

Food Market and its Agenda

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Abstract: Food advertisement is one of the prominent section in mass media and social media. Food advertisements pull people to walk into the world of illusion about food and culture. Cultural Signs are well mediated through these ads. Culture plays a vital role in the promotion of food. At many times, Media takes Modernization as a base to promote its products among the common public. This has created a sense of excitement about food in the present decade and a cosmopolitan sentiment has become more apparent. This article discusses the effect of food advertising on the consumer culture and its effects on the ill health of the people. Scholarly articles, essays, statistics from scientific studies, and other reliable sources will be used for analyzing information.

Keywords: Mass Media, Advertising, Commercialization, Cultural Commodity, Public Health.

1. Introduction

The eating habits of society as a whole have drastically changed over the last few decades. Advertising images in media and changes within modern cultural and family values play a big role in the psychological evolution of consumers in the foodservice industry.

From as early as the period ranging from 1910-1920, the definition of marketing was very general and could be described as “all those activities involved in the distribution of goods from producers to consumers and in the transfer of the title thereto,” (Van Trijp). The primary idea of advertising is to announce the piece of information to the general people. At many times, Advertising is more than a merchandising tool. It takes control of everyday life and dominates social relationships. It also imposes upon people a collective form of taste. The problem with many of the advertisements in recent years is that they are very clever, and it is almost as if they contain subliminal messages telling people that they “need” to buy these products.

Advertising is an important move to the marketing of the food supply. A large amount of influence on western food is done through these advertisements which force a common man to walk in the roads of lavishness. Advertising creates an appetite in people to earn more through some means, to own a product rather than avoiding it. Pinpointing how, exactly, the media perpetuates the trends in consumerism – focusing mostly on the unhealthy eating habits of society – is the main purpose of this research paper.

2. Review of Literature

The study by Helen G. Dixon *et al.*, (2007) “The Effects of Television Advertisements for Junk Food versus Nutritious Food on Children’s Food Attitudes and Preferences,” was aimed to improve the facts support regard to influential effect of TV food advertising on children’s viewpoint on food. According to Dixon *et al.*, Social Cognitive Theory forecasts that children get influenced by the things symbolically portrayed in mass media and from their role models.

Alrefai, Farah (2013) examined The Westernization of Advertisements Published in Kuwaiti Newspapers from 1992 to 2012. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the degree of Westernization in advertisements published in

major Kuwaiti daily newspapers over the past 21 years (1992-2012). Findings indicate that Western cultural values have diffused into advertisements published on the front pages of Kuwaiti dailies over the past 21 years. Results indicate that English use, and the cultural values of modernity, globalization, individualism, freedom, youth and beauty, and active contribution, have diffused, increased, and become prevalent in advertisements published on the front pages of Kuwaiti dailies from 1992 to 2012.

A study by Diabetes Foundation of India (DFI) found that TV commercials have such impact on school children that they consider eating fatty foods fashionable. At least 54% of children surveyed preferred buying foods shown in commercials and 59% said they would continue to buy such foods (Bhardwaj *et al.*, 2008)

“Almost everything influences food choice, at one time and place or another,” (Rozin) states Professor Paul Rozin, of the Department of Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania in his scholarly article, “The Integration of Biological, Social, Cultural and Psychological Influences on Food Choice.” For humans, he explains, food is so important that it “engages and interacts with almost all of our activities: leisure, the arts, sex, [and] work...” (Rozin). All of these activities are used as elements in advertisements to capture the attention of potential consumers and entice them to buy a product. According to Rozin, there are four different influences on humans’ food choice – biological (physiological and evolutionary/adaptive), psychological, social, and cultural influences. By using these four types of influences, advertising agents are able to arouse consumers’ interest in their products. The most common way to pinpoint exactly what will have the greatest influence on the product’s target market is to conduct studies for “product optimization.”

Dr. T. N. Murty *et al* (2013) in their research it is evident that Nearly 92 % of the parents surveyed feel that there is need for regulation as far as food related Advertisements are concerned and about 66% said that, either the advertisements of unhealthy food products should be banned or the Ad Message should be regulated by including the warning against excess consumption. 12% parents accepted that all the food Ads targeting children should be totally banned and about 22% of them said that the use of children in food advertisements should be banned, as when children

themselves advocate such products, it becomes difficult for the parents to convince their kids for not eating.

Segokgo, Kabo Tuelo (2016) examined the Impact of Fast Food Marketing on Millennials. The study assessed the association between fast food marketing and consumption of fast food. It further dealt with perceptions on the relationship between fast food consumption and weight gain. A convenience sample of 507 participants was used to collect data from University of Arkansas' students through an online survey and an in person survey. The findings indicated that knowledge levels affected consumption decisions. Low nutritional knowledge level consumers would be more likely influenced by fast food advertisement to purchase fast food as opposed to consumers with adequate nutritional knowledge level. However, there was a relationship between the level of consumption of fast food and obesity

Hazem Rasheed Gaber (2014) studied on the impact of Fast-food advertising in social media. 4 focus groups were conducted with young consumers from 2 Egyptian cities. Content analysis was applied for the Egyptian fast-food Facebook fan pages. The findings of this exploratory study have shown that young consumers are accepting the idea of fast food advertising in Facebook. Moreover, the research provides a framework for the factors that lead to consumers' engagement with the advertisements on Facebook. With the increase in the popularity of social media websites among the young generation, fast-food marketers find it a more effective medium for advertising for their chains among that segment.

Caraher and Landon present results of a 1996 study done by Consumers International on the percentage of unhealthy foods being advertised during children's television. The diagram shows two food pyramids: one that shows the actual recommended proportions of food groups for a healthy diet, and another that shows the proportions that are being marketed in actual advertising content. The figure shows an "inverse relationship" (Caraher and Landon, 2006) between the recommended daily servings of the real food pyramid and the exposure of the unhealthy foods that are being marketed to children on a daily basis. The "fatty and sugary" category on food pyramid based on "what the ads show," consisting of items such as high-sugared breakfast cereals, ready-prepared foods, and fast food restaurant meals, takes up a disturbingly large percentage of the pyramid, when it should only account for a very small percentage of it, and should only be eaten sparingly. This diagram shows the lack of advertising censure in regards to protecting children from nutritional harm by being tempted by the advertisements of the fatty foods that they are presented with on television every day.

A recent review on the effects of television food advertising on preschool and school-age children's food behavior concluded that children exposed to advertising will choose advertised food products at significantly higher rates than children who were not exposed. Findings from food purchase request studies have consistently shown that children's exposure to food television advertising increases the number of attempts children make to influence food

purchases their parents buy. Purchase requests for specific brands or categories of food products also reflect product advertising frequencies (Coon KA *et al*, 2001)

Obesity and overweight levels have increased sharply in India in the last 15 years. A WHO-supported study collated data from 52 different studies across the country to show that combined prevalence of childhood overweight and obesity recorded between 2013 and 2015 was 19.3%, a significant increase from the earlier prevalence of 16.3% reported in 2001-2005. Body Mass Index is inversely proportional to square of height and early nutrition plays a major role in determining height (The Hindu, feb 2017).

In a study examined by Robinson, Borzekowski, and Matheson (2007), on young children by testing the influence of branding from a heavily marketed source on taste preferences, the children preferred the tastes of foods and drinks if they thought they were from McDonald's. Moderator analysis found significantly greater effects of branding among children with more television sets in their homes and children who ate food from McDonald's more often. Thus the study concluded that Branding of foods and beverages influences young children's taste perceptions.

3. Theoretical Background

Food is essential to our existence, and the images we use to communicate about food are important to public culture. Advertisements in the past few decades have become much cleverer in "luring" people into buying products. The central claim is that advertising is a social institution of import situated within the broader concept of consumer culture, and as such, its social and cultural influence cannot be ignored.

Marxism

The two classes that Marx talks about are the bourgeoisie, who own the factories and corporations and form the ruling class and the proletariat, the huge mass of workers who are exploited by this ruling class and whose condition becomes increasingly more desperate.

Advertising has become one of the most essential institutions in advanced capitalist societies because it is necessary to motivate people to work hard so that they can accumulate money. Here people must be driven to consume, must be made crazy to consume, for its consumption to maintain its economic system.

As Marx has written about the effects of capitalism: Every man speculates upon creating the new need in another in order to force him to new sacrifices, to place him in a new dependence, and to entice him into a new kind of pleasure and thereby into economic ruin. Everyone tries to establish over other an *alien* power in order to find there the satisfaction of his own egoistic need. (quoted in Fromm, 1962, p.50).

Cultural Hegemony

Hegemony means domination or rule on the other hand, it is a complicated of forces of a political, social and cultural nature. Hegemony transcends but also includes two other concepts: culture, which is how we shape our lives and

ideology, which from a Marxist perspective, expresses and is a projection of specific class interests. The media, as unwilling instruments of hegemonic domination, have a much broader and deeper influence. They shape people's very idea of themselves and the world, they shape people's world-views.

Culture Industry

The term culture industry was coined by the critical theorists Theodor Adorno (1903–1969) and Max Horkheimer (1895–1973), The inherent danger of the culture industry is the cultivation of false psychological needs that can only be met and satisfied by the products of capitalism; thus Adorno and Horkheimer especially perceived mass-produced culture as dangerous to the more technically and intellectually difficult high arts. In contrast, true psychological needs are freedom, creativity, and genuine happiness, which refer to an earlier demarcation of human needs, established by Herbert Marcuse.

Critical Political Economy Theory coined by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky is a Marxism approach. It is also called as Propaganda theory.

The theory holds five filters in which the second and fourth filters discuss about role of advertisement in spreading capitalist ideology. The second filter highlights the enhancement of the western or modern culture through advertisement. Fourth filter discusses on the Promotion of Corporate agenda (i.e) promoting a brand through a strong character in media eg: Hero, in a movie using a particular brand. Food brands are also promoted with these sorts of advertisements.

Commodification of culture

In modern capitalist societies, cultural products function as commodities that are manufactured and distributed to meet the demands of a consuming public. In literary and cultural criticism, "commodification" and "consumer culture" are terms that direct us to the intimate relationship between large-scale economic systems, particularly market capitalism, and hegemonic cultural ideologies. "Commodities" are objects designed or promoted for purchase; the people who purchase them are "consumers," a term that indicates the level of desire cultivated in the purchasing public for commodified things. In a consumer culture, one's desire for commodities feels like a need and is never fully satisfied. Marx argued that with in a capitalist political economy, the market endows objects with a "mystical character" that makes them appear to be of value in and of themselves, rather than as products of human labor or by virtue of their use-value. "A commodity," he writes, is "a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour"

Methods

This study is based upon extensive review of books, journals, articles, as well as results from many researches on advertisements related to food.

4. Discussions

Food Advertisements

Food advertisements are more colorful and attractive. The updates on varieties of food never stops rather have got increased in the recent years. These advertisements on food gratify people every day. The urge on these sort of food is created by the promoting the culture. The west culture is promoted as the most esteemed way of living. This is the age where people go crazy about western food and restaurant culture. People work hard and spent their hard earned money on these restaurant and western food culture just to feel satisfied about their lifestyle. We could also see that restaurants and eat outs glitter all around the cities. Advertisements on restaurants in newspapers and magazine are on its heights. It ultimately triggers public by its colorful displays of food and rich portrayal. It also creates attraction by building ads on the basis of modern culture. Since the curiosity for admiring and adopting the western culture exists, the viral portrayals of food culture in media pulls people towards it. A sense of excitement about food has emerged and Cosmopolitan sentiment among people became more apparent.

Media also showcases the positive side of foods at times. It gives information on some useful food products and it also depicts some medicinal values of foods. Though media provide some valuable information on food through traditional methods, the strongest capitalist ideology pulls people towards its side.

Growth trends in food outlets

There were nearly 22 lakh hotel and restaurant establishments in India in 2002. The food service or restaurant industry was worth a whopping Rs. 43,000 crores in 2010 and growing at a healthy rate of 15-20 percent annually.

But the real game changer was the entry of American fast food chain McDonalds into India in the year 1996. Indians, who had limited exposure to American food until then, lapped it up and gave rise to a huge upsurge in the quick service restaurant (QSR) industry. The following years saw the establishment of many international fast food chains such as Dominos, Pizza Hut, KFC, etc. The restaurant industry went through a technological revolution of sorts in the last few years with the emergence of the online food ordering service (Wikipedia)

Lifestyle

Lifestyle increasingly becomes a basis of social identity, displacing class as the central organizing principle of social life. CLASS used to be the dominant social division with respect to consumption. Consumption behavior characterizes class position. The social group determined the norms of consumption and the individual learned appropriate taste and consumer behavior occurred within the parameters of such cultures.

Food ads and its influence on children

In recent years, the food and beverage industry has viewed children and adolescents as a major market force. As a result, children and adolescents are targeted aggressively by

food advertisers, and are exposed to a growing and unprecedented amount of advertising, marketing, and commercialism through a wide range of channels.

Children are considered as the special member of Indian families. Thus advertisement portrays children for even unwanted products and services like bank ads, vehicle ads etc. Portrayal of children for Products dealing with children is justifiable but there is lot of exaggeration. Children learn characters and slogans from the commercial breaks children also learn that these triggers are associated with certain products. Increased exposure to the ads strengthens this brand awareness. This may lead to the obsession on the product. Children learn much about their social world vicariously, through observation of the media (Bandura, 2002) [7].

Nutrition during childhood and adolescence is essential for growth and development, health and well-being. But due to the drastic growth of western foods and its influence, children and adolescents are poor and do not meet national dietary goals. The growing epidemic of childhood overweight and obesity is a major public health concern.

Children and adolescents are eating more food away from home, drinking more soft drinks, and snacking more frequently. A new WHO/FAO consultation report on diet and prevention of chronic diseases examined the strength of evidence linking dietary and lifestyle factors to the risk of developing obesity. Diet and lifestyle factors were categorized based on the strength of scientific evidence according to four levels of evidence: convincing, probable, possible and insufficient. The report concluded that while the evidence that the heavy marketing of fast food outlets and energy-dense, micronutrient-poor food and beverages to children causes obesity is equivocal, sufficient indirect evidence exists to place this practice in the "probable" category for increasing risk of obesity.

Food Advertisement in newspapers

Almost every newspaper carries an article on food. There is a special category allotted for food articles on everyday supplements of newspapers. These articles come under special feature writing where the specific product or service pays for the article to get published. They appear every day just as information, which tries to appeal people with its fabulous and dramatic writing about the product and services. Food advertisements also come as Ad displays which is the most attractive one in the front page of the newspaper. Pictorial content attract a large and diverse that is, mass audience of middle and working-class people, men and women, from various age groups, and from urban and rural locales. This will be considered as the most important product or services by the people. The front page ads are more magnetic which has an ability to tempt the readers to grab it. It is not that food advertisements are published only as ad copies in the front page and advertorials in supplements but also as ad copies, in large number.

Cookery Shows and Food Advertisements in Television

Nowadays, Cookery shows hits the highest slots in most of the private television channels. These shows promote the best known dishes of other countries. All these shows create a sense of excitement about food. Culinary experts not only

helped develop the mass marketing and consumption of food. They also shaped a consumerist worldview, which exalted mental and physical exuberance, laying the groundwork for consumer culture, especially advertising, to grow. Culinary authorities' promotion of dainty foods played a large role in this modernizing process.

The impracticability of some of the recipes for domestic purposes suggests that they also have a role in expanding the general knowledge and reflection on cuisine through visual imagery in fuelling the imagination about food style and pleasure. Most of this westernized food leads people to health issues and obesity.

Social networking updates on lifestyles and food

It is not only those mass media vehicles such as television, radio and newspapers promote modernization, Social media does it on a large scale. There are numerous ads in social networking sites that pop-up promoting various food outlets with drooling pictures of the food items. These options may pull out people from choosing traditional foods made at home since the online services provide food at door step.

Today, the rise of social media is very evident and shows no signs for stopping. Social media has become an essential part of the lives of people especially the young generation; they use it for social interaction and to keep connected with their friends and colleagues. We could see people uploading pictures and selfies of their experiences from famous eat outs in social networking and it goes viral. Most often they cover the ambience and specify the brand of the eat outs. All these pictures are just a word about their status, showing their lifestyle as modern. Since products gets an excellent space in Social media to advertise is products and the consumer's acceptance for the marketing practices of fast food chains goes well, the chances on unhealthy condition of the public is more.

Facebook, the most widely used social network world wide had more than 1.23 billion users by the end of 2013 (The Guardian, 2014). That fact represents a huge opportunity for marketers who search for innovative ways of marketing rather than the traditional forms of advertising.

The introduction of social media websites has changed the communication landscape. With the popularity of these websites among consumers and the increase in the time they spend on browsing of these websites given the great amount of social interaction that occurs between them, the effect of these websites on influencing the consumers' behavior has also increased (Hutter et al., 2013).

5. Conclusion

Food ads attract people from all walks of life with varieties of food items that crop up every day. Strategic promotion of food items creates sense of excitement among people to adopt modern food style which builds in them appetite to earn more to meet its expenses which in turn leads to health issues.

Why do we crave for all these identity? Why did we lose our satisfaction on traditional foods? Why is that it has become

huge target in our life to experience familiar eat outs? Why do we feel achieved after experiencing these branded eat-outs even if they do not make our taste buds happier? Why do we feel excited about experiencing the branded ones?

Do we go to MC Donald's just because it is next to our house???

The hidden agenda of food marketing is a complete 'Business' which makes the mankind to go crazy behind the new food varieties through their magical trap called 'Modern Culture'. It would be great if people realize that eating the food items rich in nutrition is more important than eating food items of famed brands which will keep their health and wallet in good shape.

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