

FOOD MARKETING IN CHILD AND ADOLESCENT NUTRITION

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The food and beverage industry, which have expanded rapidly in recent years, create market potential by influencing children and young adults with the use of high sugar drinks. Therefore, children and young consumers will be the adult consumers and target audience of the future.




In this study, the objective was to determine the current order and strategy of the effects of advertising on children and adolescents in the food and beverage industry.

Material and Method: This study was conducted as a scope review, and the methodology was derived from published articles in PubMed directed at food marketing in children and adolescences. The study was conducted between 2008 and 2018 and focused on special cases in Turkey, Europe, and USA.

Results: Food preferences develop at a very young age. Awareness levels of parents play a major role in determining the child's eating style. In recent years, the food and beverage industry has chosen young people and children as their target market. The purpose of marketing in this industry has been to create long-term brand loyalty.

Conclusion: The role of advertising in the food and beverage industry may play a significant factor in influencing eating preferences and body weight of young people, which is controversial in terms of the growing epidemic of childhood obesity. Government policies are important in this regard. However, more research are still needed and may draw attention to the prevalence of food marketing on children's healthy eating.

Keywords: Food advertising, children and adolescents, nutrition.

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ÇOCUK VE ERGEN BESLENMESİNDE GIDA PAZARLAMASI

ÖZET

Amaç: Şüphesiz son yıllarda hızlı bir şekilde genişleyen gıda fabrikalarının şeker oranı yüksek içeceklerin, çocukların ve gençlerin üzerinde büyük bir pazar gücü yaratmaktadır. Bu yüzden çocuk ve genç tüketicileri geleceğin yetişkin tüketicileri olarak görmek şaşırtıcı değildir.

Bu çalışmanın amacı reklamın yiyecek ve içecek pazarında çocuklar ve gençler üzerinde bulunan etkilerini, var olan düzen ve stratejilerini belirlemeyi amaçlamıştır.

Materyal ve Metot: Bu çalışma PubMed'de gıda pazarının çocuklar ve gençlerde etkileri ile ilgili yayımlanan makalelerin derlemesi ile elde edilmiştir. Çalışma 2008-2018 yıllarında Türkiye, Avrupa ve ABD'deki vaka örnekleri incelenerek gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Bulgular: Yemek yeme alışkanlığı en çok genç yaşlarda gelişmektedir. Anne ve babaların farkındalık düzeyleri çocuğun yeme şeklinin belirlenmesinde büyük rol oynamaktadır.

Son yıllarda, yiyecek ve içecek endüstrisi gençleri ve çocukları hedef pazar olarak görmektedir. Bu endüstrilerin amacı, uzun vadede daha fazla kazanç sağlayabilmek için çocuk ve gençleri markalarına bağlı duruma getirmektir.

Sonuç: Yiyecek ve içecek reklamlarının gençlerin ve çocukların vücut ağırlıkları ile yeme tercihleri üzerinde önemli rol oynayabilir. Bu durumun çocukluk çağında artan obezite hakkında nedeni olarak tartışılmaktadır. Devletin geliştirdiği politika ve stratejiler bu konuda büyük öneme sahiptirler. Bununla birlikte çok fazla araştırmaya daha ihtiyaç vardır. Ayrıca çocukların sağlıklı beslenme konusunda gıda pazarlanmasının yaygınlığına dikkat çekilebilir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Gıda reklamı, çocuklar ve ergenler, beslenme.

INTRODUCTION

The food and beverage industry has focused on adolescence and children to be the main target audience and heavy market force in the last few decades. The food and beverage market/advertise and push snacks and unhealthy eating habits in children. According to their spending and purchasing power, marketers have been concerned with youth currently and with future adult consumers. The impact of food product buying and brand building starts in childhood, then to adolescence, and ends with adults. Very intelligent mechanisms and paths are planned to reach them. The most efficient promotion, marketing and advertising channels for drinks and food are internet, television, child clubs, marketing in schools, entertainment products and child's play labeled favorite trademark for children, youth-targeted introduction. A new published report studied the contents of beverages and foods directed at children and youth and indicated very high amounts in sugar and fat. These findings were in complete conflict with the global health dietary criteria recommendations.¹

Scientists insist that the establishment of eating habits and behaviors from childhood phase contributes to long-term unhealthy life style and the risk of chronic diseases. Compared with adulthood, adolescents and children snack more repeatedly, drink more beverages with high sugar content, and eat more fast food. Fast foods, snacking, and consuming beverages loaded in

sugar percentage have increased in the children and adolescent population.² It is considered a public health crisis and has advanced the prevalence of childhood obesity. The aim of this review was to determine the effect of food and beverage advertising and marketing on children and adolescence under the influence of the available systems and policies.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

This study was conducted as a review of the literature, and the methodology was derived from published articles in PubMed focused on food marketing in child and adolescent nutrition from special cases on the refugee crisis in Turkey, USA, and Europe.

RESULTS

Food Advertising

The exchange and activity between organization/companies and its customers/clients is defined as a marketing, which mainly consist of TV, social media, radio, magazines, newspaper, and all advertisements materials.³ The experts in marketing emphasize strong relationships between brand preference and purchase behavior; therefore, food brand loyalty and brand priority have been directly marketed towards the youth. Two main reasons that affect child brand preferences are: 1) parents liking that brand and 2) a child's positive feedback with a brand. Studies

have shown that preschool children and toddlers use "pester power" or "nag factor" to direct their parents to specific products.⁴ Studies have documented that the first request of children for a specific brand starts in a supermarket at about 2 years of age. False advertising on children between 2 and 8 years old have been reported in numerous studies because they are more vulnerable.⁵ At this stage, small children do not fully understand these advertisements since their cognitive perception is still under development.

Ecological Factors of Food and Drinks Consuming of Children and Adolescents

The food, snack, and drink preferences of children start from an ecological perspective. These include socioeconomic status, biological factors, community, and culture. Clarification about eating behaviors and health outputs of children and adolescents and how it is interacting by environmental influences are inadequate currently.

Here we categorized the 3 main spheres of influences:

• Individual Factors:

- o Genetic: External factors can affect the food intake in humans more than physiological factors and this is including sensory stimulation like smell, sight, and taste. Another factor under the central nervous system and the neural regulatory control contents are appetite, satiety, and hunger. In spite of the fact that genes effect weight are well documented, family history about eating behaviors are much less significant. Several studies suggest that one of the most important can play a role in food preferences and daily intake in children are genetic factors.⁶
- o Depression: Little research has been done on children and youth about the influence of depression and stress and its influence desire for food entirely either an rise or reduce on feeding.⁷ In addition, Cartwright *et al.* (2003) investigated by extensive studies support a link among depression and eating disorders on youth as well as weight displeasure and depression.⁸

• Family and Social Influences:

- o Maternal Employment: According to Healthy Eating Index (HEI) scores, full-time working mothers had lower grades with children ages 1–17 years, and mothers who had a job were more likely to go outside to eat. At least part-time mothers were able to prepare some food for their children; thus, creating a better diet.⁹

- o Socioeconomic Status: Children in the high-income group consume more than 3 meals in an estimated 2 days compared to low-income groups. Daily average calorie intake is not different between different income groups, but consumption of fruits and vegetables is higher in high socioeconomic groups. In low socioeconomic groups, possible carbohydrate intake is higher.¹⁰

• Community and Culture:

- o Schools: In a cohort-type study by Cullen and Zakeri (2004), it was shown that primary school students in the same school demanded more school meals and healthy food than secondary school students who had access to more sugary drinks.¹¹
- o Culture: Studies have shown that beliefs is transmitted from one generation to the next by indoctrination which directly influences a child's eating behaviors.⁴⁻⁶ Parents, care providers, siblings, or peers play the main role of direct influence events. Media and marketing channels include advertising, television, videos, movies and Internet are the first responsible of costumer acquisition.

Food Advertising and Marketing Channels

Very smart media channels and marketing techniques are planned to reach them. The most effective food and sweeten drinks advertising channels are internet, television, primary school marketing, hobbies clubs and entertainment-aimed toy products with label trade logos, and youth-targeted marketing. In the following factors below, we sorted the channels used to market food and drinks to children.

• Marketing and Advertising in Television

Television considered as the most effective media channel in food advertising field for children. Several studies indicate that television is the most influential method for adolescents and children in low-income families and undoubtedly promotes unhealthy foods (i.e. candy, sugary cereals, fast-foods, etc.) has a direct linkage with television-based food and beverage marketing directed at children and adolescents and this has proved in a recent study.¹² Thus, they have higher exposure to junk food. In United Kingdom sweeten sugar breakfast cereal was the most repeatedly advertised food products. On the other hand, there were no advertisements for vegetables or fruits.¹³

A comparative survey conducted by the federation of consumer organizations, which is a non-profit organization about the most exposition people, from the television advertising results was children. During three months in 13 countries included Finland, France, Greece, Belgium, Denmark, Australia, Germany, Austria, Sweden, Netherlands, UK and USA for 20 hours of children's programming the television advertisements were monitored. The US, UK and Australia were found to have advertised 10-12 food per hour. These advertisements were 10 times higher than in Austria, Sweden and Belgium, twice as much as in Germany and Denmark.

• **In-School Marketing**

One of the most effective and popular tools has been used in the last few decades in USA for marketing food and advertising was a public school. There are potential reasons influence marketer to focus more in-school marketing adolescents and children was fiscal vulnerability of schools due to chronic monetary constraints; moreover, the ability to reach a lot of numbers of children and adolescents increase sales and generate product loyalty.¹⁴

The consumption of soft drinks in schools was the most expanded activity of all product sales as reported by the USA General Accounting Office in the last few years. Also, direct visible advertising in billboards for high sugar soft beverages was the highest ever among another foods or drinks.¹⁵

• **The Place of Products**

Product placement has become more acceptable channels in the popularity. They arranged the brand name of foods and drinks to be a complementary part of the scenario by produce placement policies. It was set to be more factual and that trademarks attract famous personalities. The first attention of product placement was 40 years ago when it was determined that selling rating of pistachio sweet increased by two-thirds within a month due to its placement within one children's program.¹⁶

• **Kids' Clubs**

The food industry has established children's clubs to communicate with children and thus reach them. The point being to deliver information to communities through these kids' clubs. A well-known hamburger company in the USA has established a children's club and has more than 5 million members.¹⁷

• **Internet**

Social media plays a progressively significant role nowadays in children and teenagers' daily lives. The word "advertisement" or "ad bugs" has been added beside sponsor's hotlink in many food company web pages and children's websites due to criticisms from consumer advocacy groups.¹⁸

• **Food Products and Toys with Brand Logos**

Aimed to build loyalty and make a sympathetic early acceptance relationship among youth and trademarks logos a lot of food companies try to enhance brand awareness and preference. Moreover, food manufacturers have developed a partnership with toy factories to produce dummies with advertise food. Several industries sell counting and reading books for students of brand-name foods. For instance, the M&M's Brand Counting Book. There are abundant math books for children such as Oreo Cookie Math Fun. There are more than 40 children's brand food name on the Amazon.com website alone.¹⁹

Children and Adolescents-Targeted Promotions

One of the fastest ways to reach youth is marketing and promotion techniques. These channels include TV and internet. Furthermore, huge food companies set long term partnerships with very famous TV channels like Network, champion leagues, and Disney. One hamburger firm has created a linkage with TV children net system and another has sold chicken nuggets similar to Tom & Jerry.

Food Advertising Effect on Children's Eating Behavior

A recent date and studies showed how children and adolescent's food predication and eating manner influence by television food ads as the following:

- 1) numerous studies have shown that children who prefer a lot of advertised food will; of course, prefer it over non-advertised food.
- 2) children's exposure consistently to food TV advertisements significantly increase the attempts number children to push and make their parents buy the TV advertised food as these results documented in some researches based on experimental trials, surveys, newspaper, and accurate observation of mother and child shopping together; and
- 3) the frequencies of the food ads influence the consumption rate and demands for specific trademarks and brands.²⁰

DISCUSSIONS

Progress on child nutrition is difficult to see in the mind's eye unless the force of food and beverage advertising is weakened, if not eliminated. The food industry spends more than that every month, and youth in the front lines of marketing junk foods.

Regulations on Children Advertising

Child protection associations and consumer rights associations have found that children are being exploited commercially through harmful food advertisements. In USA, current restrictions are limited and standards for food advertising and marketing are child-targeted. The Children's Advertising Review Unit issued self-regulatory policies, Children's Advertising Review Unit has a group of about 20 advisors who are from the food industry including some fast-food firms. Regulating advertising policies has been regulated from Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and Federal Communications Commission (FCC) at a governmental level. The regulation of unfair and mislead children advertising is the FTC's responsibility, while determined community concern obligations for television programs are Federal Communications Commission's engagement.²¹

• Television

A Turkish research drew attention to food advertisements directed specifically to children. The Children's Television Action (ACT) has raised the awareness in Turkey on advertising for children. It has been stated that all ads were deceptive.²²

• Internet

Still advertising on websites practically unrestricted, no wonder adolescents and children-targeted by marketing and advertising dramatically increased by new developed and updated techniques. The new section addressing about Children's Advertising Guidelines Internet has been revised by CARU in 1997. FTC to improve regulations constricted precise information collection application has been issued in 1998 by conference passed the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA).²³

• Schools

Diplomacies about trading marketing practices and advertising in the majority of schools are not existed. In order to create school's advertisement-free zones the Consumers Union Education

has struggled and arranged campaigns in aim to upgrade the consciousness of educators and parents where students follow learning free of pressures and commercial influences activities.²⁴ These initiatives impact the efficiency of great works to regulate commercial activities in schools.

Government Legislations and Policies

Policies, regulations, rules can affect consumers' choice of products. Can it also be effective in the cost of producing food products? How do consumers interact to price changes? Finally, taxation and subsidies on food choices are a topic of discussion. The answer of all these question depends on the regulations, legislations and policies who it draws the farm of this activities in a legal way and grantee consumer rights.²⁵ Unfortunately, more studies are required in this field to determine how global economic and public agricultural affect obesity, healthy life style, and right food choices.²⁶ Also, the impact of healthy diet in children and youth through different kinds and road of foods present through the governmental food and nutrition assistance programs.

Regulations in Other Countries

Sweden has some of the strictest control mechanisms in Europe. In general, the Scandinavian countries come at the frontline of protection youth from the effects of unhealthy food ads. Since children and adolescents have difficulty distinguishing between the various channels of communication and the purpose of advertising. The misleading of youth-targeted advertising is ethically and morally is unacceptable in the Swedish government.²⁷ For instance, broadcasting of commercials advertising 5 minutes before, after, or during children's programs is banned in Belgium. In conclusion, more data and rules are needed to regulate children and adolescents-targeted by television food advertising in aim to increase eating behaviors and more healthful food habits.

CONCLUSIONS

The choice and preferences of food develops at a very young age and affects the way children eat. Therefore, a coordinated series of studies are necessary for children to eat healthier during childhood. Government policies are important in this regard. Promoting healthy foods as well as the promotion of unhealthy foods should be prevented. It is also important to restrict access to unhealthy foods, especially children and young people from ethnic minority groups who are at greater risk. Therefore, particular attention should be paid to them.

In recent years, the food and beverage industry has chosen young people and children as their target market. Thus, young children are exposed to advertising and marketing of harmful food and beverages. The purpose is to advertise brands and increase commercial gain through long-term brand loyalty creation. It is therefore necessary to protect children and young people from these effects of the food industry. Therefore, various child defending associations, child health initiatives, and the state have important responsibilities.

The role of advertising and marketing on food and beverage may play a significant factor in influencing youth body weight and eating preferences and that is a

controversy about the growing epidemic of childhood obesity. However, several articles and studies focused on marketing practices and behaviors whether food and sweetened drinks advertising is a causal factor related directly in the increasing risk of obesity like United Kingdom and Canada. In addition, more research is still needed. Suitable international studies may draw attention to the prevalence and impact of food marketing and advertising on children's healthy eating. Further studies on this subject are recommended.

*The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.



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