

Influence of Food Advertisements on Packaged Food Consumption among Children Aged 6–12 Years: A Parental Perspective

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Abstract

The research paper entitled “Influence of Food Advertisements on Packaged Food Consumption among Children Aged 6–12 Years: A Parental Perspective” aims to study the role of food advertisements in influencing children’s packaged food consumption habits. In recent years, children have become increasingly exposed to advertisements through television, mobile phones, social media, and online platforms. Such advertisements often attract children toward packaged and processed food products. The study was conducted in Jabalpur city with a sample of 50 parents selected through convenient sampling technique. A self-developed questionnaire was used to gather information related to children’s exposure to food advertisements, their interest in packaged food items, frequency of consumption, and parental opinions regarding advertisement influence. The collected responses were analyzed using simple percentage. The study concludes that food advertisements significantly influence packaged food consumption, food preferences, and purchasing behavior among children aged 6–12 years. The findings emphasize the need for parental awareness and healthy food guidance for children.

Keywords: Food Advertisements, Packaged Food Consumption, Children.

1. Introduction

In the modern era, children are increasingly exposed to various forms of media such as television, mobile phones, internet platforms, social media, and digital advertisements. Among the many types of advertisements viewed by children, food advertisements occupy a major place. Attractive visuals, colorful packaging, cartoon characters, celebrity endorsements, and promotional offers are commonly used by food companies to attract children toward packaged and processed food products. As a result, children often develop interest in snacks, soft drinks, chocolates, chips, instant noodles, and other ready-to-eat products from an early age.

The age group of 6–12 years is considered an important developmental stage in a child’s life. During this period, children gradually develop eating preferences, food choices, and consumer behavior patterns. They are highly influenced by external environmental factors, especially advertisements and peer influence. Since children at this age are emotionally attracted to visual media, repeated exposure to food advertisements may influence their eating habits and increase their preference for packaged food products.

Packaged foods have become easily available and widely consumed in urban areas due to changing lifestyles, busy family schedules, and increasing market availability. Many packaged food products are heavily promoted through television and digital media, making children more likely to demand such items from parents. Parents, often observe that children insist on purchasing advertised food products after watching commercials or online promotional content. This growing trend has raised concerns regarding children's food habits and nutritional practices.

Food advertisements are designed in a persuasive manner to create attraction and influence purchasing behavior. Children generally lack the maturity to understand the commercial purpose of advertisements and may perceive advertised products as healthy, enjoyable, or socially desirable. Consequently, advertisements can strongly shape children's food preferences, eating choices, and consumption patterns. Parents play a significant role in controlling and monitoring children's dietary habits; therefore, their perceptions are important for understanding the actual influence of food advertising on children.

In recent years, concerns regarding unhealthy eating habits among children have increased significantly. Excessive consumption of packaged and processed foods may affect children's nutritional balance and encourage unhealthy dietary practices. Therefore, studying the relationship between food advertisements and packaged food consumption among children has become socially and educationally relevant.

The present study, titled "Influence of Food Advertisements on Packaged Food Consumption among Children Aged 6–12 Years: A Parental Perspective," aims to examine how food advertisements influence children's attraction toward packaged foods from the viewpoint of parents. The study focuses on understanding parental observations regarding children's food demands, advertisement exposure, and consumption behavior. The findings of the study may help create awareness among parents, educators, and society regarding the influence of media advertisements on children's eating habits and encourage healthier food choices among children.

2. Food Advertisements

Food advertisements refer to promotional messages created by companies to attract consumers toward food and beverage products. These advertisements are commonly shown through television, mobile phones, internet platforms, social media, newspapers, and outdoor media. In the case of children, food advertisements often use colorful visuals, cartoon characters, catchy music, celebrity endorsements, and attractive packaging to gain attention. Such advertisements mainly promote packaged snacks, chocolates, soft drinks, fast foods, and processed food items. Children are highly influenced by repeated exposure to these advertisements, which can shape their food preferences, eating habits, and purchasing demands. Food advertising has become an important factor affecting children's dietary behavior in modern society.

3. Packaged Food Consumption

Packaged food consumption refers to the intake of ready-to-eat or commercially packed food products by individuals. These foods are manufactured, processed, preserved, and sold in sealed packets or containers for convenience and longer shelf life. Common examples include chips, biscuits,

chocolates, noodles, soft drinks, candies, frozen foods, and other processed snacks. In recent years, packaged food consumption among children has increased rapidly due to urban lifestyles, easy availability, and the influence of advertisements. Children often prefer packaged foods because of their taste, appearance, and promotional attraction. Excessive consumption of such foods may affect healthy eating habits and reduce the intake of nutritious homemade meals.

Children

Children are young individuals who are in the stage of physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development. In the present study, children aged 6–12 years have been considered. This age period is important because children gradually develop independent choices, habits, and behavioral patterns during these years. They are highly sensitive to environmental influences such as family practices, peer groups, school environment, and media exposure. Children in this age group are more attracted toward visual advertisements and are likely to imitate the food preferences shown in media content. Their eating habits and consumer behavior are still developing, making them more vulnerable to the influence of food advertisements and marketing strategies.

4. Review of Literature

Ahmed and Khan (2020) observed that children influenced by advertisements frequently demanded chips, chocolates, and soft drinks from parents. Lee and Kim (2021) reported that increased screen exposure was associated with higher packaged food consumption among children. Sharma and Yadav (2022) found that children preferred advertised food products over homemade meals due to media influence. Gupta and Sinha (2023) concluded that children exposed to frequent food advertisements consumed more fast food and sugary snacks. Brown and Carter (2023) highlighted that cartoon characters and promotional offers strongly influence children’s food choices. Patel and Mehta (2024) observed that television and mobile advertisements strongly influenced children’s snack preferences and purchase demands. Johnson and Miller (2024) found that social media food promotions and celebrity endorsements increased children’s attraction toward unhealthy packaged foods. Singh and Verma (2025) reported that excessive junk food consumption negatively affected children’s concentration and emotional balance. Kumar and Sharma (2026) found that repeated exposure to digital food marketing increased children’s preference for packaged food products. These studies collectively indicate that food advertisements and media exposure significantly influence children’s packaged food consumption behavior and eating habits.

5. Methodology

(a) **Sample Techniques**-Sample for the present study consists of 50 parents of children of 6-12 age randomly selected from Jabalpur city.

Table No. – 1

Sample distribution

Area	Parents
Jabalpur	50

(b) Tool used

For the collection of data in the present study, the researcher used a self-constructed questionnaire entitled “Influence of Food Advertisements on Packaged Food Consumption among Children Aged 6–12 Years: A Parental Perspective Questionnaire.” The questionnaire was prepared according to the objectives and requirements of the study. The tool consisted of four sections. Section A included general information related to parents and children such as gender, educational qualification, occupation, family income, age of child, type of school, and area of residence. Section B focused on children’s packaged food consumption patterns including frequency of consumption, commonly consumed packaged foods, time of consumption, purchasing pattern, and weekly expenditure on packaged foods. Section C included items related to children’s exposure to food advertisements through television, YouTube, social media, mobile games, and other media sources. Section D consisted of statements related to parental perspectives regarding the influence of food advertisements on packaged food consumption among children. This section was based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The questionnaire was administered to the parents of children aged 6–12 years for collecting the required information related to packaged food consumption and advertisement influence among children.

(c) Data Analysis

In the present study, the data collected through the questionnaire was analyzed using the percentage method. The questionnaire consisted of different sections related to general information, packaged food consumption patterns, exposure to food advertisements, and parental perspectives regarding the influence of food advertisements on children’s packaged food consumption behavior. The responses obtained from parents in the Likert scale section were classified into five categories namely Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree. The frequency and percentage of responses for each statement were calculated to interpret parental perceptions regarding the influence of food advertisements on packaged food consumption among children aged 6–12 years. The percentage analysis helped in presenting the data in a simple, systematic, and meaningful manner for interpretation and discussion of the findings.

(d) Objective of the study

1. To study the influence of food advertisements on packaged food consumption among children aged 6–12 years from a parental perspective.

(e) Hypothesis of the study

Hypothesis 01 There will be no significant influence of food advertisements on packaged food consumption among children aged 6–12 years from a parental perspective.

Interpretation

Hypothesis 01 There will be no significant influence of food advertisements on packaged food consumption among children aged 6–12 years from a parental perspective.

Table No. – 2

Percentage Distribution of General Information of Parents and Children

SN	Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
1	Parent Gender	Male	24	48%

		Female	26	52%
2	Educational Qualification	School Level	10	20%
		Graduate	20	40%
		Postgraduate	15	30%
		Other	5	10%
3	Occupation	Teacher	7	14%
		Private Job	9	18%
		Business	8	16%
		Government Service	6	12%
		Housewife	9	18%
		Shopkeeper	4	8%
		Self-employed	4	8%
		Labour	3	6%
4	Monthly Family Income	Low Income	5	10%
		Lower-Middle Income	23	46%
		Upper-Middle Income	17	34%
		High Income	5	10%
5	Age of Child	6–9 Years	27	54%
		10–12 Years	23	46%
6	Gender of Child	Boy	26	52%
		Girl	24	48%
7	Type of School	Government	18	36%
		Private	32	64%
8	Area of Residence	Urban	50	100%
		Rural	0	0%

Table No. – 2 presents the percentage distribution of general information related to parents and children included in the study. Out of 50 parents, 48% were male and 52% were female. Regarding educational qualification, 40% of the parents were graduates, 30% were postgraduates, 20% had school-level education, and 10% belonged to other educational categories. In terms of occupation, the highest percentage of parents belonged to private jobs and housewives (18% each), followed by business (16%), teaching profession (14%), government service (12%), shopkeepers and self-employed categories (8% each), and labour class (6%). The findings further revealed that 46% of the families belonged to the lower-middle income group, while 34% belonged to the upper-middle income group. Only 10% each belonged to low-income and high-income categories. Regarding the age of children, 54% were in the age group of 6–9 years and 46% were in the age group of 10–12 years. Among the children, 52% were boys and 48% were girls. The majority of children (64%) studied in private schools, while 36% studied in government schools. All respondents (100%) belonged to urban areas of Jabalpur city.

The analysis of Table No. – 2 indicate that the study included parents from different educational, occupational, and income backgrounds. Most parents were graduates and belonged to lower-middle and upper-middle income groups. The majority of children studied in private schools and all respondents were from urban areas. The distribution of boys and girls as well as age groups was found to be nearly balanced in the study sample.

Table No. – 3

Percentage Distribution of Child’s Packaged Food Consumption Pattern

SN	Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
1	Frequency of Packaged Food Consumption	Daily	14	28%
		3–4 times a week	18	36%
		Once a week	11	22%
		Occasionally	7	14%
2	Most Frequently Consumed Packaged Foods	Chips/Snacks	15	30%
		Chocolates/Candies	10	20%
		Instant Noodles	8	16%
		Soft Drinks/Juices	7	14%
		Biscuits/Cookies	6	12%
		Frozen Foods	4	8%
3	Time of Packaged Food Consumption	Breakfast	6	12%
		School Time	15	30%
		Evening Snacks	22	44%
		Late Night	7	14%
4	Person Purchasing Packaged Foods	Parents	12	24%
		Child Demands and Parents Buy	28	56%
		Grandparents	6	12%
		Others	4	8%
5	Approximate Weekly Spending on Packaged Foods	Below ₹100	9	18%
		₹100–₹300	24	48%
		₹300–₹500	12	24%
		Above ₹500	5	10%

Table No. – 3 present the percentage distribution of children’s packaged food consumption patterns. The findings reveal that 36% of children consumed packaged foods 3–4 times a week, while 28% consumed packaged foods daily. About 22% consumed packaged foods once a week and 14% consumed them occasionally. Regarding the most frequently consumed packaged foods, chips and snacks were found to be the most preferred items among children (30%), followed by chocolates and candies (20%), instant noodles (16%), soft drinks and juices (14%), biscuits and cookies (12%), and frozen foods (8%). The data further indicate that the majority of children consumed packaged foods during evening snacks (44%), followed by school time (30%), late night (14%), and breakfast time (12%). In relation to purchasing behavior, 56% of parents reported that packaged foods were purchased after children demanded them, while 24% stated that parents themselves purchased packaged foods.

Grandparents accounted for 12% of purchases and others for 8%. Regarding weekly expenditure on packaged foods, 48% of families spent between ₹100–₹300, while 24% spent between ₹300–₹500. About 18% spent below ₹100 and only 10% spent above ₹500 per week on packaged food items.

The analysis of Table No. – 3 indicate that packaged food consumption among children was quite common, with most children consuming packaged foods multiple times during the week. Chips, snacks, chocolates, and instant noodles were found to be the most preferred packaged food products. Evening time and school time were identified as the major periods for packaged food consumption. The findings also reveal that children’s demands played an important role in the purchasing of packaged food items, and most families spent a moderate amount weekly on packaged foods.

Table No. – 4

Percentage Distribution of Exposure to Food Advertisements among Children

SN	Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
1	Frequency of Watching Food Advertisements	Very Frequently	16	32%
		Frequently	18	36%
		Sometimes	11	22%
		Rarely	5	10%
2	Source of Food Advertisements	Television	14	28%
		YouTube	16	32%
		Social Media	9	18%
		Mobile Games	7	14%
		Hoardings/Posters	4	8%
3	Most Attractive Advertisement Type	Cartoon Characters	15	30%
		Celebrity Endorsements	10	20%
		Free Gifts/Toys	8	16%
		Attractive Packaging	12	24%
		Jingles/Music	5	10%
4	Child Asking for Packaged Foods after Watching Advertisements	Always	13	26%
		Often	18	36%
		Sometimes	15	30%
		Never	4	8%
5	Influence of Advertisements on Food Preferences	Yes	32	64%
		No	6	12%
		Maybe	12	24%

Table No. – 4 present the percentage distribution of children’s exposure to food advertisements. The findings reveal that 36% of children frequently watched food advertisements, while 32% watched them very frequently. About 22% watched food advertisements sometimes and only 10% watched them rarely. Regarding the source of food advertisements, YouTube was found to be the most common source (32%), followed by television (28%), social media (18%), mobile games (14%), and hoardings or posters (8%). The data further indicate that cartoon characters were the most attractive advertisement

feature for children (30%), followed by attractive packaging (24%), celebrity endorsements (20%), free gifts or toys (16%), and jingles or music (10%). In relation to children’s demands for packaged foods after watching advertisements, 36% of parents reported that children often asked for packaged foods, while 26% reported always, 30% sometimes, and only 8% never asked for such products. The findings also reveal that 64% of parents believed that advertisements influenced their children’s food preferences, while 24% responded maybe and only 12% responded negatively.

The analysis of Table No. – 4 indicate that children were highly exposed to food advertisements through various media sources, especially YouTube and television. Cartoon characters, attractive packaging, and celebrity endorsements were found to be major factors attracting children toward food advertisements. The findings also reveal that food advertisements strongly influenced children’s demands and food preferences, as most parents reported that children frequently requested packaged food products after watching advertisements.

Table No. -5

Comparative Parental Perspective regarding the Influence of Food Advertisements on Packaged Food Consumption among Children

SN	Statements	Mother					Father				
		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
1	Food advertisements increase children’s demand for packaged foods.	3	4	6	1 9	1 8	4	5	7	1 8	1 6
2	Children are easily attracted by colorful packaging shown in advertisements.	2	5	7	2 0	1 6	3	6	8	1 9	1 4
3	Celebrity endorsements influence children’s food choices.	4	5	8	1 8	1 5	5	6	9	1 7	1 3
4	Advertisements encourage unhealthy eating habits among children.	3	4	6	1 7	2 0	4	5	7	1 8	1 6
5	My child prefers advertised foods over homemade foods.	5	7	1 0	1 6	1 2	6	8	1 1	1 5	1 0
6	Repeated advertisements increase children’s cravings for snacks/junk foods.	3	5	7	1 9	1 6	4	6	8	1 8	1 4
7	Food advertisements affect children’s purchasing behavior.	4	5	8	1 8	1 5	5	6	9	1 7	1 3
8	Parents find it difficult to refuse children’s demands for advertised foods.	5	6	9	1 7	1 3	6	7	1 0	1 6	1 1
9	Social media advertisements strongly influence children today.	3	4	7	1 8	1 8	4	5	8	1 7	1 6
10	Food advertisements should be regulated for children.	2	3	5	1 6	2 4	3	4	6	1 7	2 0
11	Watching food advertisements increases packaged food consumption among children.	3	4	6	1 9	1 8	4	5	7	1 8	1 6

12	Children believe advertised foods are healthier or tastier.	4	6	8	1 7	1 5	5	7	9	1 6	1 3
13	Attractive offers/free gifts in advertisements influence children’s demands.	3	5	7	1 8	1 7	4	6	8	1 7	1 5
14	Parents should educate children about healthy food choices.	1	2	4	1 5	2 8	2	3	5	1 6	2 4
15	Limiting screen time can reduce children’s exposure to food advertisements.	2	3	5	1 7	2 3	3	4	6	1 8	1 9

Table No. – 5 present the comparative parental perspective of mothers and fathers regarding the influence of food advertisements on packaged food consumption among children. The findings reveal that the majority of both mothers and fathers agreed that food advertisements increase children’s demand for packaged foods. Most parents also agreed that children are easily attracted by colorful packaging, celebrity endorsements, and attractive offers shown in advertisements. A large number of parents further reported that repeated exposure to advertisements increases children’s cravings for snacks and junk foods and influences their purchasing behavior. The data also indicate that both mothers and fathers believed that advertisements encourage unhealthy eating habits among children and increase packaged food consumption. Many parents agreed that social media advertisements strongly influence children in the present time. The majority of respondents also supported the opinion that food advertisements directed toward children should be regulated. Furthermore, most parents strongly agreed that parents should educate children about healthy food choices and that limiting screen time can reduce children’s exposure to food advertisements. Although slight differences were observed between mothers’ and fathers’ responses, the overall findings indicate that both groups shared similar perceptions regarding the strong influence of food advertisements on children’s packaged food consumption behavior.

The analysis of Table No. – 5 indicate that both mothers and fathers believed that food advertisements significantly influence children’s packaged food consumption habits, food preferences, and purchasing behavior. Colorful packaging, celebrity endorsements, and attractive promotional strategies were identified as important factors attracting children toward packaged food products. The findings also reveal that parents considered food advertisements responsible for encouraging unhealthy eating habits among children and emphasized the importance of parental guidance, healthy food education, and limited screen exposure for children.

Verification of the Hypothesis:

The data collected through Tables No. – 2, 3, 4, and 5 were analyzed using the percentage method to examine the influence of food advertisements on packaged food consumption among children from the parental perspective. The findings revealed that a large number of children frequently watched food advertisements through media sources such as YouTube, television, and social media. The majority of parents reported that children were attracted toward packaged foods because of cartoon characters, celebrity endorsements, colorful packaging, and attractive promotional offers. The results further indicated that most children demanded packaged food items after watching advertisements and those

advertisements significantly influenced children's food preferences and packaged food consumption behavior. Both mothers and fathers also agreed that food advertisements encourage unhealthy eating habits, increase children's cravings for junk foods, and affect children's purchasing behavior. On the basis of these findings, the null hypothesis stating that there will be no significant influence of food advertisements on packaged food consumption among children aged 6–12 years is rejected. Therefore, it may be concluded that food advertisements have a significant influence on packaged food consumption among children aged 6–12 years.

6. Conclusion:

The present study entitled “Influence of Food Advertisements on Packaged Food Consumption among Children Aged 6–12 Years: A Parental Perspective” was conducted to examine the influence of food advertisements on children's packaged food consumption behavior. The findings revealed that children are highly exposed to food advertisements through television, YouTube, social media, and other digital platforms. Cartoon characters, celebrity endorsements, colorful packaging, and attractive promotional offers were found to strongly attract children toward packaged food products. The study further revealed that food advertisements significantly influence children's food preferences, purchasing behavior, and demand for packaged foods such as chips, chocolates, noodles, snacks, and soft drinks. Both mothers and fathers believed that repeated exposure to food advertisements encourages unhealthy eating habits among children. On the basis of the findings, it can be concluded that food advertisements have a significant influence on packaged food consumption among children aged 6–12 years. The study emphasizes the importance of parental awareness, healthy food education, and controlled screen exposure for promoting healthy eating habits among children.

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