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## Influence of Commercials on Consumer Purchasing Decisions: A Study on Junk food consumption by adolescents

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### ABSTRACT

This study delves into the impact of commercials on consumer purchasing decisions, focusing specifically on the behavior of adolescents regarding convenience food consumption. The influence of commercials on consumer behavior has been a subject of interest for marketers and researchers alike, particularly in the context of the food industry where advertising plays a significant role in shaping preferences and consumption patterns. The research methodology involved a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative data were gathered through focus group discussions with adolescents to understand their perceptions, attitudes, and experiences related to convenience foods and commercials promoting such products. Quantitative data were collected through surveys distributed among a larger sample of adolescents to measure the actual influence of commercials on their purchasing decisions regarding convenience foods. The findings of the study highlight several key insights. Firstly, commercials play a substantial role in shaping adolescents' preferences and perceptions of convenience foods. These advertisements often portray convenience foods as appealing, convenient, and desirable, leading to an increased inclination among adolescents to purchase such products. Additionally, the study revealed that peer influence and social media amplify the impact of commercials, creating a social norm around the consumption of convenience foods among adolescents. To examine the impact of advertisements on adolescents' attitudes towards convenience foods.

To analyze the role of persuasive techniques in commercials targeting adolescents: This objective aims to identify the specific persuasive tactics used in advertisements, including emotional appeals, celebrity endorsements, storytelling, and visual stimuli, and their effectiveness in shaping adolescents' purchasing decisions.

The data was gathered through an online questionnaire(Google Forms) that was prepared and a structured survey was conducted. Responses were gathered from 112 respondents.

### INTRODUCTION

In today's dynamic market environment, the influence of commercials on consumer purchasing decisions has become a significant area of study, particularly concerning the consumption patterns of adolescents about convenience foods. Adolescents, defined as individuals aged between 10 and 19 years, represent a crucial demographic segment with substantial purchasing power and unique consumption behaviors. Convenience foods, characterized by their ease of preparation and consumption, have gained immense popularity among adolescents due to their busy lifestyles and increasing autonomy in food choices.

This study aims to explore the intricate relationship between commercials and the consumption of convenience foods among adolescents, shedding light on the underlying factors that drive their purchasing decisions. Understanding these dynamics is vital for marketers, policymakers, and health advocates alike, as it can inform targeted strategies to promote healthier eating habits and mitigate potential negative impacts associated with excessive convenience food consumption.

The research will delve into various aspects, including the types of commercials most influential on adolescents, the psychological mechanisms at play, the role of peer influence and social media, as well as the impact of cultural and environmental factors. By employing a comprehensive approach, this study seeks to provide valuable insights into how commercials shape adolescents' perceptions, preferences, and ultimately, their consumption behaviors regarding convenience foods.

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## Review of Literature

Dahlen., 2010 specified that Advertising is a powerful tool used by companies to influence consumer behavior and purchasing decisions. Numerous studies have highlighted the persuasive techniques employed in commercials, including emotional appeals, celebrity endorsements, and storytelling, all aimed at creating a positive perception of the advertised products. These advertising strategies are particularly effective in shaping the preferences and choices of adolescents, who are often more susceptible to marketing messages.

Harris, 2009 specified that In the context of food products, commercials play a significant role in shaping consumer preferences and consumption patterns. Research has shown that advertisements for convenience foods, such as fast food, snacks, and ready-to-eat meals, can influence both children and adolescents, leading to increased consumption of these products. The use of appealing visuals, catchy slogans, and promotional offers in commercials contributes to the perception that these foods are convenient, tasty, and desirable.

Buijzen et al., 2010 asserted that Adolescents represent a vulnerable consumer group highly susceptible to advertising influences. Their cognitive development, social interactions, and desire for autonomy make them more prone to peer pressure, media influence, and persuasive marketing tactics. Studies have indicated that adolescents often perceive advertised products as symbols of social status, acceptance, and identity, leading to increased consumption and brand loyalty. Vaterlaus et al., 2015 described that In recent years, the proliferation of social media platforms has further amplified the influence of commercials on consumer behavior, including adolescents' food choices. Social media platforms allow companies to engage with consumers directly, create targeted advertising campaigns, and leverage user-generated content to promote products. The interactive and personalized nature of social media marketing makes it a potent tool for influencing adolescent consumers' preferences and behaviors.

Hastings et al., 2010 stated that the impact of commercials on adolescent convenience food consumption raises ethical concerns regarding health, nutrition, and responsible marketing practices. Several studies have called for stricter regulations and guidelines to govern advertising content, especially concerning food products targeted at children and adolescents. Ethical considerations include promoting balanced diets, disclosing nutritional information, and avoiding deceptive or misleading advertising practices.

D Neumark-Sztainer, 2002 stated that Adolescent food choices are inconsistent with Dietary Guidelines, with low intake of fruits, vegetables, and calcium-rich foods and high-fat content. Skipping meals is a concern, especially among girls. Understanding factors influencing eating behaviors is crucial for developing effective nutrition interventions. The model identifies four levels of influence: individual, social, physical, and societal. EJ Boyland, and JCG Halford 2013, stated that Television advertising significantly influences children's brand preferences and food intake, particularly in overweight and obese children. Despite regulations, children in the UK are exposed to numerous food adverts, primarily for high-fat, salt, and sugar foods, with increased intake and preference for high carbohydrate and high-fat foods.

Y AKTAŞ ARNAS 2006 claimed that television advertising significantly influences children's food preferences, especially in overweight and obese children, with increased intake of high-fat, salt, and sugar foods despite UK regulations.

RS Hughner and JK Maher 2007 asserted this research examines parental attitudes and purchase behaviors towards children's food products, focusing on convenience and entertainment-oriented items, important attributes, and parental monitoring. The findings have implications for consumer education, food manufacturing, labeling, and retail practices, highlighting the significant role parents play in children's dietary habits.

J Utter, R Scragg, and D Schaaf declared that these findings suggest that longer duration of TV watching (thus, more frequent exposure to advertising) influences the frequency of consumption of soft drinks, some sweets and snacks, and some fast foods among children and young adolescents. Efforts to curtail the amount of time children spend watching TV may result in better dietary habits and weight control for children and adolescents. Future studies examining the impact of advertising on children's diets through interventions and international comparisons of legislation would provide more definitive evidence of the role of advertising in child and adolescent obesity.

R Smith, B Kelly, H Yeatman, and E Boyland 2019 stated that the research explores parental attitudes and purchase behaviors towards children's food products, highlighting their significant role in dietary habits and their implications for consumer education and food manufacturing.

B Elbel, J Gyamfi, and R. Kershthe 2011 state that the article challenges the assumption that advertising influences younger children more than older ones, suggesting different persuasion processes and media literacy interventions are effective at different ages.

N Larson 2009 designated that Future research should focus on multilevel investigations, examining population subgroup variations, developing standard measures for food environment and policy assessment, and improving dietary assessment methodology.

JL Harris, KD Brownell, and JA Bargh Food in 2009 stated that marketing poses significant public health risks to children and adolescents, leading to increased calls for government action and industry change. Current proposals include restricting television advertising to children under 12, but psychological models suggest more is needed. A defense model posits awareness, understanding, ability, and motivation to resist harmful practices. S Scaglioni, V De Cosmi, V Ciappolino, and F Parazzini stated that this study examines factors influencing children's food preferences and eating behaviors, providing pediatricians with practical tools to understand and manage nutrition for preventive purposes. The research identifies family systems and early-life experiences as key factors. Parental food habits and strategies are found to be dominant determinants of a child's eating

behavior. Parents should expose their children to good food choices and implement prevention programs considering socioeconomic aspects and education.

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## Research Design

This study seeks to delve into the intricate relationship between advertisements and consumer purchasing behaviors, particularly focusing on adolescents' choices regarding convenience food consumption. Embracing a quantitative research paradigm, the investigation will deploy a structured questionnaire designed using Google Forms. The questionnaire will be disseminated among a convenience sample of adolescents, chosen for their accessibility. It will comprise several sections intended to capture multifaceted aspects of their consumption patterns and the influence of advertisements. These sections will include inquiries about demographic characteristics to contextualize responses, as well as questions exploring the frequency and types of advertisements encountered by adolescents in the realm of convenience foods.

Furthermore, the questionnaire will delve into adolescents' purchasing behaviors concerning convenience food products, aiming to uncover factors shaping their decisions. Crucially, participants will be asked to assess the perceived impact of advertisements on their purchasing choices, providing insights into the persuasive power of marketing stimuli. To ensure a comprehensive understanding, both closed-ended questions, employing Likert scales or multiple-choice formats, and open-ended queries will be incorporated to capture nuanced responses and qualitative insights.

Before full-scale implementation, a pilot test will be conducted with a small subset of adolescents to gauge the clarity, relevance, and comprehensibility of the questionnaire. Feedback garnered from the pilot test will inform necessary adjustments to refine the questionnaire for broader application. Ethical considerations will remain paramount throughout the research process, with measures in place to secure informed consent, as well as to safeguard participants' privacy and confidentiality.

Data analysis will entail employing statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics and regression analysis to scrutinize the collected data rigorously. Limitations inherent in the research design, such as potential sampling bias stemming from the convenience sampling approach and the reliance on self-reported data, will be acknowledged transparently. By adopting this meticulously crafted research design, the study aspires to deepen our understanding of the mechanisms through which advertisements influence adolescents' consumption behaviors in the domain of convenience foods, thereby contributing valuable insights to the academic discourse and informing marketing strategies in this realm.

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## Findings

### **Impact of Advertisements on Attitudes and Preferences:**

The study found that advertisements significantly influence adolescents' attitudes and preferences regarding convenience foods. Exposure to commercials portraying these products as convenient, tasty, and desirable led to more positive perceptions among adolescents, increasing their likelihood of purchasing such items.

### ***Persuasive Techniques in Advertisements:***

The research identified several persuasive techniques used in advertisements targeting adolescents, including emotional appeals, celebrity endorsements, and visual cues. Emotional appeals, in particular, were found to be highly effective in capturing adolescents' attention and influencing their purchasing decisions.

#### **Social and Peer Influences:**

Social and peer influences played a significant role in shaping adolescents' responses to advertisements. Peer recommendations, social media endorsements, and perceptions of social status associated with certain brands or products influenced adolescents' willingness to try convenience foods promoted in commercials.

### ***Actual Consumption Behaviors:***

The study revealed a correlation between advertising exposure and actual consumption behaviors among adolescents. Those exposed to higher levels of advertising for convenience foods showed an increased frequency of consumption and a preference for advertised brands compared to those with lower exposure.

***Mediating Psychological Factors:***

Psychological factors such as self-image, self-esteem, and perceived benefits of consuming convenience foods acted as mediators in the relationship between advertisements and consumer purchasing decisions. Adolescents who perceived these products as enhancing their self-image or providing social acceptance were more likely to purchase them.

***Ethical Considerations and Policy Implications:***

The research highlighted ethical considerations related to advertising practices targeting adolescents, including concerns about nutritional content, truthfulness, and transparency. There were calls for stricter regulations, industry self-regulation, and educational initiatives to promote responsible advertising and enhance media literacy among adolescents

Implication

***Understanding Audience Segmentation:***

Marketers should segment the adolescent market based on psychographic factors such as attitudes, lifestyles, and values related to convenience food consumption. This segmentation can help tailor commercials to resonate with different segments, such as health-conscious adolescents, those seeking convenience, or those influenced by peer trends.

***Utilizing Persuasive Techniques:***

Incorporate persuasive techniques such as social proof (showing others enjoying the product), scarcity (limited-time offers), and authority figures (trusted influencers or experts endorsing the product) in commercials targeting adolescents. These techniques can create a sense of urgency, credibility, and social acceptance, influencing purchasing decisions.

***Emphasizing Health and Wellness:***

Highlight the health benefits or nutritional aspects of convenience foods in commercials to appeal to health-conscious adolescents and their parents. Use messaging that emphasizes ingredients, nutritional value, and positive health outcomes to address concerns about unhealthy eating habits.

***Engaging Storytelling and Visuals:***

Create commercials with engaging storytelling and visuals that captivate adolescents' attention and evoke emotions. Use relatable narratives, humor, and vibrant visuals to make the commercials memorable and shareable among peers on social media platforms.

Incorporating Digital and Social Media Platforms:

Leverage digital and social media platforms extensively to reach adolescents, as they are active users of these channels. Develop interactive and shareable content, such as challenges, contests, and user-generated content, to enhance engagement and virality among adolescents.

***Addressing Ethical Considerations:***

Ensure commercials adhere to ethical guidelines regarding advertising to minors, especially concerning deceptive or manipulative tactics. Transparency, honesty, and authenticity in advertising can build trust and credibility among adolescents and their parents, leading to sustainable brand loyalty.

***Offering Value and Convenience:***

Highlight the convenience, affordability, and value proposition of convenience foods in commercials. Emphasize features such as easy preparation, on-the-go packaging, and variety to meet adolescents' preferences for quick and convenient meals.

Monitoring and Analyzing Consumer Feedback:

Continuously monitor consumer feedback, attitudes, and purchasing behaviors through surveys, social media listening, and analytics. Use insights from data analysis to refine commercial strategies, identify emerging trends, and address evolving consumer preferences among adolescents.

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## Conclusions

Commercials wield a significant influence on adolescents' consumption patterns of convenience foods, playing a pivotal role in shaping their preferences and behaviors related to food choices. Through strategic marketing tactics, commercials effectively promote the appeal and accessibility of convenience foods, tapping into adolescents' desires for convenience, taste, and social acceptance. The findings collectively suggest that there is a consistent association between exposure to advertisements for convenience foods and subsequent consumer behavior. While individuals who engage more frequently with social media advertisements are more likely to purchase convenience foods and feel influenced by those advertisements, there is also a nuanced relationship with perceived impacts on dietary habits, indicating that individual responses may vary. Therefore, marketers and policymakers should consider these correlations when designing advertising strategies and interventions aimed at promoting healthier dietary choices.

However, this influence raises concerns regarding the promotion of potentially unhealthy eating habits and the prioritization of commercial interests over public health considerations. Moving forward, it is crucial to adopt a balanced approach that combines responsible advertising practices, consumer education initiatives, and regulatory measures to empower adolescents to make informed and health-conscious decisions about their food consumption. Collaborative efforts among stakeholders, including advertisers, educators, policymakers, and health professionals, are essential in addressing these challenges and promoting a culture of wellness and mindful eating among adolescents.

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