main reasons that lead to student opting to fast food.

Furthermore, the study of (Esteban-Guerrero, 2018) discovered that university students have a tendency to consume more of processed food and beverage than fresh food and readily processed food was a very significant part of their diet. This was supported by (Gunter, 2013), that the college students had intake of low nutrients-dense food and high intake of fast and processed food.

The researcher also agrees with the evidence from the studies of food types that are specifically consumed by students, as this is a normal practice of college student to opt for the readily made food. Student may opt for fast food because of their busy schedules as it saves time, some of them may go for this option due to their laziness to prepare raw food.

### ➤ *The Students Average Spending on Fast food*

It is a well-known fact that university students face financial struggles time and again, many studies have done some investigations on the analysis of the average money that university students spend on fast-food. This section will

provide a brief overview on the related literature of students' average student spending on such food.

It was discovered in the study of (Garrido, 2015) that college students spent about \$200 per month on average towards fast-food and this was driven by numerous factors such as food choices and budget constraints, it was further highlighted by (Kahle, 2017) that students who were depending on financial aid spent more on fast-food compared to those who were not, with the average amount of \$222.00. This average food spending was influenced by factors such as race and gender.

The study of (United States Department of Agriculture, 2018) showed that the average spending of college student may vary from individual to individual from as little as \$60.00 per month up to \$450.00 per month on average. This is supported by (Hanson, 2022) showing that college students are spending around USD 356.00 monthly towards fast food.

The researcher's opinion in relation to the average spending of college students is that, student spend a significant portion of their budget towards fast-food and this is driven by different factors such as socio-economic background and financial aid status. Students who are receiving scholarships spend less on fast food compared to those who depend on parental income, but however their average spending differs depending on the geographical location and preferences.

### III. THEORETICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

#### A. Introduction

The theoretical literature review is defined by (Saunders, 2019) as an important part of the research, this section assists in providing a framework and foundation for understanding the main concepts and theories relating to the study under review. Theoretical literature review can assist in identifying research gaps (Collins, 2019). The book of (Hart, 2019) titled, Literature review; a step-by-step guide, indicated that this kind of literature review can assist in developing new ways of thinking as it helps to ensure that new research is well-informed and builds the already existing theories. This section of the chapter aims to discover the factors that influences student spending behavior on fast-food consumption using the model of Theory of Planned Behavior and Theory of Reasoned Action.

#### B. Theory of Reasoned Action

Having reviewed the empirical literature on student spending behavior this study will further examine the spending pattern of university student from the broader perspective using the theory of reasoned action that was developed by (Ajzen, 1977), this model is widely used and provide an insight on how the attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control can influence student behavior. The theory suggests that behavioral intentions is guided by attitudes and subjective norms. According to (Ajzen, 1977). Attitudes refers to individual's personal belief about the outcome of the behavior, while the subjective norms refer to the individual's perception of how other people would view

that certain behavior. When applied to student spending on fast food, studies have shown that attitudes play an important role in influencing student's intention towards their spending. (Smith, 2019) Found that students who have positive attitudes towards buying high quality food are more likely to spend their income dining out at high standard restaurants. Additionally, (Johnson, 2018) also discovered that students' perception of what is socially acceptable in terms of spending on fast food is influenced by their social networks and the society as a whole.

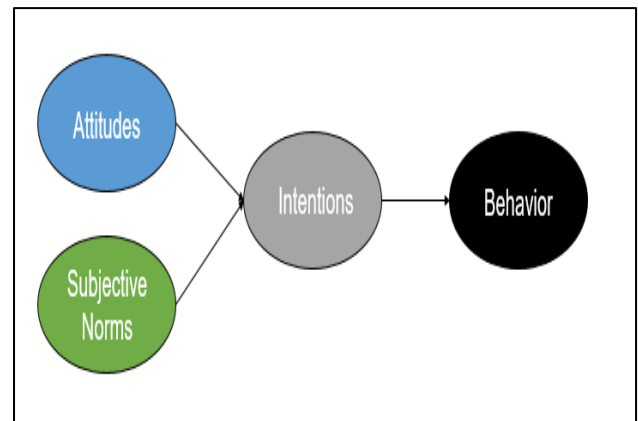


Fig 1: Theory of Reasoned Action Diagram by (Worthington, 2013)

#### C. Theory of Planned Behaviour

This theory builds on the Theory of Reasoned Action by adding the factor of perceived behavioral control in the model. This refers to how much control an individual has over their actions. In the case of university students, this becomes a crucial factor in understanding how much control do student have over their feeding decisions. The study of (Miller, 2020) found that students who feel that they have more control on their finances are more likely to make the responsible food choices. However, (Lowe, 2008) on her findings found that students who perceived greater control over their food choice felt more pressure from their friends to eat healthy food.

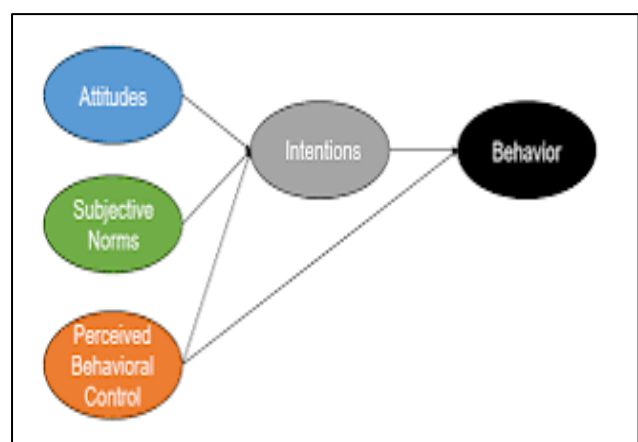


Fig 2: Theory of Planned Behavior Diagram by (Worthington, 2013)



By incorporating the theory of Reasoned Action and theory of planned behavior, a full understanding of factors affecting students' intention towards their fast-food spending choice can be achieved, as both theories provide insights on the underlying social influences that impact students' decision-making regarding food Choices.

#### IV. METHODOLOGY

##### A. Introduction

Methodology is described by (Bester, 2021) as the overall process of conducting the research project, this section will include the general approach and the methods to be used to collect data. This chapter outline the research methods that will be used to investigate the factors that influences the spending behaviour among Final-year Accounting Students a Botho University, Maseru campus. The chapter also go in detail on the research design, data collection methods, population and sample selection, instruments validation, instrument's reliability, procedures for data collection and the ethical consideration.

##### B. Research Design

For the purpose of this study, the quantitative approach method was used to investigate the factors influencing the students' spending behavior on fast food items. This approach method provides a larger perspective on the research problem under review (Creswell, 2015). This type of approach is very crucial for this study as it allows the researcher to gain a clear and deeper understanding of the topic under review. The quantitative research method also allows the research to explore the topic in the most flexible way. The cross-sectional design was used as it involves collecting data at the single point in time.

##### C. Methods of Data collection

This study used the quantitative method of collecting data, the data was obtained through the structured surveys in the form of questioners as it allows participants to express their views on their fast-food spending in an open way. This approach also allows easy measurement, and was used to ensure a wide-range and strong understanding of the research topic. The closed-ended and the Likert-scale questions were incorporated to gather information on the student spending behavior on fast food.

##### D. Population and Sample Selection

The target population was the final-year accounting Students at Botho University, Maseru Campus and the sample size of 30 students was used. A purposive sampling technique was used for selection of the participants, this sampling approach assist by making sure that the findings of the study are relevant and meaningful. (Creswell, 2015) Highlighted that this sampling technique is very important as it allows the selection of participants who are likely to have the relevant knowledge and experience to the topic.

##### ➤ The Selection Criteria used Under Purposive Sampling was the Following

- Participants are final year accounting students.
- Participants have been students for almost 5 years.
- Participants are willing to give their insights on their spending pattern.

##### E. Data Collection Procedures

The procedures for collecting data is by a structured survey created from Google forms, this is the user-friendly platform that enabled easy access to participants.. The multiple-choice and the Likert-scale question were incorporated to gather information on the student spending behavior on fast food, the invitation link was sent to the targeted participants through Accounting Final-year students' WhatsApp group and via Botho blackboard learn. The Survey took 2 weeks and it was very short and simple to allow high response rate.

##### F. Ethical Consideration

To protect the participants' rights from any potential harm, this research places a greater emphasis on the ethical consideration. The informed permission and agreement were obtained from the participants by providing them with clear details about the objectives of this study and that they are providing data voluntarily. To protect the confidentiality and privacy of participants, all data collected was only used for the purpose of this study.

#### V. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

##### A. Introduction

This section presents the analysis of the findings of Factors Influencing Consumer Behaviour on fast Food Spending among Final year accounting students at Botho University Maseru Campus. Through meticulous and careful data collection and analysis, this part shed light on the key factors that shapes and influences consumer behaviour on fast food choice among Final-year accounting students at Botho University. The total respondents are 32 final-year accounting students, Botho University, Maseru campus.

##### B. Descriptive Statistics Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics data analysis is a very important tool for analyzing data as it provides easiest way to visualize and summarize vast amount of data. It is also used to identify the trends and patterns of data being collected and measure the central tendency.

##### C. Respondents Demographics

Table 1: Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	16	50
Male	13	40.6
Prefer not to say	3	9.4
Total	32	100

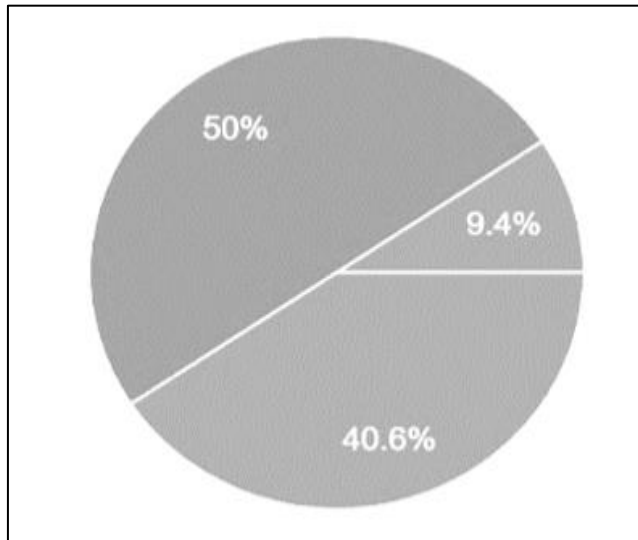


Fig 3: Gender Distribution

The sample of this study largely dominated by female students who constituted 50% of the respondents, 40.6% are males whereas 9.4% preferred not to reveal their gender. This is illustrated in Table 1 and figure 3 above. According to the study of (Sharpe D, 2009), it was discovered that on average, female's students had less financial knowledge compared to the male's students hence carried more debt. The main intention of asking this question is to ensure that every gender is fairly represented, and also to define and label out gender and individualities that may poses a significant influence on the total survey answers.

Table 2: Age of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent
Under 18 years old	1	3.1
18 to 24 years old	26	81.3
25 to 34 years old	5	15.6
Total	32	100

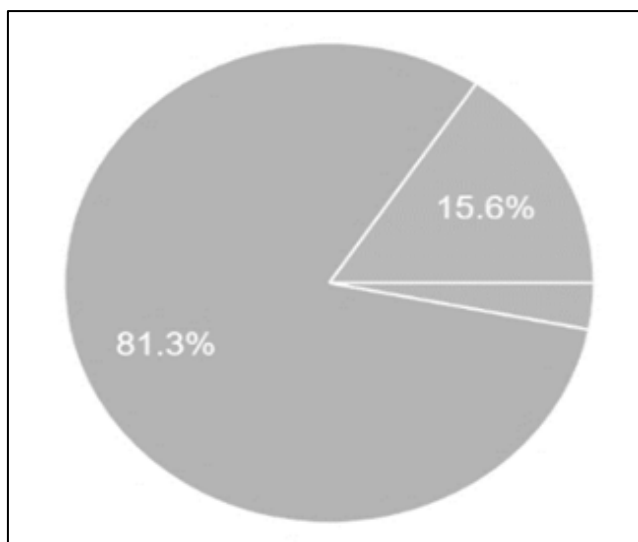


Fig 4: Age of Respondents

The main objective of asking the question is to make sure that there is a correct age group obtained. The above table 2 and figure 4 indicates that age that ranges between 18 – 24 years poses a high proportion of 81.3% of the total respondents, followed by the range of 25 – 34 years with 15.6% and the balance of 3.1% is from the age 18 years and below. The age group is valid and is in line with the scope of the study.

Table 3: When did you First Hear About the Concept of Consumer Behaviour?

Education Level	Frequency	Percent
Primary School	1	3.1
Secondary School	8	25.0
High School	13	40.6
Botho University	10	31.3
Total	32	100

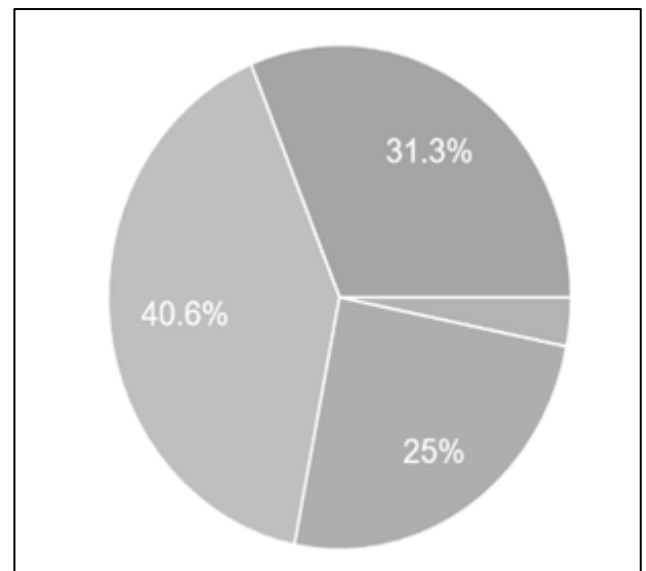


Fig 5: When did you First Hear About the Concept of Consumer Behaviour?

The aim of asking this question is to assess and understand the effectiveness of different education approaches to teaching the concept of consumer behaviour. Based on the data collected and presented in table 3, it seems that the majority of the people who responded being 40.6% first heard about this concept of consumer behaviour at high school level. Followed by 31.3% who claimed to have heard about this concept at Botho University, 25% have heard about it at secondary school and 3.1% at Primary School.

This suggests that high school level maybe the most common place where students are introduced to this concept since it has been mentioned by 13 respondents which is the highest frequency among all the education level.

*D. Influential Factors*

- *Kindly Indicate the Extent to Which You Consider the Following to be Factors Influencing Consumer Behaviour Related to Fast Food Spending.*

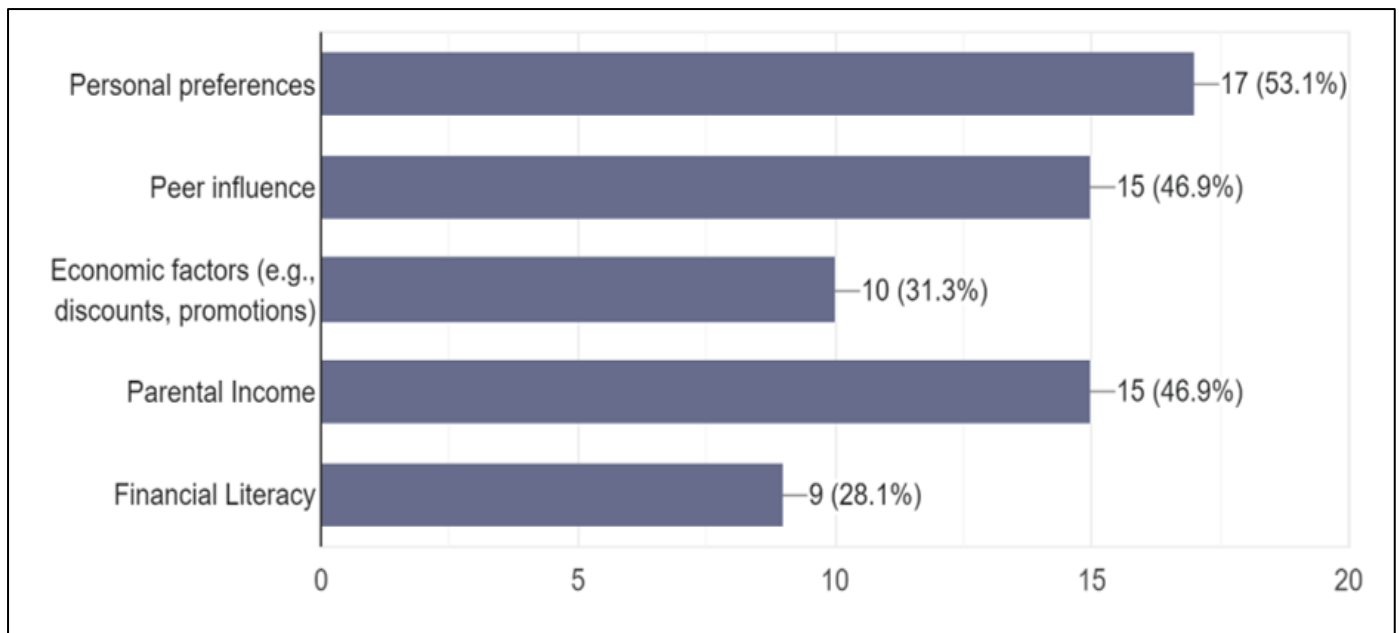


Fig 6: Influential Factors

The main aim of asking this question is to gain a better understanding on the fundamental and underlying motivations and influence that drives students' choice when it comes to fast food spending and to answer the first research question.

From figure 6, personal preferences seem to be the one that is constituting a higher proportion of 53.1% of the overall

factors stated, therefore being the mode factor since it has been mentioned by 17 respondents which is the highest frequency among all the factors, this is followed by peer influence and parental income with 46.9% each factor. Economic factors and financial literacy seem to be the least with 31.3% and 28.1% respectively.

- *What Factors Influence Your Choice of where to Buy Fast Food?*

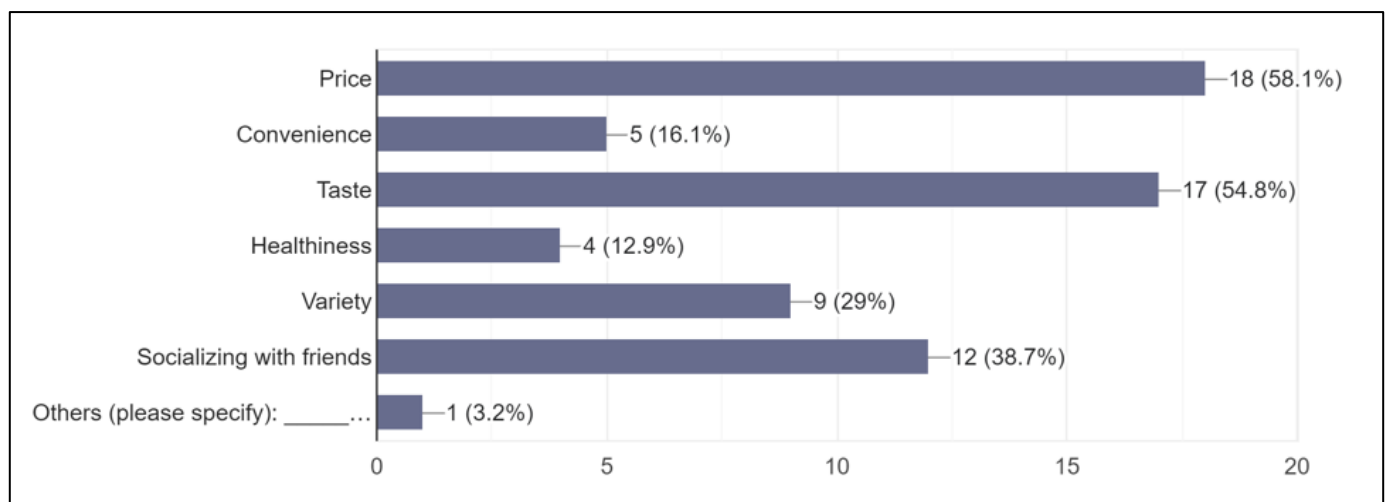


Fig 7: Illustrate the Percentage Break-Down of Factors Influencing the Students' Decision on Where to Buy Fast Food.

The factor "Price" Appears to be a Mode Factor with 58.1% Followed by taste that Makes 54.8%, While Socializing with Friends Constitute 38.7% Choice. Additionally, Convenience, Healthiness is 16.1% and 9% Respectively.

*E. Fast-Food Spending*

Table 4: What Percentage of your Monthly Food Budget is Allocated to Fast Food?

Monthly Budget Allocation Towards Fast Food	Frequency	Percent
Less than 10%	4	12.9
10% to 25%	22	71
26% to 50%	3	9.7
51% to 75%	1	3.2
More than 75%	1	3.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>100</b>

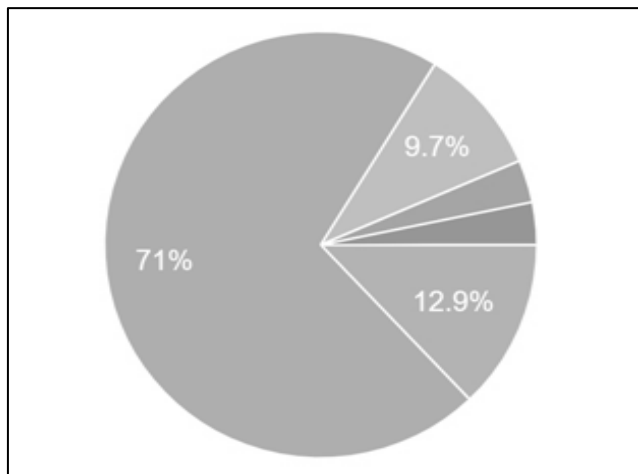


Fig 8: What Percentage of your Monthly Food Budget is Allocated to Fast Food?

Table 4 reveals students' monthly budget allocation towards fast food spending among accounting Final year students at Botho University, Maseru Campus. The mode budget allocation is 10% to 25%, this category has the highest frequency, and it has 22 respondents which makes it the most common budget allocation among the group.

On the other hand, 12.9% of total respondents allocates less than 10% of their budget towards fast food, only few respondents allocate a substantial amount of their budget towards fast food. In particular, 9.7% of the respondents allocate 50%, 3.2% of the respondents allocate 51% to 75%, similarly, 3.2% of the respondents allocate more than 75% of their monthly budget towards fast-food. One respondent did not answer this question at all.

Table 5: How Much do you Approximately Spend on Fast Food Per Month?

Amount Approximately Spent on Fast Food Per Month	Frequency	Percent
Less Than M300	14	45.2
M400 to M1000	17	54.8
M1100 to M1900	0	0
More than M2000	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>100</b>

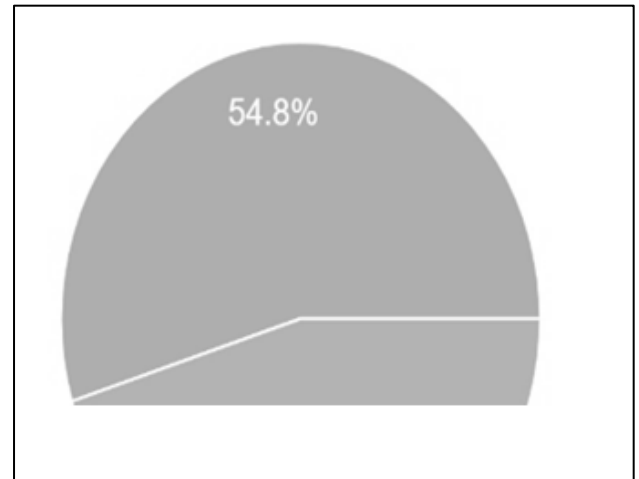


Fig 9: How Much do you Approximately Spend on Fast Food Per Month

The above table shows students' distribution of monthly spending on fast food, data on table 5 reveals that the majority of the respondents constituting 54.8% of the respondents are falling within the range of M400.00 to M1000.00. A very significant but slightly small group accounting to 45.2% spends less than M300 on fast food per month. There are no respondents in the high spending categories, in the range M1100 to M1900 and from M2000 and above.

The range between M400 to M1000 is evident to be the mode amount students spent on fast food per month.

Table 6: On average, How Much do you Spend on a Single Meal When Eating Out?

Amount spent on single meal while eating out	Frequency	Percent
Less Than M10	3	9.7
M10 to M20	11	35.5
M21 to M50	14	45.2
More than M50	3	9.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>100</b>

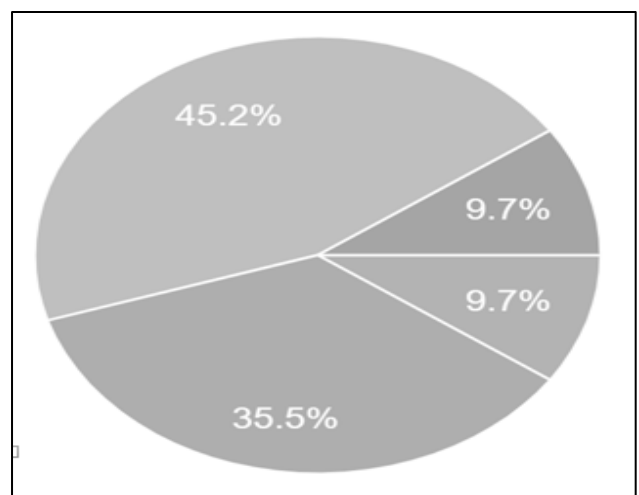


Fig 10: On Average, How Much do you Spend on a Single Meal When Eating Out?



As shown in table 6 above, the number of students who responded on how much they spend on a single meal when dining out is 31. It is revealed that the significant number of students that makes 45.2% of the total respondents are spending between M21.00 to M50.00 on a single meal indicating a very reasonable choice while dining out. Additionally, 35.5% opt for the budget that is friendlier by spending between the ranges of M10.00 to M20.00, signifying a more rational approach to dining out. On the other hand, only 9.7% spend less than M10.00 also the very same percentage spend more than M50.00.

On average students spends approximately M28.80 on a single meal while dining out.

Table 7: Which of the Following Fast-Food Items do you Spend on Most Frequently?

Fast Food Items Spent Mostly On	Frequency	Percent
Fast Food Burgers and Sandwich	6	19.4
Pizza	9	29
Fried Chicken	5	16.1
Fried Potatoes and Bread	11	35.5
Total	31	100

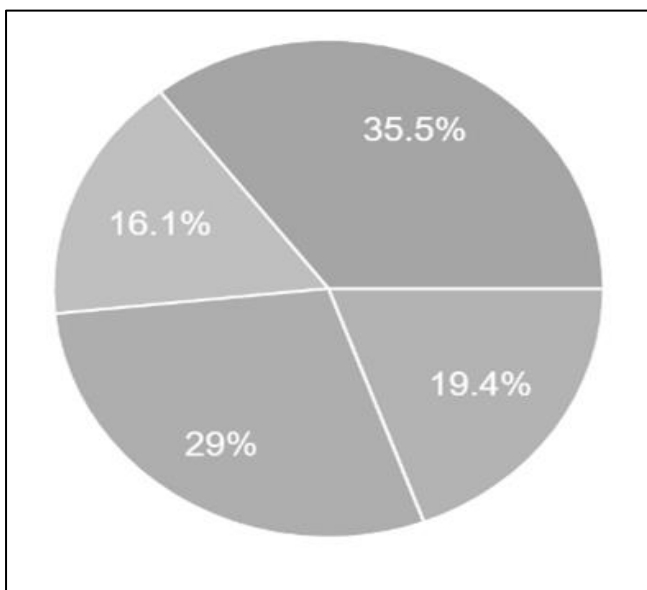


Fig 11: Which of the Following Fast-Food Items do you Spend on Most Frequently?

Data presented in table 7 shows the respondents' fast-food preference and the most frequent spending choice. Fried potatoes and bread stand out to be the mode choice students spent mostly on with the highest frequency of 11 appearance making 35.5%, followed closely by Pizza with 29% of the total respondents. Fast food burgers and sandwiches constitute 19.4% and fried chicken accounting for a smaller portion of 16.1%.

## VI. DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. Discussion and Interpretation of Major Findings.

This section provides a comprehensive discussion on the major research findings, drawing a brief connection between the identified factors that influences the students' spending behaviour towards fast food among Botho university final-year accounting students. The study also considers the relevant insights from the literature review to offer the complete analysis.

#### ➤ Major Findings

#### • Research Objective 1: Key Factors that Influence the Spending Patterns on Fast Food.

Parental income, peer influence and personal preference all have a significant influence on the student spending behaviour of Final-year accounting Students at Botho University Maseru Campus towards fast food.

Personal preference is the most influential factor, suggesting that the desire and attitudes of individuals are the key factors in determining what fast food a person can consume, this aligns with the main and central principle of the theory of planned behavior and theory of reasoned action, which state that the person's intention to engage in a certain behaviours are shaped strongly by their attitudes towards that behaviour and this seems to be the case with the consumption of fast food of Final year Accounting students at Botho University, Maseru Campus.

It is further revealed from the findings that peer influence is also a key factor that shapes Final year accounting students at Botho University, Maseru Campus, with a high number of students conforming to their friends' fast-food choice in order to fit in and maintain social connections. This finding aligns straight with the social aspect and component of the theory of planned behavior and theory of reasoned action, which indicate that the subjective norms such as peer influence plays a significant role in shaping the person's behaviour.

The findings of this research also reveals that the students from the rich families spend more of their money towards fast food than their counterparts, these findings can be related to the perceived behavioral control principle in the theory of planned behaviour. Furthermore, the findings about peer influence are supported by the literature review stated in chapter 2 that shows that students frequently familiarize their spending behaviors to fit in with their social circle. For example, the study of (Brown, 2014) found that college students tend to imitate their peers' spending patterns out of a desire just for social acceptance.

These findings support the study that was conducted by (Gulati, 2017) as the finding are similar. This suggest that influence from peers, parental income and financial literacy have a very strong and powerful impact on the university student spending pattern on fast-food.

### ➤ *Factors Influencing Spending Patterns for Different Fast-Food Products*

It is evident from the findings of this study that taste and price are the most influential factors. Price seems to be the dominating factor and this is maybe due to the financial obstacles and constraints students faces, these findings support the theory of reasoned Action, which state that the individual's choice is mainly based on their subjective norms and attitudes. In the case of this study, it is discovered that price of fast food is a subjective norm that influences the spending decision of students.

It is further discovered in this study that taste plays a very important role in shaping the consumer behaviour towards fast spending as defined by the guiding theories of this study. Students' attitudes and preference in regard to a particular food item plays a very significant role in their food spending choice. In the case of this study price and taste appears to be the most important factors that shapes the students' intentions to spend more on fast food and this ultimately affects their behaviour.

The findings also collaborate with the literature review on the study of (Younis, 2018) by pin-pointing that cost is the main and critical factor that force students to go for fast food. This is aligning with the results, as most students prioritize on the affordability of fast food.

### • *Research Objective 2: Fast Food Types that are Mostly Consumed by Students*

It is evident from the findings of this study that potato chips and bread normally known as French fries are the most preferred fast food that accounting students at Botho University Maseru Campus mostly eat. This preference of fried potatoes is aligning straight with the wider trend of fast-food consumption where the convenient meal options have a tendency to be the most preferred and favored meals by university students. These outcomes resonate clearly with the idea of convenience, a frequent theme in literature review, where university student that have busy schedules and academic commitments often tend to eat fast and processed food.

The results on the fast-food types that are mostly consumed by Students also reinforce the strong connection between convenience and student food choice of the reviewed study of (Smith, 2017) as it is indicated that the lack of time for preparing meal and the students busy schedules lead them to opt for fast food that can be easily and quickly prepared. This is reflected in the popularity of potato chips a classic example of a convenient food options.

The findings of the study also match with the concept and principle of the theory of reasoned action and the theory of planned behaviour with a great emphasis on the importance of attitudes, perceived behavioral control and subjective norms in determining the consumer behavior. The perceived taste and convenience of Potato chips plays a very important role in influencing students' choice to consume such item, this preference aligns with the foundational theories of this study, the theory of planned behaviour where the students' attitudes

towards the convenience and taste of potato chips significantly influence their fast-food consumption choice.

### • *Research Objective 3: Students Average Monthly Fast-Food Spending*

The students' monthly income from National Manpower Development secretariat sums up to M1,750.00 per monthly and the investigations on the students' average monthly spending on fast-food reveals that majority being (71%) of accounting final-year students allocates 10% to 25% of their monthly budget towards consumption of fast-food. This shows the use of the principle of perceived behavioral control when making budget allocation hence aligning with the theory of planned behaviour.

There is no significant variance in the findings of this study with the results from the study that was conducted by (United States Department of Agriculture, 2018) as it shows that students spend up to \$400.00 in average which is the similar case for Final-year accounting students at Botho University, Maseru Campus where students spend M437.50 in average. The currency fluctuations between Lesotho currency and US Dollar indicated the difference in the standard of living between the residence in America and Lesotho. This spending behaviour is aligning with the literature stated in chapter two by the study of (Garrido, 2015) and (Hanson, 2022), this shows that students balance their fast-food desire with the little they get from National Manpower Development secretariat.

### *B. Conclusion*

In the nutshell, the research can conclude that personal preferences, parental income and peer influence appears to be the most factors influencing the student spending on fast-food, highlighting the significant role that desire and individual attitudes plays on students' fast-food spending decision. Whereas factors such as financial literacy and economic factors like promotion and discounts are found to be less significant with the overall spending of fast-food of Botho University, Maseru campus students. Concurrently it is discovered that potato chips and bread are the most common and frequent preferred food choice among students and this aligns with the current trend of university students preferring readily made meals due to their convenience and busy schedules.

Besides that, the strategy for budget allocation is also witnessed, indicating that students allocate between 10% and 25% of their monthly income towards fast-food and this aligns well with the concept of behavioral control under the theory of planned behaviour. The findings of this study do not only give emphasis on the reasonableness, convenience and suitability of specific food choices of student but also shows the multidimensional interaction of personal and socio-economic factors that influences students' fast-food spending pattern.

### C. Implications for Future Considerations

The results of this research have a very important implications for different stakeholders such as educational institutions, Government of Lesotho and the businesses that provides fast food. The institution of higher education can make use of these findings on designing and implementing the financial literacy programs in their curriculum as this will help students to make best decisions on how and where to spend their money on fast-food.

It can also be useful to the Government of Lesotho through National Manpower Development Secretariat as it will help them in understanding student spending behaviour therefore doing relevant adjustments to their policies based on the identified spending patterns. Additionally, parent can use these findings to discuss and monitor their children's budgeting and spending. Lastly, the business providing fast food products can use the insights from this study to adapt on what they offer to students in order to meet their preferences.

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## APPENDIX

### APPENDIX 1

#### Consent Form

By taking part in this research, you agree that:

You have clearly read and understood the information provided in this consent form.

You voluntarily and willingly agree to take part in this research.


#### Contact Information:

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Bongane Debese, 1923315 or email [Bongane.debese@bothouniversity.com](mailto:Bongane.debese@bothouniversity.com)

#### Signature:

By signing below, you confirm your consent to participate in the study.

Participant's Name: Mpiti Mohale

Signature: 

Date: 09 October 2023



## APPENDIX 2

### RESEARCH QUESTIONEERS

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Other

**1. When did you first hear about the concept of consumer behavior?**

*Primary School*

*Secondary School*

*High School*

*Botho University*

**2. Kindly indicate the extent to which you consider the following to be factors influencing consumer behavior related to fast food spending:**

*Personal preferences*

*Peer influence*

*Economic factors (e.g., discounts, promotions)*

*Parental Income*

*Health considerations*

**3. To what extent do you agree with the statement: "Understanding consumer behavior can help me make informed choices about my fast-food spending"?**

*Strongly Agree*

*Agree*

*Neutral*

*Disagree*

*Strongly Disagree*

**4. How important is it for you to make healthy food choices?**

☐ *Not important*

☐ *Slightly important*

☐ *Very important*

☐ *Extremely important*

**5. Which of the following fast-food items do you spend on most frequently? (Select one option):**

*Fast food burgers and sandwiches*

*Pizza*

*Fried chicken*

*Fried Potatoes and Bread*

**6. Which of the following reasons best describes why you choose to eat fast food? (Select one option):**

*Lack of time for cooking*

*Craving for specific fast-food items*

*Convenience while on campus*

*Peer outings and social gatherings*

*Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_*

**7. How often do you eat out or buy food on campus in a week?**

*[ ] Never*

*[ ] 1-2 times*

*[ ] 3-4 times*

*[ ] 5 or more times*

**8. How much do you approximately spend on fast food per month?**

*[ ] Less than M300*

*[ ] M400- M1000*

*[ ] M1100 – M1900*

*[ ] More than M2000*

**9. What factors influence your choice of where to buy fast food? (Check all that apply)**

*[ ] Price*

*[ ] Convenience*

*[ ] Taste*

*[ ] Healthiness*

*[ ] Variety*

*[ ] Socializing with friends*

*[ ] Others (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_*

**10. On average, how much do you spend on a single meal when eating out?**

*[ ] Less than M10.00*

*[ ] M10.00 – M20.00*

*[ ] M21.00 - M50.00*

*[ ] More than M50.00*

**11. How much does peer influence impact your food spending decisions?**

*[ ] Not at all*

*[ ] Slightly*

*[ ] Very much*

*[ ] Extremely*

**12. which of the following reasons best describes why you choose to eat fast food? (Select one option):**

*Lack of time for cooking*

*Craving for specific fast-food items*

*Convenience while on campus*

*Peer outings and social gatherings*

*Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_*