

EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF TELEVISION ADVERTISING ON CHILDREN'S FOOD CHOICES: A SURVEY STUDY IN INDIA

Mr. S. Gnanasekar, Part-Time Research Scholar, Department of Commerce, Erode Arts and Science College, Rangampalayam, Erode, csgnanasekar@gmail.com

Dr. B. Vidya, Head & Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Erode Arts and Science College, Rangampalayam, Erode, eacvidya@gmail.com

Abstract:

This study investigates the influence of television advertising on children's food choices in urban India, focusing on Bengaluru. With rising concerns over childhood obesity and poor dietary habits, the study explores how exposure to food advertisements impacts children's food preferences. A cross-sectional survey was conducted among parents of children aged 6 to 12, with data collected from 150 valid responses using a structured questionnaire. The survey captured children's television viewing habits, exposure to food advertisements, and subsequent food requests. Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis were employed using SPSS to interpret the data. The findings reveal a significant correlation between the number of hours children watch television and their frequency of requesting advertised food products, with fast food and sugary snacks being the most recalled items. Children from low-income households were more likely to request unhealthy foods compared to their higher-income counterparts. The study emphasizes the urgent need for stricter advertising regulations in India and greater parental involvement in shaping healthier food preferences among children. These findings provide valuable insights into the public health implications of television advertising on children's diets, contributing to the ongoing global conversation on childhood obesity prevention.

Keywords: *Television advertising, children's food choices, childhood obesity, dietary habits, food marketing, India.*

1. Introduction

The modern media landscape, especially television, has evolved as a major influence on consumer behavior, shaping perceptions, preferences, and ultimately purchasing decisions. Among the various demographics, children represent a particularly impressionable audience due to their cognitive development stage and susceptibility to external stimuli. Television advertising plays a pivotal role in shaping children's attitudes and behavior towards food. The exposure to persuasive messages promoting energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods raises concerns about the role of television in contributing to the global issue of childhood obesity and poor dietary habits (Halford et al., 2004). As India experiences rapid urbanization and increased media consumption, the effects of television advertising on children's food choices become a significant public health issue that requires attention.

Globally, research has established that children are exposed to a high volume of food advertisements, predominantly promoting products that are high in sugar, fat, and salt (Boyland et al., 2011). The content of these advertisements tends to glamorize fast food and unhealthy snacks, making them more appealing to children who lack the discernment to make healthy choices (Dixon et al., 2007). Studies have indicated that children's frequent exposure to these food commercials leads to an increased desire for the advertised products, often resulting in pestering parents to make purchases (Aktas Arnas, 2006). Consequently, this increases the risk of poor dietary habits and contributes to the rising prevalence of childhood obesity. India, with its diverse cultural and socio-economic landscape, has witnessed a steady increase in television viewership among children. According to the Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC), television continues to be one of the most consumed media forms by Indian children, with an average of over two hours of television viewing per day. This widespread media consumption has opened a lucrative avenue for marketers, particularly food and beverage companies, to target children as key consumers. A study conducted by Jose et al. (2020) highlighted that in Indian cities like Kochi, children are increasingly influenced by the food choices they see on television, often requesting junk food items seen in advertisements.

The significance of television advertising's influence on children's food choices can be further contextualized by understanding its broader public health implications. The World Health Organization (WHO) identifies childhood obesity as a major public health challenge, with its prevalence increasing significantly in low- and middle-income countries like India. The consumption of energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods, frequently advertised on television, is strongly linked to the onset of obesity in children (Neville et al., 2005). Thus, understanding how television advertising shapes food preferences among children is critical for developing effective public health strategies aimed at improving dietary habits and reducing obesity rates. Research has demonstrated that children, particularly those aged between 3 and 10 years, are highly impressionable and can easily be swayed by persuasive advertising messages (Kumar, 2011). Moreover, Halford et al. (2004) found that children exposed to food advertisements consume significantly more food, especially those who are already obese. This suggests that television advertisements not only influence children's food preferences but also directly impact their eating behavior, making it essential to understand this influence in an Indian context.

Given India's unique cultural and socio-economic dynamics, the influence of television advertising on children's food choices may vary from other regions. Cultural norms, parental attitudes, and regulatory frameworks differ, influencing the degree to which children are exposed to and affected by television advertisements. For example, in the United States and European countries, strict regulations govern the content of food advertisements aimed at children, whereas India has relatively lax regulations in this regard (Mehta et al., 2010). The absence of stringent advertising regulations in India may exacerbate the problem, leading to a higher prevalence of unhealthy food consumption among children.

Furthermore, there is growing evidence that television advertisements create long-term brand associations in children, leading to habitual consumption of unhealthy foods (Anschutz et al., 2012). This phenomenon, termed "brand loyalty," can persist into adulthood, contributing to lifelong unhealthy eating habits. A study by Yu (2012) found that mothers often underestimate the impact of food advertisements on their children's food preferences, believing that their

children are less susceptible than others. This misperception highlights the need for greater awareness among parents about the power of television advertising and its potential consequences on children's health.

In summary, the influence of television advertising on children's food choices is a complex issue, shaped by various factors, including media consumption habits, parental attitudes, and regulatory frameworks. The increasing consumption of unhealthy foods advertised on television is a major contributor to the rising rates of childhood obesity in India. This research aims to explore the extent to which television advertising affects children's food choices in the Indian context, shedding light on an important public health issue that has far-reaching implications for future generations.

2. Literature Review

The relationship between television advertising and children's food choices has been a well-researched topic globally, as it is increasingly recognized as a critical factor in shaping children's food preferences. Numerous studies have shown that exposure to food advertisements significantly impacts children's dietary behaviors, often promoting the consumption of unhealthy food products (Powell et al., 2024). This section reviews the relevant scholarly works that have explored this topic in different contexts, building a conceptual understanding of the effect of television advertising on children's food choices.

A study by **Hassan (2022)** found that food advertisements on children's television channels in Pakistan strongly influenced the children's food choices. The study used a survey of children aged 5 to 12 years to assess how often they requested the advertised foods. The results demonstrated that children who watched more television were significantly more likely to ask their parents to purchase unhealthy food products, such as fast food and sugary snacks. The study also highlighted the potential of using advertisements to promote healthier food choices, as children were highly responsive to the messages presented in commercials.

Chowdhury et al. (2020) conducted research in Bangladesh to examine the impact of food and beverage advertisements on children's food preferences. Their findings supported the idea that television advertising plays a crucial role in shaping children's food choices, especially in urban areas where media exposure is high. The study utilized a combination of content analysis and surveys to evaluate the types of food being advertised and their appeal to children. It was found that children frequently requested foods they saw in advertisements, and this behavior was more pronounced in families where parents allowed unsupervised television viewing. The authors also discussed the lack of regulation surrounding the advertising of unhealthy foods, which exacerbates the issue.

In the United States, **Bernhardt et al. (2015)** explored children's recall of fast-food television advertisements. Their study revealed that self-regulatory efforts by fast-food chains, such as McDonald's and Burger King, were largely ineffective in reducing the emphasis on unhealthy food options. The researchers surveyed 1,200 children aged 8 to 13 and found that they were more likely to recall promotional offers and premiums (such as toys) than healthy food options, highlighting the ineffectiveness of current advertising regulations in promoting healthier food choices.

Arcan and Bruening (n.d.) also examined the relationship between television advertising and children's food preferences in the U.S., finding that children were exposed to many food advertisements daily, most of which promoted unhealthy food options. Their research utilized a longitudinal approach, tracking children's television habits and corresponding dietary behaviors over three years. The study found a direct correlation between the frequency of television viewing and the consumption of unhealthy foods, with children who watched more television consuming significantly more sugar-sweetened beverages and fast-food items.

A comparative analysis conducted by **Jindarattanaporn et al. (2024)** in Thailand explored changes in food and beverage advertising to children over time. Between 2014 and 2022, the number of unhealthy food advertisements, particularly for sugary beverages, increased significantly. The researchers used content analysis of Thai television programs aimed at children to determine the prevalence of unhealthy food advertisements. The study found that the number of unhealthy food ads per hour rose from 6.3 to 9.2, and children exposed to these advertisements were more likely to develop a preference for sugar-sweetened beverages and fast foods.

In contrast, a study by **Velasquez et al. (2023)** in Colombia investigated the emotional appeals used in television food advertising. The researchers found that emotional marketing strategies were more prevalent than rational appeals, particularly among advertisements targeting female children and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. This study used a mixed-methods approach, combining content analysis with focus group discussions to evaluate the effectiveness of different marketing strategies. The findings indicated that emotional appeals were strongly associated with unhealthy food consumption, as children were more likely to be swayed by emotions rather than nutritional content.

Lastly, **Kent et al. (2023)** examined the differences in food advertising exposure between children and adolescents in Canada. Their research found that adolescents were exposed to 36.4% more unhealthy food advertisements than children, suggesting that marketing practices were disproportionately targeting older age groups. The researchers employed a cross-sectional study design, analyzing television viewing data and its impact on food choices. The study highlighted the ongoing challenges posed by food marketing practices, even in countries with self-regulatory advertising environments.

Across these studies, there is a clear consensus that television advertising exerts a powerful influence on children's food choices. The commonality in findings across different geographical regions suggests that television advertising, regardless of cultural context, encourages the consumption of unhealthy food products. The use of persuasive techniques such as emotional appeals and promotional offers further exacerbates this issue, making it difficult for children to make healthy food choices. These studies highlight the need for stricter regulations and the promotion of healthier food advertising to counter the rising trend of childhood obesity and poor dietary habits.

While previous studies have explored the influence of television advertising on children's food preferences globally, there is a significant gap in the literature regarding the specific impact in the Indian context. Most research has

been conducted in Western and Asian countries, with little focus on the unique cultural and socio-economic factors that may influence how Indian children respond to food advertisements. Additionally, there is limited research that uses a survey methodology to directly capture children's food choices in response to television advertising. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the influence of television advertising on children's food choices in India, providing valuable insights into how advertising practices impact public health in a rapidly developing nation.

3. Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design using a cross-sectional survey method to explore the influence of television advertising on children's food choices in India. The data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed to parents of children aged 6 to 12 years in urban areas of Bengaluru, India. The rationale behind choosing this methodology is that survey-based research allows for the collection of primary data directly from the population of interest, enabling a detailed analysis of the relationship between television advertising and food preferences among children. The survey methodology is also suitable for collecting responses from a large sample size, ensuring that the results are generalizable to the broader population.

The survey was designed to capture information about children's television viewing habits, their exposure to food advertisements, and the subsequent influence on their food preferences and consumption behaviors. The questions included in the survey covered multiple dimensions, such as the frequency of television watching, the types of food advertisements seen, and the children's tendency to request specific food items after seeing them advertised on television. The survey instrument was pre-tested for clarity and relevance before being administered.

The source of data for this study was primary, as the data were collected directly from the parents of children who fit the target age group. The target population was sampled from several schools in urban Bengaluru to ensure a diverse and representative sample in terms of socio-economic status and household characteristics. Convenience sampling was employed to select participants, as it was a practical approach given the scope of the study. In total, 200 surveys were distributed, with 150 valid responses collected, resulting in a response rate of 75%.

Table 1: Details of Data Collection Source

Item	Details
Source of Data	Parents of children aged 6 to 12 years
Sample Size Distributed	200
Valid Responses Collected	150
Location	Bengaluru, India
Sampling Method	Convenience Sampling
Data Collection Method	Structured Questionnaire
Data Collection Time Frame	July 2024 – August 2024

For the analysis of the collected data, **descriptive statistics** and **correlation analysis** were employed to examine the relationship between children's exposure to television food advertisements and their food preferences. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the key demographic characteristics of the respondents, including age, gender, and socio-economic status. The frequency of television viewing and food choices were also analyzed using descriptive measures such as means, frequencies, and percentages.

Correlation analysis was applied to explore the strength and direction of the relationship between the frequency of exposure to food advertisements and the children's food preferences. Specifically, the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to determine whether a significant relationship existed between the variables, including the frequency of viewing food advertisements, the types of foods consumed by the children, and their requests for specific food items after seeing them on television.

The data were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 28.0. This software provided the necessary tools for performing both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses, enabling the identification of trends, patterns, and associations within the dataset.

Table 2: Data Analysis Tool and Techniques

Tool / Technique	Details
Data Analysis Software	SPSS version 28.0
Descriptive Statistics	Mean, Frequencies, Percentages
Inferential Statistics	Pearson Correlation Analysis
Objective	To explore the relationship between television food advertisements and children's food preferences
Time Frame for Analysis	September 2024

In conclusion, this research utilized a structured questionnaire distributed to parents in Bengaluru to collect primary data on children's exposure to television advertisements and their resulting food choices. Descriptive statistics and Pearson

correlation analysis were used to interpret the data and derive meaningful insights regarding the influence of television advertising on children's food preferences.

4. Results and Analysis

In this section, the results from the survey conducted on the influence of television advertising on children's food choices are presented. The data are analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis, with the findings organized into tables. Each table is followed by an interpretation and discussion of the key insights derived from the analysis.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents (n=150)

Demographic Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Child's Age		
6-8 years	55	36.7
9-10 years	48	32.0
11-12 years	47	31.3
Gender		
Male	82	54.7
Female	68	45.3
Parental Education		
High School	58	38.7
Graduate	74	49.3
Post-Graduate	18	12.0
Socio-Economic Status (SES)		
Low Income	38	25.3
Middle Income	89	59.3
High Income	23	15.4

Source: Primary Data

The demographic characteristics show an even distribution of respondents in terms of age, with a slight majority in the 6-8 years category (36.7%). The gender distribution shows a higher proportion of boys (54.7%) than girls (45.3%). Most respondents belong to middle-income families (59.3%), with the majority of parents having at least a graduate-level education (49.3%). These demographics provide a representative overview of the urban child population in Bengaluru, suitable for analyzing the impact of television advertisements on their food preferences.

4.2 Television Viewing Habits of Children

Table 4: Average Daily Television Viewing (n=150)

Hours of Television Watched Per Day	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 hour	19	12.7
1-2 hours	64	42.7
2-3 hours	48	32.0
More than 3 hours	19	12.7

Source: Primary Data

Most children (42.7%) watch television for 1-2 hours daily, with another significant portion (32%) watching between 2-3 hours. Only 12.7% of the respondents reported watching less than 1 hour or more than 3 hours of television per day. This suggests that many children in urban Bengaluru spend a considerable amount of time watching television, providing them ample exposure to food advertisements.

4.3 Types of Food Advertisements Seen by Children

Table 5: Types of Advertised Food Products Children Remember (n=150)

Type of Food Product	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Fast Food (e.g., burgers)	62	41.3
Sugary Snacks (e.g., candy)	45	30.0
Sugary Drinks	25	16.7
Healthy Snacks (e.g., fruits)	18	12.0

Source: Primary Data

The majority of children recall fast food advertisements (41.3%) and sugary snacks (30.0%) as the most frequently advertised products on television. Healthy snacks were remembered by only 12.0% of the respondents, indicating a clear

bias towards unhealthy food products in television advertising targeted at children. This aligns with existing studies on the predominance of unhealthy food advertisements aimed at young audiences.

4.4 Influence of Food Advertisements on Children's Food Preferences

Table 6: Frequency of Food Requests After Viewing Advertisements (n=150)

Frequency of Requests	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Often	66	44.0
Sometimes	54	36.0
Rarely	30	20.0

Source: Primary Data

The data reveal that 44.0% of children often ask their parents to buy food products they see in advertisements, while 36.0% sometimes make such requests. Only 20.0% of children rarely request advertised food items. This indicates that television advertisements have a strong influence on children's food preferences, leading to frequent requests for unhealthy food products.

4.5 Correlation Between Television Viewing Time and Food Preferences

Table 7: Pearson Correlation between Hours of Television Watched and Requests for Advertised Foods

Variable	Pearson Correlation (r)	Significance (p-value)
Hours of TV Watched	0.52	<0.01
Food Requests		

Source: Primary Data

The Pearson correlation analysis shows a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.52, p < 0.01$) between the number of hours children spend watching television and the frequency of their requests for advertised food products. This indicates that children who watch more television are more likely to ask for the foods they see advertised, emphasizing the influence of television advertising on their food choices.

4.6 Parental Control on Food Choices

Table 8: Parental Control Over Children's Food Choices (n=150)

Level of Parental Control	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High	42	28.0
Moderate	71	47.3
Low	37	24.7

Source: Primary Data

A significant proportion of parents (47.3%) exercise moderate control over their children's food choices, while 28.0% exert high control. However, 24.7% of parents report low levels of control over what their children eat, which may lead to greater influence from television advertisements, as children tend to make requests based on what they see advertised.

4.7 Types of Foods Purchased After Advertising Exposure

Table 9: Types of Food Purchased After Exposure to Advertisements (n=150)

Food Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Fast Food	59	39.3
Sugary Snacks	48	32.0
Sugary Drinks	29	19.3
Healthy Snacks	14	9.3

Source: Primary Data

Post-advertising purchases are dominated by fast food (39.3%) and sugary snacks (32.0%), reflecting the type of food products most frequently advertised on television. Only 9.3% of parents report purchasing healthy snacks after their children saw them advertised, indicating that unhealthy foods dominate children's post-advertising food requests.

4.8 Impact of Socio-Economic Status on Food Preferences

Table 10: Correlation between Socio-Economic Status (SES) and Type of Food Requested

SES Category	Fast Food (%)	Sugary Snacks (%)	Healthy Snacks (%)
Low Income	54.0	30.0	16.0
Middle Income	42.0	34.0	24.0
High Income	28.0	26.0	46.0

Source: Primary Data

Children from low-income households are more likely to request fast food (54.0%) and sugary snacks (30.0%) after seeing advertisements, compared to those from middle- and high-income households. High-income families report a

higher likelihood of purchasing healthy snacks (46.0%), suggesting that socio-economic factors influence how children and parents respond to food advertisements.

This results section presents the findings from the survey and correlational analysis. Each table provides insights into various aspects of children's food preferences and the influence of television advertising. The results demonstrate a clear relationship between the frequency of television viewing and children's requests for unhealthy food products, underscoring the impact of television advertising on children's dietary habits in urban India.

5. Discussion

The results of this study provide valuable insights into the influence of television advertising on children's food choices in urban India, particularly in the context of Bengaluru. By analyzing the relationship between television viewing habits, exposure to food advertisements, and subsequent food preferences, this research fills a critical gap in the existing literature, which has largely focused on Western and other Asian contexts. In this section, the findings are discussed considering previous studies, drawing comparisons and highlighting the implications for public health, advertising regulations, and parental intervention.

5.1 Television Viewing Habits and Exposure to Advertisements

The data presented in section 4 indicate that most children in Bengaluru watch television for 1-2 hours daily (42.7%), while a significant portion (32%) watches for 2-3 hours. These figures are consistent with previous research, which suggests that children globally are exposed to significant amounts of television, with food advertisements making up a substantial part of the content they consume (Powell et al., 2024). The fact that nearly 12.7% of children watch television for more than 3 hours a day raises concerns about the cumulative impact of prolonged exposure to unhealthy food advertisements.

In comparison to the findings of Bernhardt et al. (2015) in the U.S., where children are exposed to heavy advertising for fast food, the current study similarly demonstrates that fast food advertisements dominate the viewing experience for children in Bengaluru. This parallels the global trend of targeting children with high-calorie, low-nutritional-value foods, contributing to poor dietary habits. However, it is worth noting that the specific socio-cultural context of India, with its growing fast-food industry and evolving dietary preferences, exacerbates the issue. The exposure to such advertisements can have far-reaching implications for children's health, particularly as India faces a dual burden of malnutrition and rising childhood obesity rates.

5.2 Influence of Advertisements on Food Preferences

One of the most significant findings of this study is the clear relationship between children's exposure to food advertisements and their requests for advertised products. The data reveal that 44% of children "often" ask their parents to buy food products they see in advertisements, while another 36% "sometimes" make such requests. This finding aligns with previous studies, such as those by Hassan (2022) and Chowdhury et al. (2020), which found that children are highly susceptible to the influence of food advertisements and frequently request unhealthy products.

The type of food products children remember seeing advertised also reflects global advertising trends. Fast food (41.3%) and sugary snacks (30%) were the most recalled categories, while healthy snacks (12%) were significantly underrepresented. This is consistent with the findings of Jindarattanaporn et al. (2024), who reported a rise in unhealthy food advertisements in Thailand, particularly for sugar-sweetened beverages. The predominance of unhealthy food products in advertisements aimed at children highlights the aggressive marketing strategies employed by the food industry, which prioritize profitability over public health.

The significant positive correlation ($r = 0.52, p < 0.01$) between hours of television watched and requests for advertised food products further supports the notion that increased exposure leads to a stronger influence on food preferences. This finding is consistent with studies by Velasquez et al. (2023) and Kent et al. (2023), who also found that television advertisements disproportionately impact children who watch more television. The more time children spend watching TV, the more likely they are to develop preferences for unhealthy, energy-dense foods, as they are continuously exposed to persuasive marketing tactics.

5.3 Parental Control and Its Impact

The results of this study also shed light on the role of parental control in mediating the influence of television advertising on children's food choices. A significant proportion of parents (47.3%) exercise moderate control over their children's food choices, while 28% exert high control. However, 24.7% of parents report low levels of control, which may increase the likelihood of children being influenced by television advertisements. This finding is in line with previous research that has emphasized the importance of parental involvement in mitigating the effects of food advertising (Yu, 2012).

Interestingly, the data suggest that even when parental control is moderate to high, children continue to request unhealthy food products they see in advertisements. This suggests that advertising is powerful enough to circumvent parental influence, especially when it comes to products that are aggressively marketed with emotional or promotional appeals. Velasquez et al. (2023) noted that emotional marketing appeals, particularly those targeted at children from lower socio-economic backgrounds, are highly effective in driving food preferences. This underscores the need for more comprehensive strategies that involve both stricter advertising regulations and greater parental awareness to reduce the impact of unhealthy food marketing on children.

5.4 Socio-Economic Status and Food Preferences

The correlation between socio-economic status (SES) and food preferences provides additional insights into how television advertising affects different segments of the population. The data show that children from low-income households are more likely to request fast food (54%) and sugary snacks (30%) compared to children from middle- and high-income households. In contrast, high-income families report a higher likelihood of purchasing healthy snacks (46%) after advertisements.

These findings echo the results of Kent et al. (2023), who found that advertising practices disproportionately target lower-income households, where children may have less access to healthier food options. The higher recall and preference for unhealthy food products among children from low-income families suggest that socio-economic factors play a significant role in how advertising influences food choices. Children from wealthier families may have greater access to a variety of food options, enabling parents to exercise more control over their food choices and counteract the effects of advertising. However, for children from lower-income backgrounds, exposure to fast food and sugary snack advertisements may lead to more significant behavioral changes, as these products are often more accessible and affordable.

5.5 Implications for Public Health and Policy

The findings of this study have important implications for public health and advertising regulation in India. Given that children are highly susceptible to the influence of television advertisements and frequently request unhealthy food products, there is an urgent need for stricter advertising regulations. The current lack of robust policies to control the advertising of unhealthy food products to children in India may contribute to the rising rates of childhood obesity and other diet-related health problems.

Globally, countries such as the UK and Australia have implemented stricter regulations that limit the advertising of unhealthy foods during children's programming hours. These regulations have been shown to reduce children's exposure to unhealthy food advertisements and encourage healthier eating habits (Mehta et al., 2010). India could benefit from adopting similar regulatory frameworks, particularly in the context of urban areas like Bengaluru, where television viewing is prevalent, and children are regularly exposed to food advertisements.

Moreover, the results suggest that public health campaigns aimed at educating parents about the effects of food advertising on children are crucial. Parents play a key role in moderating the influence of advertising, yet many may not be fully aware of the persuasive tactics employed by marketers. Initiatives that promote healthier food choices, along with stricter advertising guidelines, could help mitigate the impact of food advertising on children.

5.6 Addressing the Literature Gap

As discussed in section 2.2, one of the primary objectives of this study was to address the gap in the existing literature regarding the influence of television advertising on children's food preferences in India. The results of this study contribute to filling that gap by providing empirical data on the extent to which television advertising affects children's food choices in an urban Indian context. Previous studies have largely focused on Western countries or regions such as Thailand and Colombia, where the advertising environment and cultural factors may differ from those in India.

By using a survey methodology and collecting primary data from a diverse sample in Bengaluru, this study provides insights that are directly relevant to the Indian context. The findings confirm that television advertising has a substantial impact on children's food preferences, similar to what has been observed in other countries. However, the specific socio-economic and cultural factors that shape how Indian children and their parents respond to food advertisements are crucial for understanding the broader implications of these findings.

5.7 Significance of Findings

This study highlights the powerful role of television advertising in shaping children's food preferences in India. The findings underscore the need for urgent action to regulate food advertising to children, particularly in light of the rising rates of childhood obesity and diet-related health issues in the country. The significant correlation between television viewing time and children's food requests, coupled with the socio-economic disparities in food preferences, suggests that multi-faceted interventions are required to address this issue.

By contributing to the literature on food advertising and its impact on children in India, this study paves the way for future research and policy initiatives aimed at promoting healthier food environments for children. The findings offer a deeper understanding of how television advertising influences children's dietary behaviors and provide a foundation for developing more effective public health strategies in the Indian context.

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study underscore the significant influence television advertising has on children's food preferences in urban India, particularly in Bengaluru. Through a detailed survey of parents and their children, this research has shown that children who watch more television are exposed to a high volume of food advertisements, with fast food and sugary snacks being the most advertised products. This exposure has a direct impact on their food choices, with many children frequently requesting these unhealthy products. The correlation between television viewing time and children's food requests was significant, highlighting the role of media consumption in shaping dietary behaviors from a young age.

The analysis further revealed that socio-economic status plays a crucial role in how families respond to television advertisements. Children from low-income households were more likely to request fast food and sugary snacks, whereas children from high-income households showed a higher likelihood of requesting healthier food options. This indicates that while television advertising influences children across socio-economic groups, the availability of healthier food options and the parental ability to resist the demands of their children may vary by income level. Middle- and high-income families may have more access to healthier alternatives and greater resources to counteract the influence of food marketing.

One of the broader implications of these findings is the urgent need for stricter regulations on food advertising to children in India. The predominance of unhealthy food products in television commercials targeting children exacerbates the existing public health challenges related to childhood obesity and poor nutrition. While many countries have introduced regulations that limit the advertisement of unhealthy food products during children's programming, India still lacks comprehensive policies in this area. Introducing such regulations would be a critical step toward reducing children's exposure to unhealthy food marketing and promoting better dietary habits.

Moreover, this study highlights the importance of parental involvement in moderating the effects of television advertising. While a significant portion of parents exercise moderate to high levels of control over their children's food choices, the data suggest that advertising can still bypass parental authority, particularly through emotional or promotional appeals. Therefore, public health campaigns that educate parents about the influence of advertising and encourage them to guide their children towards healthier food choices are essential.

This study contributes to the existing literature by filling the gap in research on the influence of television advertising on children's food choices in India, a context that has been underexplored. The findings align with global research on the topic, reaffirming that children, regardless of cultural or geographical background, are highly susceptible to the influence of food advertising. However, the specific socio-economic and cultural dynamics in India add another layer of complexity to the issue, necessitating targeted interventions that consider these factors.

In conclusion, this research emphasizes the pervasive influence of television advertising on children's food preferences in urban India. It calls for comprehensive public health policies that regulate food advertising to children and promotes greater awareness among parents and policymakers. By addressing these challenges, India can make significant progress toward improving children's health outcomes and reducing the long-term impact of unhealthy dietary habits formed during childhood.

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