

# Children Based Food Advertising in Lagos State and its Perceived Influence on their Eating Behavior

<sup>1</sup>Abiamuwe, N. O. Ph.D, <sup>2</sup>Nwankwo, Nma, <sup>1</sup>Seriki-Mosadolorun. J. S, <sup>3</sup>Sonye, C. U. Ph.D, and <sup>4</sup>Nwahunanya, I.

<sup>1</sup>Department of Vocational Education, Yaba College of Technology, Yaba, Lagos State

<sup>2</sup>Department of Home Economics and Hospitality Management Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

<sup>3</sup>Department of Home Economics and Hotel Management, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt, Rivers State

<sup>4</sup>Department of Mechanical Engineering, Federal University of Technology, Owerri

**Abstract:-** The study determined children based food advertising in Lagos State and its perceived influence on their eating behavior. Descriptive survey design was used. Population was thirteen thousand, three hundred and sixty-five pupils and students. Sample was 740. Validated questionnaire was used for data collection and analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Findings showed that the types of food advertising media that influences children's eating behavior included television, radio, direct mail, Internet, fliers, handbills, poster, billboard and flex. Findings showed that the food advertising affect influences children's eating behavior through exposure to repetitive food advertising, claims relating to the product such as locally grown or organic foods, low price and nutrition, use of celebrities in food adverts, use of attractive packages, use of catchy songs or music and jingles among others. Findings revealed that the challenges families face as a result of food advertising included health problems such as obesity, diabetes, impulsive buying, eating disorder, change in food preference and increase in unhealthy food consumption. Among recommendations made was for food advertisement focused on children to be regulated in television channels in the home.

**Keywords:-** Food, Advertising, Children, Eating, Behavior.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Advertisement informs consumers about products and services. Advertisement can be described as a form of communication which influences peoples behavior especially children and youths. Advertising is a core part of marketing. Akta (2006) noted that advertising merits has changed over time especially in globalized market. Advertisements these days are focused more on children. Nigeria food industries are beginning to focus more on children and adolescents. There are many food related adverts in recent times hence, children and adolescents are captivated by the food adverts and they tend to be influenced in making food choices. This has invariably lead to changes in eating behavior such as eating out, frequent snacking, soft drink intake and eating junk foods. Research has shown that the more a product is advertised, the higher the demand for such product. It can be argued that children have little or no knowledge of advertising intents.

Scully, Dixon & Wakefield, (2009) reported that children below 7 years old tend to view advertisement as entertaining with unbiased information. From 8 years old, children begin to develop an understanding of the persuasive intent of advertng. Howbeit, children below 10 years are viewed by child development researchers as people likely to be misled by advertising (Chou, Rashad & Grossman, 2016). Children below 10 years of age can be said to develop a level of cognitive ability capable of differentiating certain functions of food based advertising. From early teens age (11 to 12 years), children's level of reasoning begin to broaden hence, they are able to understand certain advertising intents which is to sell their products. Despite these, most food based advertising are still focused on children. Children are the major focus of food based advertising in Nigeria because the parents demonstrate child care responsibilities through provision of food products demanded by children. The children are always willing and eager to try new foods advertised. In some cases, parents get to know names of new foods, snacks and drinks in the market through their teen children. Muhammad, Tahir, Muhammad & Mansoor, (2011) noted that food based advertising may have negative, deliberate or unintentional effects on health of children. Children also make food choices in schools and these are influenced by food based advertising. Most foods advertised, available and sold to children especially those under 10 years old are usually of high calorie, sweetened, fatty, sugary and nutrient contents less that recommended daily allowance for such age. This has lead to a growing concern on nutrient related diseases among children caused by food based advertising

Various media are utilized in children food based advertising. These media includes television, radio, direct mail, Internet, fliers, handbills, poster, billboard, flex school food vendors, children clubs, internet and toys (Scully, et.al. 2009). Children based food advertising affects food choices made by children and their eating behavior. Childhood nutrition is important for proper growth and development of children. Food choices made by children in early years of life influences their eating behavior in adulthood. There are rising concern in increasing nutrition related diseases such as dental health, malnutrition, obesity, anorexia and anemia (World Health Organization, 2012). This study therefore determined children based food advertising in Lagos State and its perceived influence on their eating behavior.

➤ Objectives

The study determined:

- Types of food advertising media,
- Ways food advertising influences children’s eating behaviour,
- Food advertising related nutrition challenges among families with children.

Lecturers. The instruments were administered by the researchers to the pupils and students in their respective schools. The questionnaires were retrieved immediately by the researchers to forestall any loss. Out of the 740 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 727 were retrieved showing 98% rate of return. Mean and standard deviation were used for data analysis.

**II. METHODOLOGY**

Survey design was adopted in Education District IV, Lagos State among Government owned five primary and five junior schools. Population was thirteen thousand, three hundred and sixty-five pupils and students (13,365). This consisted of 6,142 pupils and 7,223 JSS 2 students. Sample size was 740 consisting 370 pupils and 370 students. Questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was validated by three Home Economics

**III. RESULTS**

Results on demographics showed that:

- Family type of the respondents was 11% polygamy and 89% monogamy.
- Number of members of family had 1-3 (12%), 4-6 (79%), 7-10 (8%) and 11 and above (1%).
- Number of children in the family revealed that 1-3 children were 36%, 4-6 children were 62%, 7-10 were 2% while no family had 11 children and above.

S/N	Types of Food Based Advertising Media	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Television advertising	3.30	1.03	Assent
2.	Radio advertising	2.79	1.14	Assent
3.	Direct mail advertising	2.60	1.04	Assent
4.	Billboard advertising.	2.73	1.21	Assent
5.	Internet advertising	2.84	1.03	Assent
6.	Newspaper and magazine	2.79	1.04	Assent
7.	Promotion targeted as food advertising	3.12	0.98	Assent
8.	Poster food advertising	2.63	1.05	Assent
9.	Billboard flex food advertising	3.52	0.77	Reject

SD-Standard Deviation

Table 1:- Responses on Types of Food Advertising Media that Influences Children’s Eating Behavior

Table 1 showed the items were accepted as types of food advertising media that influences children’s eating behavior. The items had mean values ranging from 2.60 to 3.52 which is above the cutoff point of 2.50. This implies that the types of food advertising media included television food advertising, radio food advertising, direct mail food advertising, billboard food advertising, Internet food advertising, newspaper and magazine, fliers and handbills food advertising, poster food advertising and billboard flex food advertising. Also, SD of .77 - 1.21 implies the responses were close.

S/N	Ways Food Advertisements Influences Children’s Eating Behavior	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Exposure to repetitive food advertising	3.18	0.88	Assent
2.	Claims relating to the product such as being organic	3.22	0.99	Assent
3.	The use of celebrities in food adverts	3.18	0.99	Assent
4.	Convincing customers of the food positive health effects	2.77	1.17	Assent
5.	Use of promotion and rewards such as coupons	3.10	0.89	Assent
6.	Use of attractive packages.	2.79	1.05	Assent
7.	Use of catchy songs or music and jingles	2.92	1.07	Assent
8.	Use of external cues such as container size and shape	2.95	0.96	Assent
9.	Use of individuals who eat the food in the food adverts and make it look appealing	2.91	0.92	Assent

SD-Standard Deviation

Table 2:- Responses on Ways Food Advertisements Influences Children’s Behavior in Eating

Table 2 reveals all listed ways food advertising influences children’s eating behavior were all accepted. All the items had mean values ranging from 2.50. Also, the SD of 0.88 to 1.17 implies the mean responses were close.

S/N	Food Advertising Related Nutritional Challenges among Families with Children	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Health problems such as obesity and diabetes,	2.98	1.05	Assent
2.	Impulsive buying	3.54	0.68	Assent
3.	Financial challenge	2.93	1.08	Assent
4.	Eating Disorder	2.66	1.14	Assent
5.	Change in food preference	2.81	1.08	Assent
6.	Increase in unhealthy food consumption	3.21	0.95	Assent
7.	Increase in nutrition related diseases	2.76	1.00	Assent

*SD-Standard Deviation*

Table 3:- Responses on Food Advertising Related Nutritional Challenges among Families with Children

Table 3 shows the responses on food advertising related nutritional challenges among families with children. All items were all accepted food advertising related nutritional challenges among families with children since mean responses were 2.66 - 3.54. Also, SD of .68 - 1.14 indicates closeness in mean responses.

**IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

Result showed types of food advertising media that influences children’s eating behavior included television advertising, radio advertising, direct mail advertising, billboard advertising, Internet advertising, newspaper and magazine, fliers and handbills advertising, poster advertising, billboard and flex advertising. These are in line with the assertions of Story, Neumark-Sztainer & French, (2012) that various food advertising channels and media are utilized in reaching children and youth. These media starts their persuasive food advertisements from when children are toddlers through teen’s age and adulthood. In the same vein, Scully, et. al. (2009) noted that food based advertisement channels can be in form of television, school food vendors, children cartoon commercials, children clubs, internet and toys.

Findings showed the ways food advertisements influences eating behavior of children included exposure to repetitive food advertising, claims relating to the product such as being organic, use of celebrities in food adverts, convincing customers of the food positive health effects, use of promotion and rewards such as coupons, use of attractive packages, use of catchy songs or music and jingles, and use of external cues such as container size and shape. These findings agree with the opinion of Livingstone & Helsper (2006) that children and adolescents are often persuaded by convincing messages of food based advertising which can affect their development and general well being.

Findings in table 3 revealed that the food advertising related nutritional challenges among families with children included health problems such as obesity and diabetes, impulsive buying, financial challenge, eating disorder, change in food preference, increase in unhealthy food consumption and increase in nutrition related diseases. Most foods advertised, available and sold to children especially those under 10 years old are usually of high calorie, sweetened, fatty, sugary and nutrient contents less than recommended daily allowance for such age. These findings are in line with the report of WHO (2012) that food-related concerns caused by food advertising included such as dental health, malnutrition, obesity, anorexia and anemia other nutrition related diseases.

**V. CONCLUSION**

There are many children based food advertisements available in different media. These food based advertisements are affecting children’s food choices and eating behavior which may have a long term effect on their health. The different food advertising media have influences on children’s eating behavior.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The following were recommended:
- Frequency of children exposure to food advertising increases likely influence on their eating behaviour.
  - Parents need to monitor advertisements that their children are exposed to.
  - There is need for parental guidance in certain television and internet food adverts.
  - Food advertisement on children television channels should be regulated in the home

**REFERENCES**

- [1]. Akta, A. Y. (2006). The effects of television food advertisement on children's food purchasing requests. *Pediatrics International*, 48:138–145
- [2]. Chou, S. Y., Rashad, I. and Grossman, M. (2016). Fast-food restaurant advertising on television and its influence on childhood obesity, *Journal of Law and Economic*, 51(4), 599–618,
- [3]. Livingstone, K. and Helsper, E. J. (2006). Does advertising literacy mediate the effects of advertising on children? A critical examination of two linked research literatures in relation to obesity and food choice. *Journal of Communication*, 56(3), 560–584,
- [4]. Muhammad, H., Tahir, M. Q., Muhammad, Z. R. and Mansoor, N. (2011). Does the Food Advertisement on Television Have the Impact on Children's Food Purchasing Behavior. A Study Based on Pakistan Food Advertisement *International Journal of Business and Management* , 6(1), 283-290
- [5]. Scully, M. Dixon, H. and Wakefield, M. (2009). Association between commercial television exposure and fast-food consumption among adults, *Public Health Nutrition*, 12(1), 105–110,
- [6]. Story, M, Neumark-Sztainer D, French, S (2012): Individual and Environmental Influences on Adolescent Eating Behaviors. *Journal of American Dietetic Association*, 102:40-51. Retrieved on 6<sup>th</sup> May, 2019 from: [www.ccsenet.org/ijbm](http://www.ccsenet.org/ijbm)
- [7]. World Health Organization, (WHO). (2012). Prioritizing areas for action in the field of population-based prevention of childhood obesity. A set of tools for Member States to determine and identify priority areas for action," WHO Publications. Retrieved on 6<sup>th</sup> June, 2019 from: <http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/childhood/tools/en/index.html>.