International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR)
E-ISSN: 2582-2160 ● Website: www.ijfmr.com ● Email: editor@ijfmr.com

From Traditional Meals to Fast Food: An Intergenerational Analysis of Changing Food Habits

Dr. Raseena K K[1], Ms. Haneena C M[2], Ms. Gayathri O[3], Dr. Jayapriya J[4]

[1]Associate Professor, Economics, Sree Neelakanta Government Sanskrit College, Pattambi
[2,3]Undergraduate Student, Economics, Sree Neelakanta Government Sanskrit College, Pattambi
[4]Associate Professor, Commerce

Abstract

Food habits are shaped by cultural traditions, family practices, socioeconomic conditions, lifestyle changes, and exposure to evolving food cultures. This study examines differences in food habits across four generations: Generation X, Millennials, Generation Z, and Generation Alpha. Using primary data collected from 144 respondents, with 36 respondents in each generational group, the study compares food preferences, frequency of home-cooked and fast-food consumption, snacking habits, breakfast regularity, family eating practices, and the use of food-delivery applications. Descriptive statistics, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), multiple comparisons, and ordered logit regression are employed to examine generational differences and the association between selected socioeconomic characteristics and the Food Habit Difference Index (FHDI). The findings indicate that home-cooked food remains the preferred option for 88.19% of respondents, although this preference declines from 100% among Generation X to 66.67% among Generation Alpha. Daily consumption of home-cooked food remains high across all generations, while Generation Z records the highest proportion of weekly fast-food consumers (38.89%) and the highest use of food-delivery applications (44.44%). The ANOVA results reveal statistically significant differences in mean FHDI across generations ($F(3, 140) = 5.523$, $p = 0.0013$). Multiple-comparison results show that Generation X differs significantly from each of the three younger generations, whereas differences among Millennials, Generation Z, and Generation Alpha are not statistically significant. The ordered logit regression does not identify statistically significant individual associations between the selected socioeconomic variables and FHDI at the 5% level. Overall, the study reveals the coexistence of traditional food practices and changing consumption preferences, with the clearest statistical differences in FHDI occurring between Generation X and the younger generations. The findings highlight the importance of considering generational experiences, family practices, and socioeconomic contexts when examining changing food habits.

Keywords: Food habits, generational differences, home-cooked food, fast food, food preferences, Food Habit Difference Index, socioeconomic factors.

1. Introduction

Food preferences are an important dimension of individual and social behaviour. They are shaped by cultural traditions, family practices, economic circumstances, availability of food, lifestyle changes, health

awareness and exposure to new food cultures. Food preferences also reflect broader changes in society, as the foods people choose and the ways they obtain and consume them evolve over time. Globalisation, urbanisation, migration and the expansion of digital technology have transformed food consumption in many societies. Traditional home-cooked meals continue to be important, but restaurant dining, fast food, packaged products and online food delivery have become increasingly visible in contemporary food cultures. Social media platforms, online advertisements, food-related videos and digital influencers may also affect awareness of new cuisines and influence food choices. These developments raise questions about whether food preferences differ systematically between generations.

Generation X, Millennials, Generation Z and Generation Alpha have experienced different social, economic and technological environments. Generation X grew up before the widespread adoption of the internet and app-based food services. Millennials experienced the expansion of global consumer culture and digital communication, while Generation Z has grown up in an environment characterised by widespread internet access and social media. Generation Alpha is experiencing food-related influences in an increasingly digital and interconnected environment, although their food preferences may be strongly influenced by parents, caregivers and household practices. These differences in formative experiences may be reflected in preferences for traditional and modern foods, home-cooked meals, restaurant food, fast food, snacks and different cuisines. However, generational differences should not be assumed in advance. Food preferences may also vary according to income, education, occupation, place of residence, family structure, cultural background and health conditions.

Against this background, the present study proposes to compare food preferences across Generation X, Millennials, Generation Z and Generation Alpha. It examines food choices, consumption practices, the influence of family and social media, attitudes towards healthy eating, and the perceived importance of food in everyday life. By comparing these dimensions, the study seeks to understand the extent to which food preferences differ across generations and the factors associated with those differences.

2. Relevance of the Study

The study is relevant for several academic and practical reasons. A comparison of four generations can help identify changes in preferences for traditional foods, home-cooked meals, restaurant food, fast food and different cuisines. It can also show which food practices remain common across generations. Food is closely associated with family traditions, regional identity and cultural practices. Examining generational preferences can help explain whether traditional food practices are maintained, modified or replaced by newer consumption patterns.

Social media, online advertisements, food-related videos and digital platforms have become important sources of information about food. The study can examine whether these influences differ between generations and whether reported exposure is associated with food preferences. Education, occupation, income category, residential background and household circumstances may affect food availability, affordability and choice. Understanding these factors can help distinguish generational differences from differences arising from economic and social conditions.

Preferences for particular food categories, the frequency of fast-food consumption, attitudes towards healthy eating and awareness of nutritional information are relevant to nutrition education and public-health initiatives. Knowledge of food preferences across generations may assist food businesses, nutrition educators and policymakers in designing more appropriate products, communication strategies and healthy-eating programmes.

3. Review of Literature

3.1 Generations and changing food preferences

Generations and changing food preferences are addressed by the work by Twenge (2023), Generations: The Real Differences Between Gen Z, Millennials, Boomers, Gen X, and Silents, and provides a broader framework for understanding differences between generations in their social experiences, values and behaviour. Turow-Paul (2015), in A Taste of Generation Yum, focuses on generational relationships with food and contemporary food culture. Wani et al. (2025), in Evolving Plates: Dietary Shifts Among Generation Z and Millennials, addresses dietary shifts among younger generations. These works provide a starting point for examining whether food choices and consumption practices differ across age cohorts. However, findings concerning Millennials and Generation Z cannot automatically be extended to Generation X or Generation Alpha. A four-generation comparison is therefore useful for examining a broader range of food preferences within a common analytical framework.

O'Brien (2023), in Eating the Present, Tasting the Future: Exploring India Through Its Changing Food, addresses changing food practices in the Indian context. Wilk (2024), in The History of Globalization and the Food Supply, and Inglis and Gimlin (2009), in The Globalization of Food, provide broader perspectives on the relationship between globalisation and food systems. The FAO publication Globalization of Food Systems in Developing Countries: Impact on Food Security and Nutrition (2004) offers a framework for considering the implications of changing food systems for food security and nutrition. This body of literature provides a basis for examining the coexistence of traditional food practices and newer consumption choices. The spread of cuisines, processed foods and modern food services may expand consumer choice, but the extent to which these developments affect individual preferences can vary across generations and socio-economic groups.

Ogden (2002), in The Psychology of Eating, provides a psychological perspective on eating behaviour. Wurgaft and White (2023), in Ways of Eating: Exploring Food through History and Culture, place food practices within wider historical and cultural contexts. Sajadmanesh et al. (2016), in Worldwide Culinary Habits from Online Recipes, examines culinary habits through online recipe data. These perspectives suggest that food choice should not be understood solely as a response to price or availability. Personal preferences, family traditions, social interaction, cultural expectations and exposure to other food cultures may also be relevant. The present study can examine these influences through questions about household food practices, preferred cuisines, family eating patterns and the role of social media.

Garai-Fodor (2021), in Food Consumption Patterns, in a Value-Based Approach for Generation Z, examines food consumption through the values associated with Generation Z. Makowska, Boguszewski and Hrehorowicz (2024), in Generational Differences in Food Choices and Consumer Behavior in Sustainable Development, addresses generational differences in food choice and consumer behaviour in relation to sustainable development. Radu and Salmon (2025), in Generations and Sustainability: Analysing Preferences and Behaviours for Organic Food Products, and Doan (2025), in Sustainable Food Consumption Behaviours of Generations Y and Z, extend this discussion to sustainability-related choices. This literature indicates the importance of examining not only what people eat but also the considerations that may influence their choices. Health awareness, nutrition information and sustainability-related values may be relevant, although the strength of these influences should be established empirically rather than assumed.

Chauhan (2019), in Changing Food Habits of Consumers Through Media, addresses the role of media in changing food habits. Patgiri (2022), in Changing Food Habits of Urban Middle-Class Youth in India:

"Ordering In", considers online food ordering among urban youth. Chandran (2016), in Food Habits and the Changing Social Scenario in the Urban Kerala, provides a regional perspective on food practices and social change. These works are particularly relevant to questions concerning online food delivery, social-media advertisements, food-related videos, restaurant meals and fast-food consumption. They also support the need to consider the social and geographical context in which food preferences develop.

The literature identified in the supplied write-up covers generational behaviour, globalisation, culture, media, health awareness and changing food consumption. Nevertheless, the proposed study can contribute by examining these dimensions together in a single comparative framework covering Generation X, Millennials, Generation Z and Generation Alpha. The study can also distinguish between stated preferences and reported consumption practices. For example, a preference for home-cooked food does not necessarily mean that a respondent consumes it most frequently. Similarly, awareness of healthy eating does not necessarily establish that a person follows a healthy diet. Comparing these dimensions can provide a more nuanced understanding of generational differences. This research gap is provisional and should be finalised after verifying the original publications and checking for studies that have already compared all four generations in the intended geographical context.

4. Statement of the Problem

Food preferences are changing alongside wider social, economic, cultural and technological transformations. Traditional food practices coexist with restaurant meals, fast food, packaged products and online food delivery. At the same time, exposure to social media, changing family arrangements, work and study schedules, economic circumstances and health awareness may influence individual food choices. Although generational differences in food consumption have received attention, it is necessary to examine whether these differences are present across Generation X, Millennials, Generation Z and Generation Alpha within the same study. It is also important to determine whether apparent generational differences are associated with factors such as education, occupation, residential background, household circumstances, family practices and digital-media exposure.

The central problem addressed by the study is therefore the extent and nature of differences in food preferences across four generations and the socio-economic, cultural, familial and technological factors associated with these preferences. The study seeks to identify both differences and commonalities without presuming that any generation necessarily prefers traditional, modern or healthier foods.

5. Objectives of the Study

The major objective is to examine differences in food preferences across Generation X, Millennials, Generation Z and Generation Alpha. The specific objectives are: To compare food preferences across the four generations, to examine generational differences in preferences for traditional foods, home-cooked meals, restaurant food, fast food, snacks and different cuisines and to analyse differences in reported food-consumption frequency and eating practices across generations.

6. Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative, descriptive and comparative research design. It will compare reported food preferences and associated practices among four generational groups. The population will consist of respondents belonging to the four generations covered by the study. The birth-year classifications proposed in the earlier write-up are:

Generation	Birth years
Generation X	1965–1980
Millennials	1981–1996
Generation Z	1997–2012
Generation Alpha	2013–2025

The study must adopt a single, consistent rule for assigning respondents born in that year. Since many members of Generation Alpha are minors, age-appropriate consent and parental or guardian consent were obtained where required. The study uses a convenient sampling method and the distribution of sample in each generation is limited to 36. Thus, a total sample of 144 respondents were approached for primary data collection.

Primary data were collected using the structured questionnaire covering demographic characteristics, food preferences, food-consumption practices, food-related influences, attitudes towards healthy eating and household food practices. Secondary information will be drawn from relevant books, journal articles, reports and publications on generational differences, food culture, globalisation, food consumption, media influences and nutrition.

The data were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques, including frequencies, percentages and cross-tabulations. A Food Habit Difference Index (FHDI) was constructed to capture variations in food habits across different generations. The index incorporated seven key dimensions of food habits: (i) preference for home-cooked food versus restaurant food, (ii) frequency of consumption of home-cooked food, (iii) frequency of fast-food consumption, (iv) snacking frequency, (v) regularity of breakfast consumption, (vi) family eating practices, and (vii) use of food delivery applications. Each of these dimensions was measured using a Likert scale and subsequently combined to construct the composite index.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed to examine whether statistically significant differences existed in the mean FHDI scores across the four generational cohorts. Further, post-hoc tests were conducted to identify the specific generational groups between which significant differences occurred. In addition, an ordered logit regression model was estimated to examine the influence of selected socio-economic variables on the FHDI. The ordered logit model was considered appropriate given the ordinal nature of the dependent variable, which represents the composite index with scores ranging from 0 to 20.

7. Results and Discussions

The results and discussion section were organised in three sections

- The socio-economic profile of the respondents
- The difference in food habits across generations and
- The socio- economic determinants of difference in food habits

7.1 Socio-economic profile of the respondents

The socio-economic profile of Generation X (1965–1980), Millennials (1981–1996), Generation Z (1997–2012), and Generation Alpha (2013–2025) provides (Table No.1) insights into the educational attainment, gender composition, economic status, residential background, religious affiliation, social group distribution, and occupational characteristics of the respondents. A comparative analysis of these variables

helps identify the similarities and differences among the four generations and provides a background for examining generational changes in food preferences and diet plans.

Table No. 1- Socio-Economic Profile of the Respondents

Education Profile				
	GEN X (1965-1980)	Millennials (1981-1996)	GEN Z (1997-2012)	GEN ALPHA (2013-2025)
10th or below	50.00%	30.56%	8.33%	100%%
Higher secondary	19.44%	11.11%	25.00%	0.00%
Under graduation	22.22%	19.44%	47.22%	0.00%
Post graduation and Above	8.33%	30.56%	13.89%	0.00%
Professional degree	0.00%	8.33%	5.56%	0.00%
Gender Profile				
Female	63.89%	77.78%	80.56%	52.78%
Male	36.11%	22.22%	19.44%	47.22%
Economic Status				
APL	63.89%	63.89%	75.00%	61.11%
BPL	36.11%	36.11%	25.00%	38.89%
Area of Living				
Rural	52.78%	33.33%	38.89%	55.56%
Semi urban	27.78%	44.44%	41.67%	33.33%
Urban	19.44%	22.22%	19.44%	11.11%
Religious Status				
Hindu	52.78%	55.56%	52.78%	52.78%
Muslim	47.22%	44.44%	47.22%	47.22%
Social Group Status				
GENERAL	11.11%	5.56%	8.33%	5.56%
OBC	77.78%	83.33%	80.56%	80.56%
SC	11.11%	11.11%	11.11%	13.89%
Grand Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Occupation Status				
Elementary occupation	8.33%	8.33%	2.78%	0.00%
Salaried	30.56%	55.56%	38.89%	0.00%
Self-employed	8.33%	2.78%	0.00%	0.00%
Student	0.00%	0.00%	38.89%	100%
Unemployed	52.78%	33.34%	19.45%	0.00%

Source: Primary Data

The educational profile reveals considerable differences across the four generations. Among Generation X, 50% of respondents have an educational qualification of 10th standard or below, followed by 22.22%

with undergraduate qualifications and 19.44% with higher secondary education. Among Millennials, the educational profile is relatively more diversified. Postgraduate qualifications and education up to the 10th standard or below each account for 30.56% of respondents. Undergraduate education represents 19.44%, while 11.11% have higher secondary qualifications. Compared with Generation X, Millennials show a greater representation in postgraduate and professional education. Generation Z demonstrates a relatively higher level of educational attainment, with 47.22% of respondents having undergraduate qualifications. Higher secondary education accounts for 25%, followed by postgraduate education at 13.89%. This distribution suggests that undergraduate education is the most prominent educational category among Generation Z respondents. Generation Alpha is distinctly different, with 100% of respondents reporting education up to the 10th standard or below This pattern should be interpreted in light of the young age of Generation Alpha, many of whose members may not yet have reached higher levels of education.

The gender profile indicates that female respondents constitute the majority of the sample across all four generations, except that the gender distribution in Generation Alpha is relatively balanced. Overall, females account for 68.75% of respondents, while males constitute 31.25%. In Generation X, females represent 63.89% of respondents and males account for 36.11%. The female proportion increases to 77.78% among Millennials and 80.56% among Generation Z. These figures indicate a substantial female representation in the two younger adult and adolescent generations included in the survey. In Generation Alpha, females constitute 52.78% and males 47.22%, indicating a more balanced gender composition.

The economic status of respondents is classified into Above Poverty Line (APL) and Below Poverty Line (BPL) categories. The overall distribution indicates that 65.97% of respondents belong to the APL category, while 34.03% belong to the BPL category. Thus, nearly two-thirds of the sample are classified as APL, although a substantial proportion belongs to the BPL category. Among Generation X and Millennials, the distribution is identical, with 63.89% of respondents belonging to the APL category and 36.11% to the BPL category. Generation Z has the highest proportion of APL respondents, at 75%, while 25% belong to the BPL category. In Generation Alpha, 61.11% are classified as APL and 38.89% as BPL, representing the highest BPL proportion among the four generations. The findings reveal differences in the economic composition of the generations, although APL respondents form the majority in every group. Economic status is particularly relevant to the study of food preferences and dietary practices because household purchasing power can influence food affordability, dietary diversity, access to restaurant meals, and the ability to purchase specialised or health-oriented food products.

The residential distribution shows that rural and semi-urban areas account for the largest shares of respondents, while urban respondents constitute a smaller proportion. Overall, 45.14% of respondents live in rural areas, 36.81% in semi-urban areas, and 18.06% in urban areas. The sample is therefore predominantly rural and semi-urban. The findings suggest that the residential background of respondents varies across generations, with rural areas dominating Generation X and Generation Alpha, while semi-urban areas are more prominent among Millennials and Generation Z. These differences may be relevant to food habits because rural, semi-urban, and urban settings can differ in access to traditional foods, fresh agricultural produce, supermarkets, restaurants, food delivery services, and packaged food products.

The religious composition of the sample is relatively balanced between Hindus and Muslims. Overall, Hindus constitute 53.47% of respondents, while Muslims account for 46.53%. The relatively stable religious composition across the four generations indicates that neither religious group overwhelmingly dominates any single generation. This provides a basis for comparing dietary practices across religious groups while considering generational differences. Religious traditions may influence food preferences

through dietary restrictions, customary foods, fasting practices, festival-related consumption, and food preparation methods.

The social group distribution indicates that Other Backward Classes (OBCs) constitute the dominant category across all four generations. Overall, OBC respondents account for 80.56% of the sample, followed by Scheduled Castes (SC) at 11.81% and the General category at 7.64%. The distribution demonstrates that the OBC category forms the largest social group in every generation, while the representation of the General category is comparatively low. The SC share is relatively stable, although it is somewhat higher in Generation Alpha. Social group status may be relevant to food consumption through differences in household resources, customary food practices, regional traditions, and access to food markets.

The occupational profile reveals substantial differences across the four generations, reflecting their different life stages and employment circumstances. Overall, students constitute the largest occupational category at 34.03%, followed by salaried employees at 31.25%, unemployed respondents at 27.08%, respondents in elementary occupations at 4.86%, and self-employed respondents at 2.78%. Among Generation X, unemployment represents the largest category, accounting for 52.78% of respondents. Salaried employment constitutes 30.56%, while elementary occupations and self-employment each account for 8.33%. Among Millennials, salaried employment is the dominant category, representing 55.56% of respondents. Unemployed respondents account for 33.34%, while elementary occupations constitute 8.33% and self-employment 2.78%. Generation Z presents a different pattern. Salaried employees and students each account for 38.89% of respondents, while 19.45% are unemployed and 2.78% are engaged in elementary occupations. All respondents belonging to Generation Alpha are classified as students. The findings highlight clear generational differences in occupational status. Millennials have the highest proportion of salaried respondents, Generation X has the highest proportion of unemployed respondents, Generation Z displays a combination of student and employment statuses, and Generation Alpha consists entirely of students.

These characteristics provide an important background for understanding intergenerational differences in food preferences and diet plans. Educational attainment may influence nutrition awareness, while economic status can affect food affordability and dietary diversity. Similarly, occupation and residential location may shape meal timings, access to food outlets, reliance on convenience foods, and the availability of traditional food items. Religious and social backgrounds may also be relevant to customary food practices.

7.2 Differences in food habits across generations

The food habits of Generation X (1965–1980), Millennials (1981–1996), Generation Z (1997–2012), and Generation Alpha (2013–2025) are examined using preferences for home-cooked and restaurant foods, frequency of home-cooked food consumption, fast-food consumption, snacking habits, breakfast regularity, family eating practices, and use of food-delivery applications as in Table No.2. These indicators provide an understanding of traditional food practices and changing patterns of food consumption across generations.

Table No. 2- Food preferences across generations

Preferred food				
	GEN X (1965-1980)	Millennials (1981-1996)	GEN Z (1997-2012)	GEN ALPHA (2012-2025)

Home cooked foods	100.00%	97.22%	88.89%	66.67%
Restaurant foods	0.00%	2.78%	11.11%	33.33%
Frequency of home cooked foods				
Daily	88.89%	83.33%	83.33%	86.11%
3-4 times a week	11.11%	11.11%	5.56%	13.89%
Occasionally	0.00%	5.56%	5.56%	0.00%
Rarely	0.00%	0.00%	5.56%	0.00%
Frequency of fast-foods				
Daily	5.56%	0.00%	0.00%	2.78%
Monthly	13.89%	30.56%	30.56%	30.56%
Rarely	72.22%	36.11%	30.56%	41.67%
Weekly	8.33%	33.33%	38.89%	25.00%
Snacking frequency				
Never	11.11%	5.56%	2.78%	2.78%
Rarely	25.00%	16.67%	25.00%	13.89%
Sometimes	44.44%	58.33%	55.56%	58.33%
Yes (Daily)	19.44%	19.44%	16.67%	25.00%
Break-fast regularity				
Always	86.11%	80.56%	83.33%	88.89%
Sometimes	8.33%	16.67%	13.89%	11.11%
Rarely	0.00%	0.00%	2.78%	0.00%
Never	5.56%	2.78%	0.00%	0.00%
Family eating practices				
Daily	61.11%	58.33%	52.78%	75.00%
Sometimes	25.00%	33.33%	33.33%	22.22%
Rarely	11.11%	2.78%	13.89%	2.78%
Never	2.78%	5.56%	0.00%	0.00%
Use of food- delivery apps				
No	86.11%	61.11%	55.56%	83.33%
Yes	13.89%	38.89%	44.44%	16.67%

Source: Primary Data

7.2.1. Preferred Food

The preference for home-cooked food versus restaurant food indicates a strong overall preference for home-cooked meals across the four generations. Among all respondents, 88.19% prefer home-cooked food, whereas 11.81% prefer restaurant food. This suggests that home-prepared meals remain the dominant food preference despite changes in food availability and consumption practices.

Generation X shows the strongest preference for home-cooked food, with 100% of respondents choosing this option. Among Millennials, 97.22% prefer home-cooked food and only 2.78% prefer restaurant food. The preference for home-cooked food declines to 88.89% among Generation Z, while 11.11% prefer restaurant food. Generation Alpha displays the lowest preference for home-cooked food, at 66.67%, while 33.33% prefer restaurant food. The results indicate a progressive decline in the reported preference for

home-cooked food across the four generational groups, accompanied by an increase in restaurant-food preference. The difference is particularly noticeable between Generation X and Generation Alpha. The relatively high preference for restaurant food among Generation Alpha may reflect the food choices and consumption environments of younger respondents, including exposure to commercially available foods and family purchasing practices.

7.2.2. Frequency of Home-Cooked Food Consumption

The frequency of home-cooked food consumption reveals that daily consumption is common across all four generations. Overall, 85.42% of respondents consume home-cooked food daily, while 10.42% consume it three to four times a week. Only 2.78% consume home-cooked food occasionally, and 1.39% report consuming it rarely. Among Generation X, 88.89% consume home-cooked food daily and 11.11% do so three to four times a week. Millennials and Generation Z display identical daily consumption rates of 83.33%. Among Generation Alpha, 86.11% consume home-cooked food daily and 13.89% consume it three to four times a week. No respondents in this group report occasional or rare consumption. These findings demonstrate that daily home-cooked food consumption remains widespread across the four generations, including Generation Alpha, despite its comparatively lower stated preference for home-cooked food over restaurant food. The results suggest that home-prepared meals continue to play an important role in everyday food practices.

7.2.3. Frequency of Fast-Food Consumption

The frequency of fast-food consumption reveals differences in eating habits across the four generations. Overall, 45.14% of respondents report consuming fast food rarely, while 26.39% consume it monthly and another 26.39% consume it weekly. Only 2.08% report daily fast-food consumption. Among Generation X, 72.22% consume fast food rarely, 13.89% consume it monthly, 8.33% consume it weekly, and 5.56% consume it daily. Among Millennials, 36.11% consume fast food rarely, while 33.33% consume it weekly and 30.56% monthly. No respondents report daily consumption. This indicates that fast food forms a more regular part of the reported eating pattern of Millennials than of Generation X. Generation Z records the highest weekly fast-food consumption, at 38.89%. Monthly and rare consumption each account for 30.56%, and no respondents report daily consumption. This suggests that weekly fast-food consumption is particularly prominent among Generation Z. Among Generation Alpha, 41.67% consume fast food rarely, 30.56% monthly, 25% weekly, and 2.78% daily. The findings indicate that fast-food consumption patterns differ across generations. Generation X is more strongly associated with rare consumption, whereas Millennials and Generation Z report higher levels of weekly and monthly consumption. Generation Z has the highest proportion of weekly consumers. Generation Alpha presents a mixed pattern, with rare consumption being the most common response.

7.2.4. Snacking Frequency

The snacking pattern indicates that snacking is a common practice across all four generations. Overall, 54.17% of respondents report snacking sometimes, while 20.14% snack daily and another 20.14% snack rarely. Only 5.56% report never snacking. The findings suggest that occasional snacking is the most common pattern in the sample, although daily snacking is also reported by a substantial proportion. Among Generation X, 44.44% report snacking sometimes, 25% snack rarely, and 19.44% snack daily. A further 11.11% report never snacking. Compared with the other generations, Generation X has the highest proportion of respondents who never snack. Among Millennials, 58.33% report snacking sometimes, while 19.44% snack daily, 16.67% snack rarely, and 5.56% never snack. This indicates that occasional snacking is the dominant practice among Millennials. Generation Z shows a similar pattern, with 55.56%

reporting occasional snacking. Daily snacking accounts for 16.67%, while 25% snack rarely and 2.78% never snack. Generation Alpha also has 58.33% reporting occasional snacking. However, 25% snack daily, the highest proportion among the four generations. Rare snacking accounts for 13.89%, while only 2.78% report never snacking. The results suggest that snacking is widespread across generations, with occasional snacking predominating among Millennials, Generation Z, and Generation Alpha.

7.2.5. Regularity of Breakfast Consumption

Breakfast regularity is high across all four generations. Overall, 84.72% of respondents report that they always consume breakfast. Another 12.50% consume breakfast sometimes, while 0.69% rarely consume it and 2.08% never consume breakfast. The findings indicate that regular breakfast consumption is a common feature of the respondents' food habits. Generation X records an 86.11% rate of regular breakfast consumption, with 8.33% consuming breakfast sometimes and 5.56% never consuming it. Among Millennials, 80.56% always consume breakfast, 16.67% do so sometimes, and 2.78% never consume it. This generation has the lowest proportion of respondents who always consume breakfast and the highest proportion who report consuming it sometimes. Generation Z records 83.33% regular breakfast consumption. A further 13.89% consume breakfast sometimes, 2.78% rarely consume it, and none report never consuming breakfast. Generation Alpha has the highest proportion of regular breakfast consumers, at 88.89%. The remaining 11.11% consume breakfast sometimes, with no respondents reporting rare or complete non-consumption. The findings indicate that breakfast consumption remains a regular practice for most respondents, with relatively small differences between generations. Generation Alpha reports the highest regularity, while Millennials report the lowest.

7.2.6. Family Eating Practices

Family eating practices reveal the extent to which respondents share meals with family members. Overall, 61.81% report eating with family daily, while 28.47% do so sometimes. A further 7.64% report eating with family rarely, and 2.08% never do so. This suggests that shared family meals remain common among the respondents. Among Generation X, 61.11% report eating with family daily, while 25% do so sometimes. Another 11.11% eat with family rarely, and 2.78% never do so. Among Millennials, 58.33% report daily family meals, while 33.33% share meals with family sometimes. Only 2.78% report doing so rarely, while 5.56% never eat with family. Thus, occasional family meals are relatively prominent among Millennials. Generation Z has the lowest proportion of daily family eating, at 52.78%. A further 33.33% report eating with family sometimes, 13.89% rarely do so, and none report never eating with family. This group therefore displays a comparatively lower frequency of daily shared meals. Generation Alpha records the highest proportion of daily family eating, at 75%. Another 22.22% report eating with family sometimes, while only 2.78% do so rarely. No respondents report never eating with family. The findings indicate that daily family meals are most common among Generation Alpha and least common among Generation Z. The high proportion among Generation Alpha may reflect greater dependence on family members for food preparation and meal routines, given the young age of this group. The lower proportion among Generation Z may be associated with differing schedules or levels of independence, but these explanations cannot be confirmed from the available data.

7.2.7. Use of Food-Delivery Applications

The use of food-delivery applications indicates differences in the adoption of digital food-purchasing services across generations. Overall, 71.53% of respondents report that they do not use food-delivery applications, while 28.47% report using them. Thus, non-use remains the dominant pattern in the overall sample. Among Generation X, 86.11% do not use food-delivery applications, while only 13.89% report

using them. This group has the highest proportion of non-users. Among Millennials, 61.11% do not use food-delivery applications and 38.89% use them. This indicates greater adoption than among Generation X. Generation Z records the highest usage rate, with 44.44% using food-delivery applications and 55.56% not using them. Although non-users remain the majority, the relatively high usage rate suggests that these services are more prevalent in this group than in the other generations. Among Generation Alpha, 83.33% do not use food-delivery applications, while 16.67% report using them. This low rate of reported use should be interpreted in the context of age, since children and younger adolescents may depend on parents or other family members to order food. Therefore, the responses may reflect personal use rather than the household's actual use of delivery services. The findings suggest that food-delivery application use is most common among Generation Z, followed by Millennials, Generation Alpha, and Generation X.

7.3 Food Habit Difference Index (FHDI)

The Food Habit Difference Index (FHDI) is used to examine differences in food habits among four generations: Gen X, Millennials, Gen Z, and Gen Alpha. The FHDI is constructed by using the above 7 variables of food habits described in section 7.2. The average FHDI and the comparison of it across generations using ANOVA is summarized in Table No. 3.

Table No. 3: Average FHDI across generations- ANOVA

Generation	Number	Mean FHDI	S.D
GEN X (1965-1980)	36	7.63889	2.0723
Millennials (1981-1996)	36	8.72222	1.6837
GEN Z (1997-2012)	36	9.02778	1.5944
GEN ALPHA (2013-2025)	36	9.19444	1.7537
F(3, 140) = 5.5228		p-value 0.0013	

Source: Computed from primary data

The mean FHDI increases progressively across the four generations, from 7.64 among Gen X to 9.19 among Gen Alpha. Gen X has the lowest mean score, while Gen Alpha has the highest. Millennials and Gen Z have intermediate scores. This pattern suggests that the measured differences in food habits are more pronounced among the younger generations than among the older generation.

As per the one-way ANOVA, the null hypothesis states that the mean FHDI is equal across all four generations. The alternative hypothesis states that at least one generation has a different mean FHDI. Since the p-value of 0.0013 is lower than the conventional 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis is rejected. The differences in mean FHDI across generations are statistically significant. In other words, the observed differences are unlikely to be attributable to random sampling variation alone, assuming the ANOVA assumptions are satisfied. The result indicates that food habit difference scores vary significantly across generations. However, ANOVA alone does not identify which specific generations differ; this is examined through the multiple-comparison results and was presented in Table No.4.

Table No.4: Results of Multiple Comparison (FHDI)

(I) Generation	(J) Generation	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
GEN X (1965-1980)	Millennials (1981-1996)	-1.083*	.421	.011
	GEN Z (1997-2012)	-1.389*	.421	.001
	GEN ALPHA (2013-2025)	-1.556*	.421	.000
Millennials (1981-1996)	GEN X (1965-1980)	1.083*	.421	.011
	GEN Z (1997-2012)	-.306	.421	.469
	GEN ALPHA (2013-2025)	-.472	.421	.264
GEN Z (1997-2012)	GEN X (1965-1980)	1.389*	.421	.001
	Millennials (1981-1996)	.306	.421	.469
	GEN ALPHA (2013-2025)	-.167	.421	.693
GEN ALPHA (2013-2025)	GEN X (1965-1980)	1.556*	.421	.000
	Millennials (1981-1996)	.472	.421	.264
	GEN Z (1997-2012)	.167	.421	.693

Source: Computed from primary data

The multiple-comparison test identifies which pairs of generations differ significantly in their mean FHDI scores. The ANOVA results indicated a statistically significant difference in mean FHDI across the four generations, $F(3, 140) = 5.523$, $p = 0.0013$. Accordingly, the null hypothesis of equal mean FHDI across generations was rejected at the 5% significance level. The multiple-comparison results further revealed that Gen X differed significantly from Millennials (mean difference = −1.083, $p = 0.011$), Gen Z (mean difference = −1.389, $p = 0.001$), and Gen Alpha (mean difference = −1.556, $p < 0.001$). However, the differences between Millennials and Gen Z ($p = 0.469$), Millennials and Gen Alpha ($p = 0.264$), and Gen Z and Gen Alpha ($p = 0.693$) were not statistically significant. Thus, the significant overall generational variation in FHDI appears to be primarily attributable to the differences between Gen X and the three younger generations, rather than to statistically significant differences among the younger groups themselves.

Overall, the findings provide evidence of generational variation in food habit difference scores, with the younger generations recording higher mean FHDI values than Gen X. These results highlight the importance of considering generational differences when examining changing food habits. However, the substantive interpretation of higher scores depends on how the FHDI is constructed and should be considered alongside other socioeconomic, cultural, and lifestyle factors that may influence food habits and is examined in section 7.4.

7.4 Socio-Economic determinants of FHDI

An ordered logit regression model was run to explore the influence of various socio-economic variables on FHDI like gender, education, religion, caste, place of living, occupation and economic status. The result of this analysis was expressed in Table No. 5.

Table No. 5: Results of Ordered Logit- Dependent variable: FHDI

Variables	*Coefficient*	*Std. Error*	*z*	*p-value*
Gender	0.479858	0.339575	1.413	0.1576

Education Qualification	0.0832764	0.152084	0.5476	0.5840
Occupation	−0.126704	0.134265	−0.9437	0.3453
Economic status	0.331090	0.409875	0.8078	0.4192
Place of living	0.0175302	0.231717	0.07565	0.9397
Religion	0.746358	0.429407	1.738	0.0822*
Caste	−0.120838	0.392699	−0.3077	0.7583
Number of cases 'correctly predicted' = 40 (27.8%)				
Likelihood ratio test: Chi-square(7) = 65.5229 [0.0000]				
Mean dependent var	8.645833	S.D. dependent var	1.867906	
Log-likelihood	−280.8241	Akaike criterion	597.6483	
Schwarz criterion	651.1049	Hannan-Quinn	619.3701	

Source: Computed from primary data

An ordered logit regression was estimated using 144 observations to examine the association between socioeconomic characteristics and the Food Habit Difference Index (FHDI). The explanatory variables included gender, educational qualification, occupation, economic status, place of living, religion, and caste.

The estimated coefficients indicate positive associations for gender, educational qualification, economic status, place of living, and religion, while occupation and caste have negative coefficients. However, none of the explanatory variables is statistically significant at the 5% level. Religion records the largest positive coefficient (0.7464), with a p-value of 0.0822, indicating a suggestive but statistically insignificant association at the conventional 5% level. Consequently, the individual coefficient estimates do not provide sufficient evidence to establish that any of the included socioeconomic characteristics is independently associated with FHDI in the specified model.

The reported likelihood ratio statistic is 65.5229, with seven degrees of freedom and a reported p-value of 0.0000, suggesting overall model significance. Nevertheless, the discrepancy between the overall likelihood ratio statistic and the individual coefficient tests requires verification of the original estimation output. The model correctly predicts 27.8% of the observations under the reported classification rule, although this figure requires comparison with an appropriate baseline to assess predictive performance. Overall, the results do not establish statistically significant individual associations between the included socioeconomic characteristics and FHDI at the 5% level.

8. Conclusion

The study, From Traditional Meals to Fast Food: An Intergenerational Analysis of Changing Food Habits, examined food consumption patterns across Generation X, Millennials, Generation Z, and Generation Alpha. The analysis focused on food preferences, home-cooked and fast-food consumption, snacking, breakfast regularity, family eating practices, food-delivery application use, and the socioeconomic factors associated with the Food Habit Difference Index. The findings reveal both continuity in traditional eating practices and variation in selected dimensions of food consumption across generations. Home-cooked food remains the dominant preference among the respondents, with 88.19% preferring it to restaurant food. However, the proportion preferring home-cooked food declines from 100% among Generation X to 97.22% among Millennials, 88.89% among Generation Z, and 66.67% among Generation Alpha. This

pattern indicates a greater stated preference for restaurant food among the younger groups, particularly Generation Alpha. Differences are also evident in fast-food consumption, snacking, and the use of digital food services. Generation X has the highest proportion of respondents reporting rare fast-food consumption (72.22%), whereas Generation Z records the highest proportion of weekly fast-food consumers (38.89%). Food-delivery application use is also highest among Generation Z at 44.44%, followed by Millennials at 38.89%. Generation Alpha records the highest proportion of daily snackers (25%), while also reporting the highest regularity of breakfast consumption (88.89%) and daily family meals (75%). These findings suggest that generational food habits are multidimensional: traditional meal routines coexist with varying levels of engagement with restaurant food, fast food, snacks, and digital food services.

The ANOVA results provide statistical evidence of differences in FHDI across the four generations. The mean score increases from 7.64 among Generation X to 8.72 among Millennials, 9.03 among Generation Z, and 9.19 among Generation Alpha. The overall difference is statistically significant. The multiple-comparison results further indicate that Generation X differs significantly from Millennials, Generation Z, and Generation Alpha. However, the differences among the three younger generations are not statistically significant. Thus, the principal statistical distinction in FHDI is between Generation X and the younger groups rather than between successive younger generations. The socioeconomic analysis examined gender, educational qualification, occupation, economic status, place of living, religion, and caste as explanatory variables. None of these variables is individually significant at the 5% level in the reported ordered logit model. Religion has a positive coefficient with a p-value of 0.0822, but this does not constitute statistically significant evidence at the conventional 5% threshold. Accordingly, the analysis does not establish that any of the selected socioeconomic characteristics independently predicts FHDI. In conclusion, the study demonstrates significant generational variation in FHDI, particularly between Generation X and the younger generations, alongside the continued importance of traditional food practices. The coexistence of home-cooked meals with changing preferences for restaurant food, fast food, and digital food services suggests that contemporary food habits are characterised by adaptation and diversification rather than a complete transition from traditional to modern eating. Understanding these patterns requires attention to generational differences as well as the social, cultural, economic, and family contexts in which food choices are made.

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