

Food Marketing and Parent's Attitude for Children's Food Habits

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Abstract

Food marketing to children is recognized worldwide as contributing to many health-related problems in children. Much of the research in this area has been carried out in the US, the UK, and other developed countries that are fighting the obesity epidemic and other related health problems. But now this phenomenon is, however, not restricted to the developed world only, it is trickling down to the developing countries, such as India. Therefore, it is pertinent that necessary measures are devised and implemented so that Indian children may not face the same situation. At present, when governmental regulations are less forthcoming, and marketers are enjoying the potential offered by a vast and untapped market for western foods, it becomes imminent for the parents to intervene and protect their children from common effects of food advertising. Therefore, the present paper seeks to review food marketing and parents' concern for the food habits of their children. **Design:** Data were drawn as of consumption and action in the child, a population-based. Setting: children from 5 middle and high schools and households in Delhi. **Surveys Participants:** A total of 200 children in results age of group 4 - 12. Variables Measured: region, Type of foods adds, Household Income, Parents' education, Media, Eating at the restaurant, Favorite, foods, Household situation, Obesity, Diabetics, and cardiovascular. **Analysis:** Microsoft excel models with pie charts were used to guesstimate links between TV advertising and junk food consumption, adjusting in favor of demographics.

Keywords

Children, Parents, Dietary Consumption, Junk Foods, Health Statues Health Growing Problem

1. Introduction

Children constitute a distinct and valuable set of consumers such that marketers

try to build strong linkages with them directly through advertisements. Children are found glued to TV sets for many hours each day and are exposed to thousands of commercials each year. On analyzing the content of TV ads, researchers have revealed that a large number of food ads are aired on children's networks as well as prime time television that children watch (Chan & McNeal, 2003). A concern here is due to the reason that commercials for candies, snacks, sodas, and sugared cereals are largely aired as compared to businesses for more healthy or nutritious foods. Sweetened breakfast cereals, confectionery, desserts, low-nutrient beverages, and salty snack foods, referred to as "Big Five" fares are the most commonly advertised products to children and are also the items most frequently requested of parents. Advertisers generally use appeals focusing on fun, fantasy, and humor to build associations of children with brands, without stating the nutritional aspects of these foods. More so, children, famous cartoon characters, and celebrities are featured in ads to endorse and promote these products. They are also very successful in persuading children to buy the advertised foods. Marketers spend huge sums while advertising foods to children. Instead of seeking a direct, short-term response from children whereby food advertising leads to purchase and Consumption, marketers use a gamut of practices (advertising and other forms of promotion) to influence food choices permanently (Advertising and other forms of promotion) to influence food choices permanently. Such attempts affect lifestyles, habits, peer norms, food perceptions, familial decisions, and cultural expectations (Livingstone, 2005). Li (2006) purports that food demand in Asia is getting increasingly westernized and adoption of this pattern of diets reported to promote obesity in developing countries (World Health Organization and BBC, 2000). Children are more vulnerable for they may not be as sophisticated consumers in developing countries as their western counterparts since advertising focused on them is a relatively new phenomenon. The impact of creative elements in advertising on the attitude of children remains largely unexplored in India (Kaur and Singh, 2006). Still, marketers use the same degree of sophistication in reaching them (Witkowski, 2007). Television commercials and prime-time programs have thus been identified to largely influence the types of food that children ask their parents to buy, the food that they buy themselves and consequently consume. Therefore, such high levels of exposure to food ads while watching television promote obesity at multiple levels. Firstly, television viewing itself encourages snacking. Secondly, food commercials aired in between also trigger the desire to take energy-rich food. Thirdly, sedentary TV viewing reduces metabolism in children, and fourthly, excessive TV viewing displaces time for other outdoor energy-expendng activities in children. Although a direct causal link between advertising exposure and obesity in children is debated, yet, the researchers mostly agree that advertising does contribute to the problem. To find out the impact of food marketing and parents' concern for the food habits of their children and the survey was conducted and the response of 200 parents was collected with the help of a questionnaire designed for the purpose.

2. Analysis of Data

1) When parents were asked about checking the nutritional value of the food before purchasing it their response was mixed in this way.

When it was asked to the parents that do they check the nutritional value of the food before purchasing it? The reply was so surprising that 83 respondents out of 200 respondents said that they very rarely check the nutritional value of the food before purchasing it is the highest percentage of all. On the other side, 22% of respondents i.e. around 43 respondents out of 200 said that on everything they check the nutritional value before purchasing it. Whereas 17% of respondents said that they never check the nutritional value before purchasing any food item, 11% of the respondents said that they check it on certain products and 8% i.e. 16 respondents out of 200 respondents said that on most of the products they check the nutritional value. It is a matter of great concern that most parents do not wish to check the nutritional value before purchasing the food items that may lead to serious health problems among the children, especially before the age of 14 (Table 1).

2) When parents were asked about the importance of the correct amount of calories per day consumed by their children they replied like this.

The below Table 2 shows that about 52% of the respondents were aware of the importance of calories consumes per day by their children and they consider it a

Table 1. Showing respondent’s response to checking the nutritional value of the food before purchase.

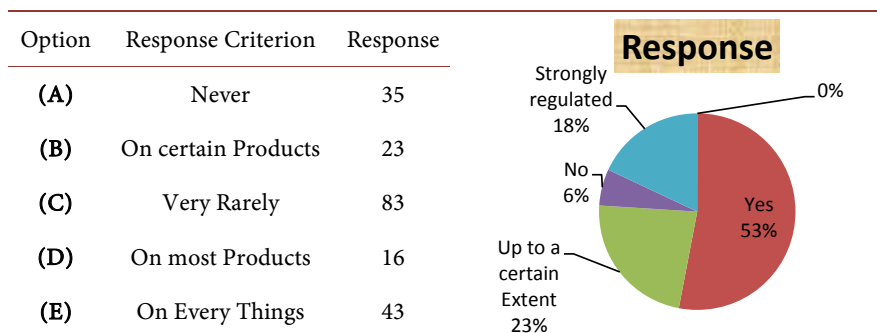
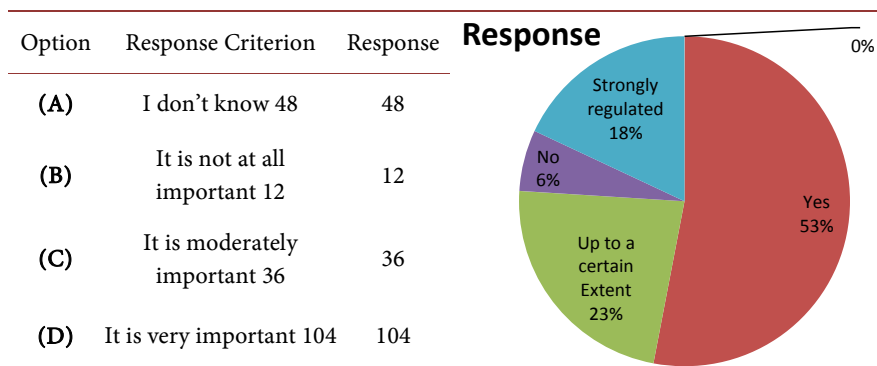


Table 2. Showing respondent’s responses to the importance of calories consumed by their children per day.



very important factor and ensure the consumption of right amount of calories consumed by their children on the other hand 24% of the respondents do not know about the importance of right amount of calories consumed by their children. Only 6% of the respondents consider it as an unimportant matter and 18% of respondents consider the moderate importance of the right amount of calories consumed by their children which seems that they are not concerned about the healthy food habits of their children.

3) When parents were asked the frequency of consuming fast food etc. by their children.

From the below **Table 3** it is clear that 116 respondents out of 200 i.e. 58% of respondents said that their children have such fast and junk food 6 - 8 times in a year which shows that they are concerned with the side effects of such junk food, and consider it good just for the sake of change. On the other hand a good majority of respondents i.e. 24% of respondents said that their children have such junk food 1 - 4 times in a month. On the other hand, a good number i.e. 26 respondents out of 200 respondents said their children prefer to have such junk food 3 - 7 times in a week, which indicates their non-concern for the food habits of their children. When they were asked further how they allow them to have such junk and fast food this much frequently they said their children do not wish to eat the normal food at all in that case whatever they wish to have they are compelled to give them that. Only 5% of respondents said that their children are allowed to have such food less than 6 times in the year that too occasionally.

4) Do you feel that the number of advertisements during children's broadcasts should be reduced?

From the below **Table 4** it is clear that 39% of the respondents support that the number of advertisements during children broadcasts must be reduced as during that time whatever shown on TV that influence the children very much. On the other hand a good number of respondents i.e. 56 respondents out of 200 respondents said that such number should be reduced up to certain extent. And 14% of the respondents said that children enjoy these advertisements too and the number should not be reduced. 19% of the parents have no opinion on this issue and they have no idea and said that nothing can be said in this regard.

5) When Parents were asked how frequently do you visit (Restaurants, fast food restaurants, cafe, etc.?) With children

Table 3. Showing respondents' response to the frequency of consuming fast food.

Option	Response Criterion	Response
(A)	3 - 7 times per week	26
(B)	1 - 4 times per month	48
(C)	6 - 8 times per year	116
(D)	Less than 6 times per year	10

Response

- Strongly regulated 18%
- No 6%
- Up to a certain Extent 23%
- Yes 53%
- 0%

Table 4. Showing respondents’ response to reducing the number of advertisements during children’s broadcasts.

Option	Response Criterion	Response
(A)	Yes	78
(B)	Up to a certain Extent	56
(C)	No	28
(D)	Can’t Say	38

Table 5. Showing respondents’ response to the frequency of consuming fast food etc. (A) 2-3 times in a month 48; (B) Daily 2 - 3 times 16; (C) 2 - 3 times in a week 78; (D) Very rarely 58.

Option	Response Criterion	Response
(A)	2 - 3 times in a month	48
(B)	Daily 2 - 3 times	16
(C)	2 - 3 times in a week	78
(D)	Very rarely	58

From the above **Table 5** it is clear that 78 respondents out of 200 respondents i.e. 39% of total respondents visited restaurants and cafes with their children 2 - 3 times in a week which shows their lifestyle pattern. Generally, it happens on weekends and sometimes in a week. It is also noticed that during their visits to such restaurants and cafes etc. The probability of ordering junk food is found very high which also indicates their poor concern for the health of their children. On the other hand, 29% of the total respondents visited restaurants and cafés very rarely which means 58 respondents out of 200 generally avoid visiting such restaurants and cafes not because of hygiene and health factor but because of the expenses affair there. 16 respondents out of 200 respondents visited such restaurants daily even 2 to 3 times in a day which indicates their unhealthy pattern of eating for themselves as well as for their children. A good majority of the person i.e. 24% of respondents visited restaurants and cafes 2 - 3 times in a month just for change’s sake.

6) When parents were asked that advertising to children during children’s broadcast should be regulated?

From the below **Table 6** it is clear that a good number of respondents i.e. 106 respondents out of 200 respondents said that the advertising during children’s broadcast should be regulated and 36 which is 18% of the total respondents said that such advertising must be strongly regulated. According to them the

Table 6. Showing the respondent's response to regulating the advertising during children's broadcast. Option response criterion response.

Option	Response Criterion	Response
(A)	Yes	106
(B)	Up to a certain Extent	46
(C)	No	12
(D)	Strongly regulated	36

The pie chart, titled "Response", illustrates the distribution of responses from the table. The largest segment is "Yes" at 53% (red), followed by "Up to a certain Extent" at 23% (green), "Strongly regulated" at 18% (blue), "No" at 6% (purple), and a final unlabeled segment at 0% (yellow).

non-regulation of such advertising is the main cause of unhealthy eating habits among children. On the other hand, 23% of the respondents said that regulation up to a certain extent must be implemented. And 6% of the respondents said that no such regulation is required for advertising during children's broadcast. This means according to them advertising does not influence the eating habits of children.

3. Conclusion

From the above discussion, it is found that parents are equally responsible for the unhealthy food habits of their children. Parents have been found to express concerns about children's advertising, quality of foods advertised, and advertising of unhealthy foods when children watch TV. A vast majority of parents are in favor of a reduction in the number of advertisements during children's broadcasts. Parents support that foods advertising to children should be strongly regulated and that the government should introduce stronger restrictions on food advertising at times when children watch television. There is, however, too little regulation controlling the programmed to advertising ratio, especially among children's programmers in developing countries including India. Though there are codes for advertisers, set up by the Advertising Council of India (ASCI), yet strict enforcement of them is less forthcoming and self-regulation is the norm for the industry. *Consumers International (2008)* concludes that self-regulation pledges by industry players are only "confusing" as they are implemented without giving add quite nutritional information to parents. Apart from all that parents are also advised to show their serious concern for the healthy food habits among their children, only blaming to the advertising agencies and authority is not enough to show their concern by doing so they cannot run away from their own responsibility.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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