

The Influence of Food Marketing on Children's Dietary Choices

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Abstract: This abstract explores the intricate interplay between food marketing, media, and their profound influence on individual food intake and broader dietary patterns. In the contemporary landscape, visual appeal and strategic branding in food marketing capture consumer attention, shaping perceptions of taste and desirability. Advertising exposure, both through traditional and digital channels, significantly impacts the consumption of energy-dense, nutrient-poor products. Promotional strategies, such as discounts and limited-time offers, contribute to increased intake of specific food items. The rise of digital and social media amplifies these influences, with platforms, influencers, and content creators shaping consumer preferences and driving dietary choices. Product placement in media subtly integrates food products into entertainment content, impacting viewers' preferences. Psychological triggers, including emotions and social norms, play a pivotal role in creating positive associations with specific food products. The portrayal of food in media, celebrity endorsements, online reviews, and targeted marketing based on demographic factors further contribute to the complexity of these influences. As these dynamics continue to evolve, responsible marketing practices, increased media literacy, and regulatory measures are essential to promote healthier dietary choices and safeguard public health. Understanding the multifaceted nature of food marketing and media is crucial for developing comprehensive strategies that address the complex relationship between marketing, media, and individual food consumption patterns.

Keywords: Food Marketing, Media, Influence, Food Intake, Visual Appeal, Branding, Advertising Exposure, Promotions, Digital Media, Social Media, Product Placement, Psychological Triggers

I. Introduction

The influence of food marketing on children's dietary choices is a topic of paramount importance in contemporary society, where the omnipresence of advertisements shapes not only consumer preferences but also the health and well-being of the younger generation. This complex and multifaceted issue requires a comprehensive examination of the various factors at play, including the techniques employed by marketers, the susceptibility of children to these strategies, and the potential consequences on their dietary habits and overall health [1]. Food marketing is a pervasive force in the modern world, encompassing a diverse array of strategies aimed at capturing the attention and loyalty of consumers, particularly children. Traditional advertising on television, radio, and print media has evolved alongside the rapid expansion of digital and social media platforms, creating an environment where marketing messages are not only ubiquitous but also seamlessly integrated into various facets of daily life. One of the primary tactics employed by food marketers is the use of visually appealing and enticing imagery. Colorful packaging, vibrant graphics, and the incorporation of popular characters create a sensory experience that captivates children, making certain products more attractive and memorable. The strategic placement of these products in stores, coupled with eye-catching displays, further reinforces their visibility and desirability [2]. Food marketers often leverage the power of association by linking their products with entertainment and popular culture. Tie-ins with movies, television shows, and video games create a sense of familiarity and excitement, embedding specific food products into the broader cultural landscape of children. This form of marketing not only promotes brand recognition but also establishes emotional connections that influence children's preferences and cravings. The advent of digital and social media has exponentially expanded the reach of food marketing to children. Online platforms provide a direct avenue for advertisers to engage with their target audience, utilizing targeted advertisements and interactive content to foster a sense of connection. Social media influencers, including child influencers, have become instrumental in shaping the choices of younger consumers by integrating product endorsements seamlessly into their content. Children, with their developing cognitive abilities, are particularly susceptible to the persuasive tactics employed in food marketing. The inability to critically evaluate advertising messages, coupled with a natural inclination towards visually stimulating and entertaining content, makes them a vulnerable demographic [3].

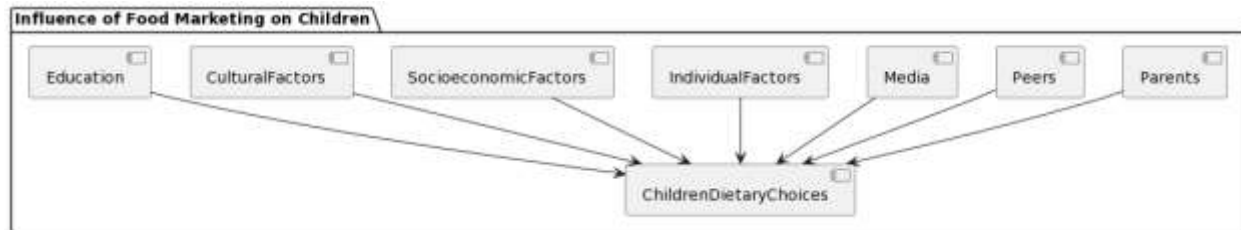


Figure 1. Depict the Food Choices of Children

Children may not fully comprehend the persuasive intent of advertisements, leading them to accept marketing messages at face value and influencing their preferences accordingly. The concept of "pester power" further accentuates the impact of food marketing on children's dietary choices. Children often exert influence over parental purchasing decisions by incessantly requesting products they have seen advertised. Advertisers capitalize on this dynamic, creating marketing campaigns that not only target children directly but also indirectly through their potential to sway parental choices in the supermarket aisle. While food marketing plays a crucial role in promoting products and driving sales, concerns have emerged regarding its impact on children's health. The prevalence of advertisements for high-sugar, high-fat, and processed foods raises questions about the nutritional quality of the products that children are encouraged to consume [4]. The emphasis on convenience and instant gratification in many marketing messages may contribute to the preference for less nutritious, ready-to-eat options, potentially fueling the rise of childhood obesity and related health issues. Some countries have implemented regulations aimed at curbing certain marketing practices targeted at children. These regulations may restrict the use of specific advertising techniques or set limits on the promotion of certain types of food products. However, the effectiveness of such measures remains a subject of ongoing debate, as marketers continually adapt their strategies to navigate regulatory frameworks. Efforts to mitigate the influence of food marketing on children's dietary choices extend beyond regulatory measures. Public health campaigns and educational initiatives seek to empower both parents and children with the knowledge and skills necessary to make informed food choices. Nutrition education programs in schools, for example, aim to equip children with the understanding of the nutritional value of different foods, fostering a sense of autonomy in their dietary decisions. Balancing the need for businesses to promote their products with the responsibility to protect children's health remains a key challenge in addressing the influence of food marketing on dietary choices. Striking this balance requires a collaborative effort involving

policymakers, industry stakeholders, educators, and parents. As our understanding of the intricate dynamics between food marketing and children's dietary choices deepens, the imperative to develop effective and ethical strategies for promoting healthier eating habits becomes increasingly evident. In exploring this multifaceted landscape, it is essential to navigate the complexities of marketing while safeguarding the health and well-being of the youngest members of society [5].

II. Literature Review

Auty and Lewis (2004) explored the reminder effect of product placement on children's choices, revealing that such marketing strategies can significantly impact preferences. Beery and Taheri (1992) introduced the Beery Picture Vocabulary Test, emphasizing the importance of understanding cognitive development in assessing how children respond to marketing messages. Blosser and Roberts (1985) contributed insights into age-related differences in children's perceptions of message intent, indicating that cognitive developmental stages play a crucial role in shaping receptiveness to advertising [6]. Bolton (1983) focused on modeling the impact of television food advertising on children's diets, shedding light on the complex relationship between exposure and dietary choices. Ali et al. (2009) delved into children's ability to recognize advertisements in web page designs, highlighting the challenges posed by digital marketing and the need for media literacy [7]. Gorn and Goldberg (1980) studied children's responses to repetitive television commercials, demonstrating the potential cumulative effect of continuous exposure. Jeffrey et al. (1982) explored the development of children's eating habits, revealing the influential role of television commercials in shaping dietary preferences. Halford et al. (2004, 2007) expanded on the impact of television advertisements on food consumption, emphasizing the lasting effects beyond the immediate exposure [8]. The research of Harris, Bargh, and Brownell (2009) focused on priming effects of television food advertising on eating behavior, underscoring the psychological mechanisms through which marketing messages influence food choices [9]. Dovey et al. (2011) investigated responsiveness to healthy television food advertisements, revealing that this effect is particularly evident in children under the age of seven with low food neophobia. Additionally, studies by Boyland et al. (2013), Bellman et al. (2014), and Connor (2006) explored the influence of celebrity endorsements, advergames, and product

placements in media, respectively, demonstrating the diverse strategies employed in food marketing and their impact on children's preferences and consumption[10].

Auth or & Year	Area	Method ology	Key Findings	Challen ges	Pros	Cons	Applicatio n
Auty and Lewis (2004)	Children's Choice, Product Placement	Not specified	The reminder effect of product placement influences children's choices, emphasizing the impact of marketing strategies on preferences .	Lack of detailed methodo logy descripti on.	Insights into the influence of product placement on preferenc es.	Limited methodol ogical transparen cy.	Understand ing the impact of product placement on children's choices in marketing strategies.
Beery and Taheri (1992)	Cognitive Developme nt, Beery Picture Vocabulary Test	Test Develop ment	Introductio n of the Beery Picture Vocabulary Test highlights the importance	Specific methodo logy not detailed in the provided reference .	Emphasis on the role of cognitive developm ent in assessing responses.	Lack of specific methodol ogical informati on.	Understand ing cognitive developme nt in evaluating children's responses to

			of understanding cognitive development in assessing children's responses to marketing messages.				marketing messages.
Blosser and Roberts (1985)	Children's Perceptions of Message Intent	Not specified	Age differences in children's perceptions of message intent indicate the influence of cognitive developmental stages on receptiveness to advertising .	Limited details on the research methodology.	Insights into how cognitive development shapes perceptions of advertising.	Lack of clarity on methodological specifics.	Understanding age-related differences in how children perceive advertising messages.
Bolto	Modeling	Modelin	Modeled	Lack of	Contributi	Lack of	Informing

n (1983)	Impact of Television Food Advertising on Diets	g	the impact of television food advertising on children's diets, contributing to the understanding of the complex relationship between exposure and dietary choices.	detailed information on the modeling approach.	on to understanding the relationship between advertising and dietary choices.	methodological details on the modeling approach.	the understanding of the complex relationship between advertising and dietary choices.
Ali et al. (2009)	Children's Recognition of Advertisements in Web Designs	Not specified	Investigated young children's ability to recognize advertisements in web page designs, highlighting challenges posed by	Lack of detailed information on the specific methodology used.	Recognition of challenges posed by digital marketing and the need for media literacy.	Lack of clarity on the specific methodology used.	Emphasizing the challenges of digital marketing and the importance of media literacy for children.

			digital marketing and the importance of media literacy.				
Gorn and Goldberg (1980)	Children's Responses to Repetitive Television Commercials	Observational	Studied children's responses to repetitive television commercials, demonstrating the potential cumulative effect of continuous exposure.	Limited information on the specific observational methodology.	Insight into the potential cumulative effect of continuous exposure to commercials.	Lack of detailed information on the observational methodology.	Understanding the potential cumulative effect of continuous exposure to television commercials.
Jeffrey et al. (1982)	Development of Children's Eating Habits, Role of Commercials	Observational	Explored the development of children's eating habits, highlighting the influential	Lack of detailed information on the specific observational methodology.	Contribution to understanding how television commercials shape children's dietary preferences	Limited information on the specific observational methodology.	Understanding the role of television commercials in shaping the development of children's

			role of television commercials in shaping dietary preferences .		es.		dietary preferences .
Halford et al. (2004, 2007)	Impact of Television Advertisements on Food Consumption	Experimental	Demonstrated the impact of television advertisements on food consumption in children, emphasizing the lasting effects beyond immediate exposure.	Limited details on specific experimental design and methodology.	Insight into the lasting effects of television advertisements on food consumption.	Lack of specific details on the experimental design and methodology.	Informing strategies to address the lasting impact of television advertisements on food consumption in children.
Harris, Bargh, and Brownell	Priming Effects of Television Food Advertising	Experimental	Investigated priming effects of television food advertising	Limited details on specific experimental	Insight into psychological mechanisms	Lack of specific details on the experimental	Understanding the psychological mechanisms through

(2009)			on eating behavior, highlighting psychological mechanisms through which marketing messages influence food choices.	design and methodology.	through which advertising influences eating behavior.	design and methodology.	which advertising influences eating behavior.
Dove et al. (2011)	Responsive to Healthy Television Food Advertisements	Experimental	Explored responsiveness to healthy television food advertisements, revealing the effect is evident in children under seven with low food neophobia.	Limited details on specific experimental design and methodology.	Identification of age-specific responsiveness to healthy television food advertisements.	Lack of specific details on the experimental design and methodology.	Informing strategies to promote healthy food choices in children based on age and food neophobia.
Boyla	Celebrity	Experimental	Studied the	Limited	Explorati	Lack of	Understand

nd et al. (2013)	Endorsement, Food Choice and Overconsumption	ental	effect of a premium sports celebrity endorser on food choice and overconsumption in children.	details on specific experime ntal design and methodo logy.	on of the impact of celebrity endorsem ent on food choice and consumpti on.	specific details on the experime ntal design and methodol ogy.	ing the impact of celebrity endorseme nt on food choices and overconsu mption in children.
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Table 1. Summarizes the Review of Literature of Various Authors

III. Food marketing and media

Food marketing and media wield significant power in shaping individuals' food intake, influencing dietary choices, and contributing to broader patterns of consumption. The interplay between food marketing and media has become a complex and impactful aspect of contemporary society, with far-reaching consequences for public health. Several key mechanisms illustrate the power of food marketing and media in influencing food intake Children's dietary choices are influenced by a myriad of factors, encompassing both environmental and social elements. One of the primary influencers is parental modeling, as children tend to mirror the eating behaviors and food choices of their parents. The food environment at home, including the availability of nutritious options, plays a pivotal role in shaping children's preferences. Social interactions, particularly peer influence at school, can also impact food choices, with a desire to fit in guiding preferences. Moreover, media and advertising wield a substantial influence through promotions, popular characters, and portrayals of food in various media. Access to healthy foods, including socio-economic factors and the existence of food deserts, significantly affects the types of foods children consume. Individual preferences, such as taste, texture, and appearance, also contribute to dietary decisions. Cultural practices and traditions, along with educational interventions and government policies like school lunch programs, further shape children's dietary choices. Recognizing and understanding these multifaceted influences is essential for implementing

effective strategies to promote healthier eating habits in children, fostering their overall well-being and mitigating the risk of nutrition-related health issues.

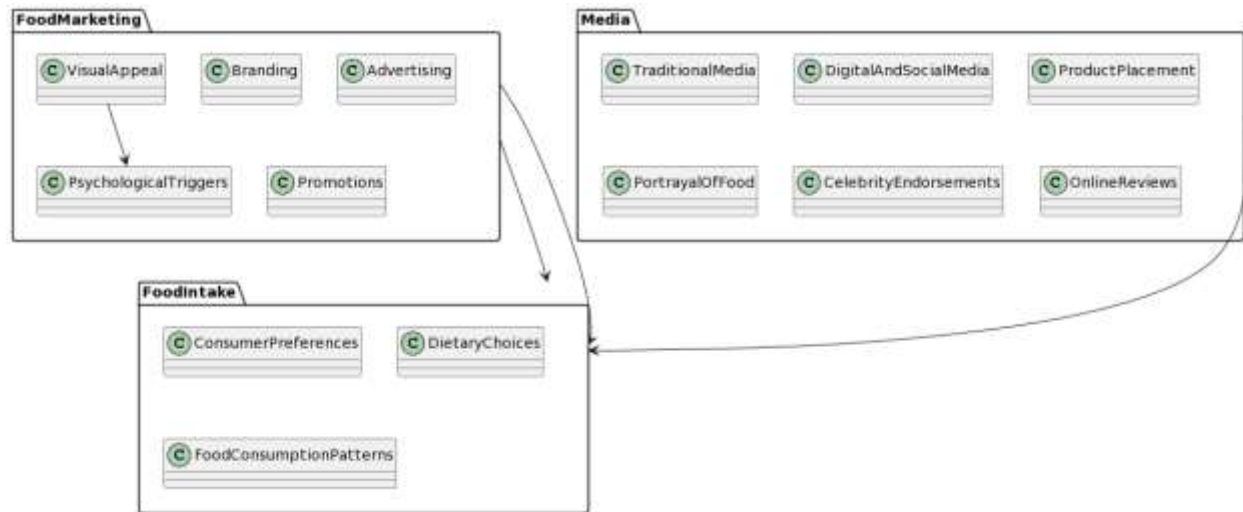


Figure 2. Food Marketing Strategies affect is children

A. Visual Appeal and Branding:

Food marketing relies heavily on visual appeal and branding to capture consumer attention. Colorful packaging, enticing imagery, and the use of logos and mascots create associations that influence perceptions of taste and desirability, ultimately impacting food choices and intake.

B. Advertising Exposure:

Exposure to food advertisements, both on traditional media like television and in the digital realm, plays a crucial role in influencing food intake. Advertisements often promote energy-dense, nutrient-poor products, contributing to the consumption of unhealthy snacks, sugary beverages, and fast food.

C. Promotions and Incentives

Promotional strategies, such as discounts, coupons, and limited-time offers, enhance the appeal of certain food products. The sense of urgency and perceived value created by promotions can lead to increased intake of promoted items, contributing to overall caloric intake.

D. Digital and Social Media Influence

The rise of digital and social media has intensified the impact of food marketing on food intake. Social media platforms, influencers, and content creators often showcase specific food products, recipes, and eating behaviors, shaping consumer preferences and influencing dietary choices.

E. Product Placement in Media

Food products are frequently placed within television shows, movies, and online content in a practice known as product placement. This subtle integration of products into entertainment media can subconsciously influence viewers' preferences and subsequently impact food intake.

F. Psychological Triggers

Food marketing leverages psychological triggers, such as emotions, nostalgia, and social norms, to create positive associations with specific products. These emotional connections can influence individuals to consume certain foods, often driven by factors beyond nutritional considerations.

G. Portrayal of Food in Media

The way food is portrayed in media, including advertisements, movies, and TV shows, can influence perceptions of what constitutes a desirable or socially acceptable food choice. This portrayal contributes to the normalization of certain dietary patterns and influences individual food intake.

H. Celebrity Endorsements:

Celebrity endorsements of food products add an aspirational and influential element to marketing. Consumers may be more inclined to emulate the dietary choices of their favorite celebrities, contributing to the consumption of specific brands and products.

I. Online Reviews and User-generated Content

Online platforms feature user-generated content, including reviews and testimonials about food products. Positive reviews and endorsements from peers can sway consumer preferences and impact food intake, particularly in the context of e-commerce and online food delivery.

J. Targeted Marketing:

Food marketing often employs targeted strategies based on demographic factors, such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status. Tailoring messages to specific groups amplifies their effectiveness, influencing the dietary choices of targeted populations.

The power of food marketing and media to influence food intake is a dynamic and evolving phenomenon. As these influences continue to shape consumer behavior, there is a growing need for responsible marketing practices, increased media literacy, and regulatory measures to promote healthier dietary choices and mitigate the impact of marketing on public health. Understanding the multifaceted nature of these influences is essential for developing comprehensive strategies to address the complex interplay between food marketing, media, and individual food consumption patterns.

IV. Conclusion

The influence of food marketing on children's dietary choices is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, encompassing various channels and strategies. Research suggests that food marketing has a significant impact on children's food preferences, short- and long-term dietary consumption, and their ability to influence parental purchase requests. While it's commonly assumed that younger children are more susceptible to marketing messages due to their limited understanding of advertising, empirical evidence from experimental designs challenges this claim. A study involving 1244 children aged five to eleven revealed that exposure to food commercials increased children's preferences for the advertised products. Surprisingly, age did not moderate this effect, indicating that both younger and older children were equally persuaded by the commercials. However, a notable gender difference emerged, with boys being more influenced by the commercials than girls. The implications of these findings are substantial for the study of food marketing to children. They underscore the pervasive impact of food marketing on children's preferences, challenging assumptions about age-related susceptibility. The gender-specific response highlights the need for tailored marketing strategies and raises questions about how societal norms and expectations may influence boys and girls differently. In conclusion, the study contributes valuable insights into the dynamics of food marketing and its influence on children's preferences. The findings emphasize the importance of considering both age and gender dynamics in future research and developing targeted interventions. As the field continues

to evolve, addressing the ethical dimensions of food marketing to children and implementing evidence-based policies will be crucial to promoting healthier dietary choices and safeguarding the well-being of the younger generation.

V. Future Scope

The future trajectory of research on the impact of food marketing on children's dietary choices holds immense promise in advancing our comprehension and devising effective strategies to cultivate healthier eating habits. The exploration encompasses diverse realms, including scrutinizing the ever-evolving landscape of digital and social media platforms, delving into the influences of new trends, features, and algorithms on children's exposure to food marketing. Furthermore, there is a call to investigate the effects of interactive and immersive marketing techniques, such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR), on children's receptivity to food advertisements, with a focus on how these emerging technologies mold preferences and decision-making, thereby informing regulatory frameworks and industry practices. Another avenue involves assessing the role of influencers and content creators on various platforms in shaping children's dietary preferences, examining the efficacy of influencer marketing, the types of promoted products, and the potential for educational content that fosters healthy eating habits. The research scope extends to evaluating the effectiveness of existing and proposed regulatory frameworks designed to restrict marketing practices targeting children, identifying regulatory gaps, and proposing evidence-based policy recommendations to enhance protections. Additionally, the future holds the prospect of conducting longitudinal studies to unravel the long-term health outcomes associated with childhood exposure to food marketing, exploring connections between early exposure and the development of obesity, cardiovascular issues, and other health concerns. Cultural and socioeconomic intersections with food marketing and children's dietary choices are also to be explored, deciphering how diverse contexts and economic factors influence marketing effectiveness and food preferences. Furthermore, the landscape includes developing and evaluating educational interventions geared toward enhancing children's media literacy and critical thinking skills concerning food marketing, gauging their impact on informed and healthier food choices. Investigating parental mediation strategies in the digital age becomes imperative, focusing on how parents navigate and regulate their children's exposure to food marketing and assessing the efficacy of parental guidance and restrictions on

children's attitudes and behaviors related to food consumption. Encouraging cross-disciplinary research that integrates insights from psychology, marketing, public health, nutrition, and communication studies stands as a pivotal approach, recognizing the need for a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted influences on children's dietary choices. Moreover, exploring cross-cultural variations in the impact of food marketing on children's dietary preferences becomes essential, uncovering differences in cultural norms, dietary patterns, and regulatory approaches globally and identifying best practices to promote healthier eating habits across diverse cultural contexts.

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