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## Review Research Paper

# The Role of Food Advertisements and Social Media on Adolescent Dietary Habits: A Comprehensive Literature Review

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## ARTICLE DETAILS

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## ABSTRACT

Adolescence, a crucial developmental phase, is marked by significant physical, cognitive, emotional, and social changes. During this period, dietary habits significantly influence long-term health. However, adolescents are highly susceptible to food advertisements, which often promote energy-dense, nutrient-poor products. This paper examines how such advertisements, particularly on social media, shape adolescents' dietary habits, leading to increased consumption of fast food, sugary snacks, and soft drinks, contributing to poor eating patterns and obesity. Celebrity endorsements, emotional appeals, and social media influencers further amplify these effects by shaping food preferences and normalizing unhealthy eating behaviors. The long-term impact includes the persistence of poor dietary habits into adulthood, increasing the risk of chronic diseases. The paper also explores strategies to mitigate these effects, including policy reforms, nutritional education, parental guidance, and leveraging health-focused influencers to promote better eating habits. A comprehensive, multi-pronged approach is essential to combat the negative influence of food advertising and support healthier adolescent behaviors.

## 1. Introduction

Adolescence is a critical phase of human development, typically spanning from ages 13 to 21, marked by significant physical, cognitive, emotional, and social transformations(1). Scholars such as G. Stanley Hall, Elizabeth Hurlock, John Blair, and John Onsuwell have extensively studied this period, each contributing valuable insights. Hall, known for describing adolescence as a time of 'storm and stress,' emphasized its distinct early and late phases, beginning with puberty and extending into the early twenties(2). Hurlock similarly acknowledged this age range but focused on the attainment of a stable identity as the culmination of adolescence(1). Blair and Onsuwell introduced additional complexity by highlighting cognitive and social milestones, such as the development of abstract thinking and social independence, suggesting that adolescence may extend beyond the teenage years(1).

Cultural perspectives from Indian and Greek philosophy further enrich this understanding. Indian philosophy, through the teachings of Swami Vivekananda and texts like the Manusmriti, views adolescence as a gradual process of self-discovery and moral growth, essential for societal roles. Plato's Greek philosophy similarly emphasizes adolescence as a period for shaping character and preparing for civic duties. In modern contexts, the concept of "emerging adulthood" acknowledges the delayed transition into adult roles, reflecting the evolving nature of this developmental stage. While the onset and progression of adolescence can vary between genders, with females typically entering puberty a year earlier than males at the age of 13, the cognitive and social developments during this period are crucial for forming a coherent sense of self and preparing for adulthood(1).

Adolescence is marked by significant physical, cognitive, and emotional changes. Physically, it begins with puberty, characterized by the development of secondary sexual characteristics and growth spurts. Cognitive advancements include the emergence of abstract thinking and reasoning, as noted by John Blair, allowing for better problem-solving and

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decision-making. Emotionally, Erik Erikson identifies this period as crucial for identity formation, where adolescents explore different roles and values, often leading to conflicts with authority figures(1). Peer relationships become central, offering a vital context for social learning and self-exploration. This phase of life is crucial for establishing lifelong health patterns, and developing healthy dietary habits is paramount during this time. The pervasive nature of food advertisements across television, radio, social media, and billboards plays a crucial role in shaping these choices. Designed to capture attention and evoke desire, these ads often promote unhealthy food options, making adolescents particularly susceptible to poor eating habits. The impact of food advertising varies among different demographic groups, influenced by factors such as socioeconomic status and access to healthy foods. To combat the negative effects of these advertisements, it is essential to promote healthy eating habits during adolescence. This comprehensive review explores the multifaceted role of food advertisements, their impact on different demographics, and the implications for public health. It further delves into the importance of cultivating healthy eating habits during adolescence and the impact it can have on an individual's future.

## 2. Significance of Developing Healthy Dietary Habits During Adolescence

Developing healthy dietary habits during adolescence is crucial for psychological, physiological, and behavioral well-being. Adolescence, a critical period of growth and development, demands increased nutritional needs to support the rapid changes occurring in the body and mind. The choices made during this stage not only influence immediate health but also set the foundation for long-term well-being. Understanding the importance of a balanced diet during adolescence from psychological, physiological, and behavioral perspectives highlights the need for promoting healthy eating habits.

### i. Psychological Significance

Psychologically, adolescence is a time of emotional and cognitive development, and diet plays a crucial role in supporting mental health. Studies, including those by Benton and Donohoe (1999), have shown that deficiencies in certain nutrients can significantly impact mood and cognitive function (3). For instance, a diet low in omega-3 fatty acids, vitamins (like B12, folate), and minerals (like zinc and magnesium) has been linked to an increased risk of depression, anxiety, and mood swings in adolescents. Omega-3 fatty acids, found in fish and nuts, are vital for brain development, and a deficiency in these can result in impaired cognitive function, reduced concentration, and memory issues. A study by Jacka et al. (2013) highlights the correlation between poor dietary habits and mental health disorders. Adolescents consuming high amounts of processed foods, sugary drinks, and fast food were more likely to report higher levels of psychological distress, including anxiety and depressive symptoms (4). Conversely, adolescents who consumed more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains had better mental health outcomes, suggesting that a nutrient-rich diet supports emotional well-being. The role of diet in managing stress is also significant. Adolescents are under various academic, social, and emotional pressures, and a poor diet can exacerbate the effects of stress. A systematic review by Shawon et al., (2023) highlighted that adolescents with unhealthy dietary patterns, such as inadequate fruit and vegetable intake and high consumption of sugary beverages, experienced higher rates of psychological distress, including symptoms of anxiety and depression. Girls, in particular, showed a greater prevalence of psychological distress associated with poor dietary choices compared to boys (5). Moreover, deficiencies in essential nutrients like iron, zinc, and vitamin B12 can lead to mental fatigue, irritability, and depression. Adolescents with poor dietary habits may experience difficulties in concentration, memory, and learning, affecting their academic performance and self-esteem. Establishing healthy eating patterns can enhance mental clarity, emotional stability, and resilience, enabling adolescents to cope better with stress and challenges. Additionally, fostering a positive relationship with food can prevent the development of eating disorders, which are prevalent during adolescence. Encouraging mindful eating and self-acceptance can help adolescents maintain a healthy body image and emotional balance.

### ii. Physiological Significance

From a physiological perspective, adolescence is marked by accelerated growth and development. Nutrition directly influences this process, as the body requires an increased intake of calories, proteins, vitamins, and minerals to support the growth spurts typical of this stage. Research by Spear (2002) underscores that calcium and vitamin D are essential during adolescence for proper bone development. Since peak bone mass is typically achieved by the end of adolescence, inadequate intake of these nutrients increases the risk of osteoporosis and other bone-related disorders later in life (6). Additionally, protein is critical for muscle growth and tissue repair, especially during the pubertal growth spurt. Adolescents engaged in sports or physical activities need higher amounts of protein to support muscle development. Studies have also shown that iron is a key nutrient for adolescents, especially girls, who experience menstruation and are at higher risk for iron-deficiency anemia. Iron is vital for energy production, and a deficiency can result in fatigue, reduced cognitive performance, and poor academic outcomes (7).

In terms of metabolic health, poor dietary habits during adolescence can lead to long-term consequences such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. A study by Dietz (1998) found that adolescents who regularly consume high amounts of processed foods and sugary beverages are at increased risk for obesity, which can persist into adulthood (8). Obesity during adolescence is often accompanied by metabolic issues such as insulin resistance, which can develop into type 2 diabetes if not addressed through proper dietary interventions. Healthy dietary habits are also linked to better physical activity levels. Adolescents who consume balanced meals are more likely to have the energy and stamina needed

to engage in regular physical activity, which is crucial for maintaining a healthy weight, building strong muscles and bones, and reducing the risk of chronic diseases.

### *iii. Behavioral Significance*

Adolescence is a period when many lifelong health habits are established. It is during adolescence that individuals build the dietary habits that will carry into adulthood, making it a critical time for instilling the importance of nutrition. Adolescence is a time of increased independence, where individuals begin to make their own food choices, often influenced by peer pressure, media, and cultural norms. Establishing healthy eating habits requires education and awareness about the benefits of good nutrition and the risks of poor dietary choices. According to Story et al. (2002), adolescents who develop healthy dietary habits, including regular consumption of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, are more likely to maintain these habits into adulthood (9). This continuity is vital for preventing chronic diseases and ensuring long-term well-being.

Furthermore, the development of self-regulation skills during adolescence is closely tied to dietary habits. Adolescents who are taught to make mindful food choices are more likely to exhibit better self-control in other areas of life, including academic performance and interpersonal relationships. For instance, teaching adolescents about portion control, the importance of balanced meals, and the impact of nutrition on energy levels can help them develop healthier behaviors, such as regular physical activity and improved sleep hygiene. A 2015 study by Loth et al. found that adolescents who regularly consume family meals tend to have better dietary habits and are less likely to engage in risky behaviors such as substance abuse (10). Family meals provide an opportunity for adolescents to learn about nutrition, portion sizes, and the importance of balanced meals, which positively influences their eating behaviors. Parents, educators, and healthcare providers play a crucial role in guiding adolescents toward healthy eating patterns by modeling positive behaviors and providing the necessary resources and support.

### **3. Advertisement, Social Media and Dietary Habits**

An advertisement is a form of communication intended to persuade or inform an audience about a product, service, or idea, often aiming to encourage specific actions like purchasing a product. Ads appear in various media, including print, television, radio, and digital platforms, and aim to capture attention, generate interest, and influence consumer behavior. There are several types of advertising: Print ads in newspapers and magazines, broadcast ads on TV and radio, and digital ads on websites and apps, such as banner and video ads. Outdoor advertising includes billboards and posters in public spaces, while native ads blend seamlessly with platform content. Social media ads on platforms like Facebook and Instagram target specific audiences, while search engine marketing (SEM) places ads at the top of search results. Influencer marketing involves individuals with large followings promoting products, while direct mail sends physical promotional materials to customers. Guerrilla marketing uses creative, low-cost methods to surprise audiences, such as street art or flash mobs.

Social media encompasses online platforms that allow users to create, share, and engage with content while interacting with others. These platforms, driven by user-generated content, enable communication and networking on a global scale. Social networking sites like Facebook and LinkedIn focus on building personal or professional connections. Media-sharing platforms such as Instagram and YouTube emphasize visual content, while microblogging platforms like Twitter allow short, frequent updates. Discussion forums like Reddit provide spaces for deeper community engagement, and messaging apps like WhatsApp facilitate real-time communication. Live streaming platforms such as Twitch allow users to broadcast live video, while blogging platforms like WordPress cater to longer-form content. Social bookmarking sites like Pinterest organize and share content, while collaborative platforms like Google Docs support group content creation. E-commerce platforms combine social media with online shopping, allowing users to buy and sell directly.

Both advertising and social media have reshaped global communication, interaction, and commerce, fostering greater connectivity across industries and communities. With the rise of digital media, adolescents are increasingly exposed to a wide range of food advertisements across various platforms, including television, social media, and mobile apps. This exposure often influences their food choices, consumption patterns, and ultimately, their overall health. Research has shown that food advertising, especially for unhealthy foods, can significantly impact adolescent eating behaviors, contributing to poor dietary habits and the rising prevalence of obesity.

#### *i. The Role of Food Advertisements in Shaping Dietary Habits of Adolescents*

Food advertisements play a significant role in shaping the dietary habits of adolescents, influencing their food preferences, consumption patterns, and long-term eating behaviors. Research has consistently shown that exposure to advertisements for unhealthy foods can lead to poor dietary choices, emotional eating, and increased risk of obesity. The use of social media, celebrity endorsements, and attractive branding further amplifies the impact of these advertisements on adolescents.

- *Influence of Television Advertisements on Adolescent Dietary Habits*

A landmark study by Boyland and Halford (2013) highlights the strong correlation between exposure to food advertisements on television and increased consumption of energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods among adolescents. The study found that food advertisements, particularly those for fast food, sugary snacks, and soft drinks, lead to increased

cravings and consumption of these unhealthy foods (11). This study is supported by the research of Harris et al. (2009), who demonstrated that television advertising significantly impacts the dietary choices of adolescents, leading them to favor foods high in fat, sugar, and salt (12).

- *The Power of Digital Marketing on Social Media*

With the growing influence of social media, food advertisements targeting adolescents have shifted to platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. A study by Coates et al. (2019) found that adolescents are highly influenced by social media advertisements for unhealthy foods, particularly when these ads are promoted by influencers. The study revealed that adolescents tend to trust influencers and are more likely to consume products endorsed by them, even if those products are unhealthy (13). This is consistent with the findings of Folkvord et al. (2016), who showed that food advertisements on social media platforms contribute to increased snacking and poor dietary choices among adolescents (14).

- *Impact of Celebrity Endorsements on Food Choices*

The use of celebrities in food advertisements has been shown to have a significant impact on adolescent food preferences. Dixon et al. (2015) conducted a study examining the influence of celebrity endorsements on the food choices of adolescents and found that endorsements by popular figures increased the likelihood of adolescents choosing unhealthy food products. The study concluded that the use of celebrities in food advertisements can override nutritional knowledge and lead to poor dietary decisions (15). Similarly, research by Boyland et al. (2013) also supports this finding, demonstrating that celebrity endorsements of unhealthy foods increase the likelihood of adolescents consuming these products (11).

- *Food Advertising and Emotional Eating*

Research by Anschutz et al. (2009) explores the connection between food advertisements and emotional eating among adolescents. The study found that food advertisements, particularly those promoting high-calorie, low-nutrient foods, can trigger emotional eating behaviors in adolescents, especially those who are already prone to stress or anxiety (16). These advertisements often use emotional appeals that resonate with adolescents, encouraging them to eat for comfort rather than hunger. This finding is echoed by the work of Scully et al. (2012), who also identified a link between food advertisements and emotional eating, particularly in response to stressful situations (17).

- *The Role of Food Packaging and Branding*

Food advertisements often emphasize branding and packaging, which can significantly influence adolescent food choices. A study by Robinson et al. (2007) showed that adolescents are more likely to choose foods that are attractively packaged or associated with well-known brands. This is particularly true for junk food, which is often marketed using bright colors, appealing imagery, and fun characters. The study demonstrated that branding can have a stronger influence on adolescents than nutritional content, leading them to prefer unhealthy foods (18). This finding is supported by the research of Harris et al. (2019), who found that branding plays a key role in shaping adolescents' food preferences, often leading them to choose calorie-dense, nutrient-poor foods (19).

- *Food Advertising and the Development of Taste Preferences*

Food advertisements often shape the development of taste preferences in adolescents. A study by Smith et al. (2011) found that repeated exposure to advertisements for sugary foods and beverages can lead to a preference for sweet tastes, which may persist into adulthood (20). This study is supported by the work of Grier et al. (2007), who demonstrated that food advertisements, particularly those targeting adolescents, often emphasize taste over nutrition, leading to the development of preferences for unhealthy, hyper-palatable foods (21).

- *Long-Term Impact of Food Advertising on Eating Behaviors*

Research by Cairns et al. (2013) highlights the long-term impact of food advertising on adolescents' eating behaviors. The study found that adolescents who are regularly exposed to advertisements for unhealthy foods are more likely to develop poor eating habits that persist into adulthood (22). These habits include frequent consumption of fast food, sugary snacks, and sugary beverages, all of which are linked to long-term health issues such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. This finding is consistent with the research of Veerman et al. (2009), who showed that exposure to unhealthy food advertisements during adolescence is a significant predictor of unhealthy eating behaviors later in life (23).

- *Food Advertising and Obesity*

Several studies have explored the link between food advertising and the rising rates of obesity among adolescents. A study by Powell et al. (2013) found that increased exposure to food advertisements, particularly those promoting fast food and sugary snacks, is strongly correlated with higher rates of obesity among adolescents. The study concluded that food advertisements contribute to overeating and the consumption of calorie-dense, nutrient-poor foods, which in turn leads to weight gain (24). This is consistent with the findings of Lobstein et al. (2004), who also identified a strong link between food advertising and the global obesity epidemic among adolescents (25).

*ii. The Role of Social Media in Shaping Dietary Habits of Adolescents*

Social media has become an integral part of the daily lives of adolescents, influencing various aspects of their behavior, including their dietary habits. Adolescents, who are highly active on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Snapchat, are constantly exposed to a wide range of food-related content, including advertisements, influencer promotions, and peer-shared experiences. The pervasive nature of social media, combined with its personalized and interactive environment, makes it a powerful tool for shaping the food choices and eating behaviors of adolescents.

- *Social Media as a Source of Nutrition Information*

Social media platforms often serve as primary sources of nutrition information for adolescents, shaping their perceptions of what constitutes healthy or trendy eating. A study by Levinson et al. (2021) found that adolescents often turn to social media influencers and content creators for dietary advice, which can sometimes be misleading or promote unhealthy behaviors. This research highlights the role of social media in presenting certain foods as "superfoods" or creating fad diets that appeal to the younger generation, even if they lack scientific backing (26). Similarly, Tiggemann and Slater (2014) demonstrated that social media exposes adolescents to a variety of food-related content that can influence their perceptions of health and nutrition, sometimes encouraging extreme or restrictive eating patterns (27).

- *Influencer Marketing and Its Impact on Adolescents' Food Choices*

Influencer marketing has become a dominant force in shaping adolescent dietary habits. Social media influencers, who have large followings and significant influence over young audiences, frequently promote foods and beverages, often without disclosing the nutritional information. Coates et al. (2019) found that adolescents are more likely to trust food recommendations from influencers, which directly impacts their food choices. This study revealed that influencers promoting unhealthy foods, such as sugary snacks and fast food, can lead to increased consumption of these products among adolescents (13). The work of De Veirman et al. (2017) supports this finding, showing that adolescents who follow influencers with large followings are more likely to adopt their dietary behaviors, even if those behaviors are unhealthy. Influencers are seen as relatable role models, and their food choices can normalize poor eating habits, contributing to unhealthy dietary patterns among adolescents (28).

- *Peer Influence and Social Media Sharing*

Social media also facilitates peer influence, as adolescents are often exposed to the food choices and eating habits of their friends through shared posts and photos. A study by Holmberg et al. (2018) found that adolescents are influenced by the eating behaviors of their peers on social media, particularly when it comes to indulgent or trendy foods. The research suggests that adolescents are more likely to try new foods or adopt certain eating behaviors when they see their peers engaging in similar practices online (29). This peer-driven behavior can contribute to the normalization of unhealthy eating habits, such as frequent consumption of fast food, sugary drinks, and highly processed snacks. Similarly, the research by Hsu et al. (2017) showed that social media reinforces social norms around eating, as adolescents are likely to emulate the dietary behaviors of their peer groups to fit in or gain social approval (30). This can lead to the reinforcement of unhealthy eating patterns if those behaviors are widespread among their peer networks.

- *Body Image and Dieting Trends on Social Media*

Body image concerns are prevalent among adolescents, and social media often exacerbates these concerns by promoting unrealistic beauty standards. Research by Perloff (2014) found that exposure to idealized body images on social media platforms, particularly Instagram, can lead to body dissatisfaction among adolescents. In response, many adolescents turn to dieting or restrictive eating behaviors to achieve these ideals (31). A study by Cohen et al. (2017) showed that adolescents who are exposed to fitspiration (fitness inspiration) content on social media are more likely to engage in restrictive eating behaviors and express dissatisfaction with their bodies (32). Furthermore, Tiggemann and Slater (2017) demonstrated that adolescents who frequently consume content related to dieting, detoxes, or body transformation challenges on social media are more likely to adopt unhealthy dieting practices, such as extreme calorie restriction or the use of diet supplements (33). These trends can negatively impact adolescent health by promoting disordered eating behaviors and an unhealthy relationship with food.

- *The Role of Food Advertising on Social Media Platforms*

Food advertising on social media platforms plays a significant role in shaping adolescent food choices. Harris et al. (2019) found that social media platforms, such as Instagram and YouTube, are rife with food advertisements, particularly for unhealthy products like sugary beverages, fast food, and snacks high in fat and sugar (19). These advertisements are often targeted at adolescents using algorithms that consider their preferences and browsing behavior. A study by Kelly et al. (2015) examined the impact of food advertising on social media and found that adolescents who are frequently exposed to advertisements for unhealthy foods are more likely to crave and consume those products (34). The personalized nature of these ads, which are often designed to be engaging and visually appealing, makes them particularly effective in influencing adolescent dietary behaviors.

- *Social Media Challenges and Viral Food Trends*

Viral food trends and challenges on social media can significantly impact adolescent dietary habits. A study by Turner and Lefevre (2017) analyzed the effects of viral food challenges, such as the "Mukbang" trend (eating large quantities of food on camera), and found that adolescents are more likely to overeat or consume unhealthy foods when participating in these challenges. The study revealed that the social validation and peer approval associated with these challenges encourage adolescents to engage in unhealthy eating behaviors (35). Similarly, the research by Holmberg et al. (2021) showed that viral food trends, such as the promotion of novelty foods like rainbow bagels or extreme milkshakes, can lead to increased consumption of highly processed, calorie-dense foods among adolescents (36). These trends often emphasize appearance and entertainment value over nutritional content, encouraging adolescents to prioritize taste and aesthetics over health.

- *The Impact of Social Media on Food-Related Decision Making*

Social media influences not only what adolescents eat but also how they make food-related decisions. A study by Feldman et al. (2019) found that adolescents rely heavily on social media for inspiration and guidance when it comes to meal planning, cooking, and dining out. The study revealed that adolescents often look to platforms like Pinterest, YouTube, and Instagram for recipe ideas, meal prep techniques, and restaurant recommendations (37). However, the content they encounter is not always nutritionally balanced, and the emphasis on visually appealing, trendy foods can lead to poor dietary decisions. Research by Chau et al. (2018) supports this finding, showing that adolescents often prioritize convenience and aesthetics over nutritional value when making food-related decisions based on social media content (38). This can result in a preference for fast food or highly processed convenience foods, which are frequently promoted on social media platforms.

- *Cultural and Socioeconomic Factors in Social Media's Influence on Diet*

The influence of social media on adolescent dietary habits can vary based on cultural and socioeconomic factors. A study by Vartanian et al. (2015) found that adolescents from different cultural backgrounds are exposed to varying food-related content on social media, which can shape their dietary habits in different ways. For example, adolescents from cultures that emphasize home-cooked meals may be less influenced by fast food advertisements, while those from more urbanized or Westernized cultures may be more susceptible to unhealthy food trends (39). Additionally, a study by Choi et al. (2017) explored the role of socioeconomic status in shaping the impact of social media on adolescent dietary habits. The research found that adolescents from lower-income families are more likely to be influenced by social media advertisements for fast food and unhealthy snacks, as these options are often more affordable and accessible (40).

#### **4. Mitigating the Effects of Food Advertisement and Social Media on Adolescent Dietary Habits**

The pervasive influence of food advertisements and social media has become a major factor shaping adolescents' dietary choices, often leading them toward unhealthy eating habits. To counteract these effects, a multi-pronged approach that combines policy interventions, education, parental involvement, and behavior-focused strategies such as mindful eating and nudging is crucial. These strategies, supported by evidence from various studies, can help promote healthier dietary behaviors among adolescents.

##### *i. Policy Interventions*

Government regulations play a vital role in reducing adolescents' exposure to unhealthy food marketing. Several studies have examined the role of government regulation in limiting the impact of food advertisements on adolescents. A study by Boyland et al. (2016) found that government regulations limiting the advertising of unhealthy foods during children's television programming have been somewhat effective in reducing exposure to such ads (41). However, the study also noted that many adolescents still encounter unhealthy food advertisements through other media, such as social media and online streaming platforms. This finding is supported by the research of Hastings et al. (2003), who argued that while regulations can reduce exposure, they need to be expanded to cover a wider range of media to be truly effective (42).

##### *ii. Education and Media Literacy*

Educational programs, especially those focusing on media literacy and nutrition, are essential for equipping adolescents with the tools to critically assess food advertisements. Media literacy programs teach students how advertising manipulates their desires and behaviors. A study by Austin et al. (2005) demonstrated that adolescents who received media literacy training were significantly less likely to be influenced by food advertisements compared to those who did not receive such training (43). Similarly, integrating nutritional education into school curricula helps build awareness about healthy eating habits. Public health campaigns, such as the "5 A Day" initiative, aim to promote increased fruit and vegetable consumption, counteracting the glamorization of unhealthy foods in ads. These campaigns, combined with regular school-based programs, can encourage lifelong healthy eating habits.

##### *iii. Parental Involvement*

The role of parents in mitigating the impact of food advertisements on adolescents has been explored in several studies. A study by Buijzen and Valkenburg (2003) found that parental mediation, such as discussing the content of food advertisements with adolescents, can reduce the influence of these ads on their dietary choices. The study showed that when parents engage in conversations about healthy eating and the manipulative nature of food advertisements, adolescents are more likely to make healthier food choices (44). This finding is supported by the research of Rozendaal et

al. (2011), who also emphasized the importance of parental involvement in helping adolescents navigate the influence of food advertising (45). Parents can also foster healthy eating by involving adolescents in meal planning and preparation. Studies suggest that adolescents who participate in family meals are more likely to consume balanced diets rich in fruits and vegetables. The home environment, when supported by positive parental influence, plays a protective role against the impact of unhealthy food marketing.

#### iv. *Social Media and Influencers*

Social media can be both a challenge and an opportunity for promoting healthy eating. Influencers have a powerful effect on adolescents' food choices, and collaborating with health-focused influencers can shift the tide in favor of better dietary habits. Studies like those by Coates et al. (2019) have demonstrated the significant role that influencers play in shaping adolescents' food choices, suggesting that partnerships with influencers promoting healthy eating can reduce the consumption of unhealthy foods (13). A study by Hingle and Yoon (2013) found that social media campaigns promoting fruits, vegetables, and other healthy foods can positively influence adolescent food choices. The study revealed that adolescents are more likely to engage with content that promotes healthy eating when it is presented in a relatable, engaging manner, such as through challenges, recipes, or influencer endorsements (46).

Similarly, a study by Holmberg et al. (2019) demonstrated that adolescents who follow social media accounts dedicated to healthy eating, fitness, or wellness are more likely to adopt healthier dietary habits (47). These accounts often share tips for balanced eating, meal prepping, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle, providing adolescents with the tools and inspiration they need to make better food choices. Moreover, peer-led campaigns on platforms like Instagram and TikTok can make healthy eating more relatable and desirable to adolescents, potentially fostering positive behavior change. These initiatives can compete with the constant flow of advertisements for unhealthy foods that dominate social media.

#### v. *Improving Food Environments and Behavioral Interventions*

Creating healthier food environments is another key to improving dietary habits among adolescents. Schools can offer nutritious meals and snacks, while retailers can promote healthy foods in ways that attract adolescents' attention. Here, the strategy of "nudging" has shown to be highly effective. Research on nudging has demonstrated that subtle environmental changes—such as positioning healthier food options at eye level or providing smaller portion sizes—can significantly influence food choices without restricting options. A 2014 study by van Kleef et al. found that these strategies increased the selection of healthy snacks among adolescents by 9-16% (48).

Mindful eating is another intervention that has been shown to improve dietary habits. Mindful eating encourages individuals to pay close attention to their hunger cues and the sensory experience of eating, helping them make more conscious and healthy food choices. A study by Alberts et al. (2012) found that mindful eating interventions reduced emotional eating and increased the consumption of healthier foods in adolescents, providing a simple yet effective method for mitigating the influence of junk food advertising and social media (49).

### 5. Conclusion

The dietary habits that adolescents develop are crucial for their long-term health and well-being, yet the pervasive influence of food advertisements, particularly on social media, poses a significant challenge. Studies have demonstrated a direct correlation between exposure to such advertisements and increased consumption of fast food, sugary beverages, and snacks, which contributes to the rising rates of obesity and other health issues. Additionally, celebrity endorsements and influencer marketing have been shown to further exacerbate poor dietary choices, as adolescents tend to emulate the eating behaviors promoted by their favorite public figures. The long-term impact of food advertisements is concerning, with many adolescents carrying unhealthy eating habits into adulthood, resulting in chronic conditions such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

However, there are ways to mitigate these negative effects. Policy interventions that limit the exposure of unhealthy food advertisements, especially on social media and during children's programming, have proven to be effective to some extent. Expanding these regulations to include a broader range of media platforms is essential to protect adolescents from harmful marketing. Educational programs, particularly those focused on media literacy, play a crucial role in equipping adolescents with the tools to critically assess food advertisements. Additionally, parental involvement is vital in fostering healthy eating habits, as discussions about nutrition and the manipulative nature of advertising can encourage adolescents to make healthier food choices. Social media can also be leveraged to promote positive behaviors by collaborating with influencers who endorse healthy eating and fitness. Lastly, creating healthier food environments in schools and public spaces, coupled with behavior-focused strategies like nudging and mindful eating, can help adolescents make better dietary choices. Through these combined efforts, it is possible to counter the negative influence of food advertisements and foster a culture of healthy eating that will benefit adolescents throughout their lives.

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