

The Gap Between Food Advertising And Actual Product Quality

Divya Zute¹, Ujwal wagh², Nancy pandit³, Mayur Mahajan⁴, Jidnyasa Mor⁵, Rohit Mahajan⁶, Dhruv Sharma⁷

^{1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7} Indira institute of management pune,

Abstract- *In today's world, food advertisements play a big role in influencing what people buy and eat. Companies often use attractive pictures, catchy slogans, and celebrity endorsements to make their products look more appealing and healthy than they really are. However, there is often a big difference between what is shown in advertisements and the actual quality or nutritional value of the food. This research aims to study how food advertising can create false expectations among consumers, especially among children and young adults. It will also explore how misleading marketing affects buying decisions, trust in brands, and public health. The study will collect data from advertisements, product labels, and customer surveys to compare the advertised claims with the real ingredients and quality. The goal is to highlight the importance of honest food marketing and to suggest ways to make consumers more aware of the reality behind food ads.*

Keywords- Food advertising, Product quality, Consumer perception, Misleading marketing, Brand trust, Consumer awareness, Advertising ethics, Food labeling, Marketing strategies, Nutritional value

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's modern world, food advertisements are everywhere — on television, social media, billboards, and even mobile apps. These ads are designed to attract customers by showing tasty, colorful, and perfectly presented food items. Many companies use creative visuals, celebrity promotions, and catchy slogans to make their products look healthy, fresh, and high in quality. However, when people actually buy and taste these products, they often find that the real quality, taste, or nutritional value does not match what was shown in the advertisement.

This difference between what is advertised and what is real is known as the “gap” between food advertising and actual product quality. Such misleading advertisements can create false expectations and influence consumer buying behavior. They can also affect public health, especially when unhealthy products are promoted as nutritious or beneficial. This study aims to understand how food advertising impacts consumers' beliefs and decisions. It will also explore how

accurate information and honest marketing can build better trust between companies and consumers.

Food Advertising :

Food advertising means the way companies promote or market their food products to attract customers. It includes things like TV commercials, social media posts, posters, billboards, and online videos that show food in an attractive way.

The main goal of food advertising is to make people want to buy or try the product. To do this, companies use bright colors, delicious-looking pictures, catchy slogans, music, and even celebrities. For example, a burger may look big and juicy in an ad, but in real life, it might be smaller and less fresh.

Sometimes, food advertisements can be misleading because they focus more on looks and emotions rather than the real quality or nutrition of the food. That's why it's important for consumers to think carefully and read product labels before believing what they see in ads.

Product Quality :

Product quality means how good or reliable a product is when compared to what customers expect. In simple words, it shows whether the product works well, tastes good, looks fresh, and gives value for money.

For food products, quality means freshness, taste, safety, hygiene, and the right nutritional value. A high-quality food product should match what is promised on its packaging or in advertisements. If a company shows healthy food in ads but sells something full of chemicals or low in nutrition, then the product quality is poor.

Good product quality helps companies build trust, keep customers happy, and stand out in the market.

Consumer Perception :

Consumer perception means how people see, understand, and feel about a product or brand. It is the image or opinion that forms in a person’s mind based on what they see in advertisements, packaging, price, and personal experience.

For example, if an ad shows a snack as healthy and natural, people may believe it is good for them — even if it is not. This shows that advertising can strongly influence consumer perception. Sometimes, people’s perception of a product is different from the actual quality or truth about it.

Understanding consumer perception is important for companies because it affects buying decisions, brand loyalty, and overall sales.



Brand Trust



Brand trust means how much people believe in and rely on a brand. When customers trust a brand, they feel confident that its products are safe, high-quality, and exactly as advertised. Trust is built over time through honest marketing, good customer experiences, and consistent product quality.

For example, if a food company always delivers fresh and tasty products just like its advertisements show, customers will trust that brand and buy from it again. But if the company’s ads are misleading or the food quality is poor, people lose trust quickly.

Brand trust is very important because it helps a company keep loyal customers and maintain a good reputation in the market.



Advertising Ethics

Advertising ethics means following moral rules and honest practices while creating and showing advertisements. It is about making sure that ads tell the truth and do not mislead or harm people.

In the case of food advertising, ethics means not showing false information about how healthy, tasty, or natural a product is. For example, if a company claims that a sugary drink is “good for health,” that would be unethical because it can mislead consumers, especially children.

Ethical advertising helps build trust, protects consumers, and improves the brand’s reputation. Companies that follow advertising ethics focus on honesty, transparency, and social responsibility.

Advertising ethics means doing marketing in a fair, honest, and responsible way. It is about showing the truth and not trying to trick or mislead consumers just to sell more products. Ethical advertising respects the customer’s right to know what they are really buying.

In the food industry, following advertising ethics is very important because food directly affects people’s health. Many food companies, however, use attractive pictures, fancy words, or emotional stories to make their products look healthier or better than they actually are. For example, chips may be advertised as “baked and healthy,” even though they

still contain high amounts of oil and salt. Similarly, sugary cereals may be marketed as “full of energy” for kids, hiding the fact that they are high in sugar.

When companies cross ethical limits, it can create a gap between the advertisement and the real product quality. Such unethical ads can harm consumer trust, damage brand reputation, and even lead to legal action.

Ethical food advertising means:

Being truthful about ingredients and nutrition.

Avoiding exaggerated claims like “100% natural” or “completely healthy” if it’s not true.

Not targeting children with misleading or unhealthy food ads.

Clearly showing information such as calories, sugar, and fat levels.

Marketing Strategy :

A marketing strategy is a plan that companies use to promote and sell their products or services to customers. It includes the steps a business takes to attract people, convince them to buy, and keep them satisfied. A good marketing strategy focuses on understanding what customers need, setting the right price, choosing where to sell, and deciding how to advertise the product.

In the food industry, marketing strategies often include colorful packaging, attractive advertisements, discounts, and celebrity endorsements to make products look appealing. However, sometimes these strategies focus more on creating excitement than on showing the real quality of the food. This can lead to a gap between what is advertised and what consumers actually get.

An ethical marketing strategy should be honest, customer-focused, and highlight the true quality of the product. When companies use fair and transparent marketing methods, they build long-term trust and brand loyalty among consumers.

Marketing Strategy

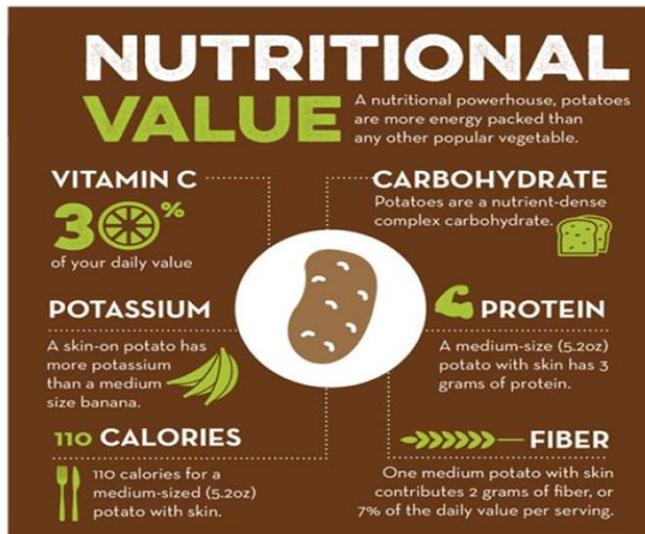


Nutritional Value

Nutritional value means the amount of nutrients — like proteins, vitamins, minerals, carbohydrates, fats, and fiber — that a food product gives to our body. It tells us how healthy or beneficial a particular food is. Foods with high nutritional value help us stay strong, energetic, and disease-free.

In food advertising, many products are shown as “healthy” or “full of nutrition,” but in reality, some of them may contain too much sugar, salt, or fat. For example, a snack may be advertised as “rich in vitamins,” but the actual nutritional label may show it has more calories and preservatives than nutrients.

Knowing the real nutritional value helps consumers make better food choices. Companies should show true and clear information about the nutrients in their products so that people can trust what they eat. Honest labeling and advertising help reduce the gap between what is promised and what is actually delivered.



Future Perspective

In the future, food advertising is likely to become more transparent and responsible as consumers are becoming smarter and more aware. People today check labels, read reviews, and compare products before buying. This change is pushing companies to focus on honesty rather than false attraction. Governments and food authorities may also introduce stricter rules to ensure that advertisements match the real quality of food products.

Technology, like AI and digital tracking, can also help monitor misleading ads and promote fair marketing. Consumers will expect clear information about ingredients, nutrition, and health effects. Therefore, the future of food advertising will depend on how companies balance creativity with truth. Ethical and transparent advertising will not only protect consumers but also help brands build long-term trust and loyalty.

II. CONCLUSION

Food advertising has a strong influence on what people choose to buy and eat. However, there is often a big difference between what is shown in advertisements and the real quality of the product. Many companies focus more on attractive presentation than on truth, which can mislead consumers and affect their health and trust.

This research highlights the need for honesty and ethics in food marketing. When advertisements match the actual product quality, it helps build brand trust and customer satisfaction. Companies should focus on transparency, clear labeling, and responsible advertising. In the long run, truthful

and ethical advertising not only benefits consumers but also helps brands grow with a positive reputation.

Acknowledgment

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who supported and guided me throughout this research. I am especially thankful to my guide and faculty members for their valuable suggestions, encouragement, and constant motivation. Their insights helped me understand the topic more deeply.

I would also like to thank my friends, classmates, and family for their continuous support and cooperation during this study. Finally, I am grateful to all the respondents and sources that provided information and data, which made this research possible.

REFERENCES

- [1] Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). *Marketing Management* (15th ed.). Pearson Education.
- [2] Belch, G. E., & Belch, M. A. (2021). *Advertising and Promotion: An Integrated Marketing Communications Perspective*. McGraw-Hill Education.
- [3] Dixon, H., Scully, M., & Wakefield, M. (2020). The impact of unhealthy food advertising on children's food choices. *Public Health Nutrition*, 23(2), 291–299.
- [4] Singh, R., & Kaur, J. (2019). Consumer perception towards food advertisements and actual product quality. *International Journal of Marketing Studies*, 11(3), 45–52.
- [5] World Health Organization (WHO). (2021). *Guidelines on Restricting Food Marketing to Children*. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int>
- [6] Hastings, G., Stead, M., McDermott, L., Forsyth, A., & MacKintosh, A. (2003). Review of Research on the Effects of Food Promotion to Children. Food Standards Agency.
- [7] Kotler, P., Kartajaya, H., & Setiawan, I. (2021). *Marketing 5.0: Technology for Humanity*. Wiley.
- [8] Sharma, A., & Kaur, P. (2020). Ethical issues in food advertising: A study of misleading claims. *Journal of Business Ethics and Marketing*, 8(1), 12–20.
- [9] Gunter, B., Oates, C., & Blades, M. (2005). *Advertising to Children on TV: Content, Impact and Regulation*. Routledge.
- [10] Verma, S., & Kapoor, S. (2022). The influence of misleading food ads on consumer trust and brand loyalty. *Asian Journal of Marketing Research*, 14(2), 98–110.
- [11] Kaur, H., & Singh, M. (2018). Comparative study between food advertisement and real product quality.

- International Journal of Consumer Studies, 42(5), 455–462.
- [12] Gupta, R., & Bhattacharya, P. (2019). Ethical dimensions of food marketing: The Indian perspective. *Indian Journal of Marketing*, 49(7), 34–41.
- [13] Harris, J. L., & Graff, S. K. (2012). Protecting young people from harmful food marketing: Legal approaches and policy options. *Health Promotion International*, 27(3), 331–341.
- [14] Story, M., & French, S. (2004). Food advertising and marketing directed at children and adolescents. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 1(3), 1–17.
- [15] Kumar, V., & Yadav, N. (2021). The relationship between advertising ethics and consumer trust in the food industry. *Journal of Business and Social Review in Emerging Economies*, 7(2), 201–214.