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**Family Food Consumption : Desire towards Convenient Food Products**

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to identify the salient factors affecting convenient food consumption among working women. Using structural equation modeling, *halal* awareness, food nutritious value, health awareness, price consideration, budget allocation and time factor were modeled to impact convenient food consumption. It is found that time factor has significant positive impact on convenient food consumption. The rest of the factors namely health awareness, *halal* awareness, price consideration, budget allocation and family influence do not have any significant effect on convenient food consumption.

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Keyword: halal; convenient food; food consumption; healthy food

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## 1. Introduction

The rising number of urban population has increased the demand for products and services associated to fast-paced city living, particularly products which is convenient and time-saving. In addition, there is an emergence of retail food outlets that serve fast and convenient food to meet consumers demand. More importantly, convenient food products such as frozen food, canned and packaged food are made available in hypermarkets and supermarkets near to the consumers. Thus, it replaces the traditional ways of cooking food with those that is hassle-free, fast and convenient.

The fast growth of disposable income among consumers in urban area has enabled them to have more opportunities to consider a wider array of products and services compared to those in rural area. The expenditure patterns of the former reflect greater choice. Indeed, living in the cities has exposed more Malaysian consumers to popular retail trends and marketing campaigns. The rapid trend of living has changed consumer behavior especially in their eating habits. At present, many fast food restaurants and retail food outlets mushroom in urban area and big cities. Parents who are busy during weekdays tend to dine out or buy take away food for dinner. Thus, it reduces the time spent in a kitchen in preparing meals for family.

The purpose of this research is to identify the factors that may influence convenient food choices among women who work in a local university. There are factors that can possibly have an impact on convenient food consumption. Among others are *halal* awareness, working mothers, time factor, health consciousness, food nutritious value and price consideration.

## 2. Literature Review

A lot of research conducted on convenient food may constantly consider the element of time (Buckley et al, 2007). Convenience involves more than just quality time, especially in food preparation (Gofton and Marshall, 1998; Buckley et al., 2007), but it also concentrates on physical and mental effort associated with food-specific activities (Man & Fullerton, 1990; Buckley et al., 2007). It is important to consider convenience at all stages in the process of food consumption and to determine the proportionate importance that consumers attach to time and energy use in acquisition, consumption and disposal (Brown and McEnally, 1993). Therefore, convenience is defined in terms of time, physical energy and mental effort savings related to food preparation and consumption.

From the definition of convenience, there are types of convenient food products that can be considered. Douglas (1976) and de Boer et al. (2004) consider eating in canteens and restaurant as convenience. Capps et al. (1983) and de Boer et al. (2004) define convenient food as fully prepared or partially prepared food items where some or all of the preparation time, culinary skills or energy inputs are provided by the food processor-distributor rather than in the home-makers kitchen. According to Romani (2006), for post-modern family members, lunch is usually consumed outside of home (at school or workplace) or at home but in a personalized way. In addition, work meeting, sports practice or friend's party have become legitimate reasons to miss the evening meals. Many family members often eat lunch outside of home and families generally eat out more than in the modern era when going to a restaurant was considered a special outing. This observation has to be considered along with an increased use of ready-made convenience food that makes food preparation quicker and easier. Therefore,

H<sub>1</sub>: Time factor has a positive relationship to convenient food consumption

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