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Impact Of Celebrity Endorsements In Tv Commercials On Children's Food Choices: A Study With Reference To Fast-Food Products In Gujarat State

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Abstract:

This study explores the impact of celebrity endorsements in TV commercials on children's food choices, with a specific focus on fast-food products in Gujarat. The research aimed to determine whether these endorsements significantly influence children's preferences and consumption behavior. Data were collected from 100 respondents, primarily parents, using a structured questionnaire designed to measure perceptions and concerns regarding the role of celebrity endorsements in shaping fast-food choices. The results revealed that a significant majority of parents believe celebrity endorsements make fast food more appealing to children, with many acknowledging that their children prefer brands promoted by famous celebrities. Statistical analysis using a one-sample t-test confirmed a significant relationship between celebrity endorsements and children's fast-food choices, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (p < 0.05). The study also highlighted parental concerns about the influence of such advertisements, with many advocating for regulatory measures to limit celebrity endorsements targeted at children. These findings underscore the need for more responsible advertising practices to promote healthier food choices among young consumers in Gujarat.

Keywords: Celebrity endorsements, TV commercials, children's food choices, fast-food products, advertising influence, consumer behavior, Gujarat, parental concerns, brand preference, regulatory measures.

1. INTRODUCTION

Celebrity endorsement is one of the most popular tools in marketing communication and has been profusely used in order to promote brands, products and services. In fact, the use of celebrity endorsement as a method of communication has increased significantly in recent years and has become a relevant phenomenon worldwide. The reason is its great effectiveness as a communication tool, its positive impact on consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions for the endorsed good (Calvo-Porral & Lévy-Mangin, 2024), as well as its influence on consumers' purchase behavior, brand awareness and brand recognition (Zhao et al., 2022).

The influence of celebrity endorsements on consumer behavior has long been a topic of interest for marketers, especially in industries that target young audiences (Osei-Frimpong et al., 2019). In recent years, television commercials featuring celebrities have become a prevalent tool for fast-food brands to capture the attention of children. In India, particularly in Gujarat, the fast-food industry has witnessed significant growth, coinciding with a rise in obesity and unhealthy eating patterns among children (Bragg et al., 2020). The nexus between fast-food advertising, celebrity endorsements, and children's food choices has raised concerns about the potential impact on health and lifestyle, making this an important area of study.

Children are particularly impressionable when exposed to media content, including television commercials. They tend to identify with celebrities and emulate their behaviors, including food preferences. Fast-food brands capitalize on this by associating their products with well-known personalities, thus creating a favorable image and promoting consumption. Celebrity endorsements, especially by actors, athletes, and popular public figures, act as powerful tools in shaping children's perception of food. Studies have shown that children are more likely to request

and consume food products that are endorsed by their favorite celebrities, often without discerning the nutritional value or health impact (Malik et al., 2021).

The Indian fast-food market, dominated by brands like McDonald's, KFC, and Domino's, has increasingly relied on celebrity endorsements to create brand loyalty among younger audiences. Advertisements often showcase celebrities consuming fast food in fun and engaging settings, associating such products with enjoyment, status, and modern lifestyles. For children, these messages are persuasive, often leading to increased demand for unhealthy fast-food products. Gujarat, a culturally vibrant state, has witnessed a surge in fast-food consumption among the younger population, with TV commercials playing a significant role in shaping food preferences (Christian & Gereffi, 2018).

Research shows that marketing techniques targeting children can have long-lasting impacts on their dietary habits. Television commercials, particularly those featuring celebrities, have the power to sway food choices toward energy-dense, nutrient-poor options, contributing to public health concerns such as childhood obesity, diabetes, and other lifestyle diseases. This raises ethical questions about the responsibility of advertisers and celebrities in promoting products that may be detrimental to children's health (Albuquerque et al., 2018).

This study aims to explore the extent to which celebrity endorsements in TV commercials influence children's food choices, specifically in relation to fast-food products in Gujarat. By analyzing the relationship between celebrity-driven advertising and children's preferences, the study seeks to understand how such endorsements shape consumer behavior at a young age. Furthermore, it will investigate the perceptions of parents regarding these advertisements and their role in influencing family purchasing decisions.

Given the growing concerns around childhood obesity and the aggressive marketing strategies of fast-food brands, this research will contribute to the broader discourse on the regulation of advertising targeted at children. The findings could provide valuable insights for policymakers, parents, and educators, helping to develop strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of such marketing on children's health and well-being.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Calvo-Porral et al., (2021) This question remains unsolved despite celebrities are constantly recommend different products in their social media networks. Much of the literature of celebrity endorsement focuses on the characteristics of celebrities influencing consumers' behavior; but there is scarce research about how celebrity endorsements about food and food products influences consumers' behavior. In this context and based on the source credibility and source attractiveness models, as well as on the match-up theory, this study aims to examine whether consumers' food purchase intention and consumers' willingness to pay a premium price is influenced by celebrity endorsement. For this purpose, an empirical research is developed through Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) based on data gathered from 316 consumers who read celebrity recommendations. Findings report that consumers are mostly influenced in their food consumption behavior by the congruence between the celebrity endorsement and the product being recommended, and by the celebrity credibility. Interestingly, celebrity recommendations show a similar influencing pattern both for consumers' food purchase intention and consumers' willingness to pay a premium price for food. The major contribution of this research is to show that congruence is the main route to influence food consumption behavior by celebrity endorsement.

Ponce-Blandón et al., (2020) The purpose of this study was to know if exposure to commercial messages which advertise food products exerts any effect on the short-term consumption preferences of 4-to 6-year-old children. (2) A double-blind and randomized experimental design. Sample consisted of 421 boys and girls from twelve schools in a city in Spain. (3) In three of the four product pairs shown, the products advertised in the intervention were preferred. In the results of applying the model for the first product pair presented, sugared cereals, the predictive variable which best explains the behavior of the preferences expressed is gender (Odds Ratio 0.285 (0.19-0.42); p < 0.05). For the second pair, chocolate cookies, the family's nationality has a strong weight in the model. As regards the regression model calculated for the last pair (filled rolls), the predictive variable which showed having more influence was gender. Boys had a 1.39 times higher risk of selecting the advertised product than girls. (4) The persuasive effect of commercials has shown to be influential in a general, immediate, and significant way only in the case of products with wide brand awareness. This study reinforces the importance of advertising and emphasizes the need to initiate measures to control the content of TV commercials.

Hassan et al., (2020) This study aimed to determine the nature, content and duration of advertisements broadcasted during children's television programs and to understand their influence on children preferences of specific food products. After the advertisements' content analysis for three days broadcasted on two famous children television channels and one primetime channel, a questionnairewas constructed based on food products advertised. Data was collected from 150 children aged between 5-15 years. Based on the children's view obtained

from the questionnaire, favorite TV channel asked was compared with the food preferences. This study explored the significant difference between children's food preference influenced by advertisements on children channel 2 as compared to channel 1 and primetime channel. In conclusion, Channel 2 has more frequent food advertisements which has influenced food choices among children. So, displaying more healthy food advertisements could be a source to educate children in making healthy choices regarding food products and consumer decisions.

Cosenza et al., (2017) The aim of this study was to assess, for the first time, the extent and nature (e.g. persuasive techniques and claims) of food advertisements, targeted at children on the most watched TV channels featuring children's shows. Methods The methodology of the International Network for Food and Obesity Non-Communicable Diseases Research, Monitoring and Action Support (INFORMAS) was used. We recorded 864h (from 6:00 am to 12:00 am) of TV programming during 4 weekend days and 4 weekdays on the 6 most viewed TV channels featuring children's shows (1 local and 5 cable channels), during the period July-September 2016, excluding school holidays. Foods advertised were classified in the following groups: sugar-sweetened beverages, snacks and sweets, sugar-sweetened cereals, fast food restaurants, and dairy products with sugar. Results Of all advertisements, 19% (2,709 of 14589) were food related commercials, of which 54% (n=1,459) were for energydense foods. Forty one percent of energy-dense food ads used both promotional characters (i.e., cartoons, famous personalities, and elements related to kids) and premium offers (i.e., collectibles, gifts, discounts, apps). Premium offers were most of the times accompanied by promotional characters (99% of cases). Concerning claims, 22% of energy-dense food ads used both brand benefit claims (i.e., emotive claims) and health claims (i.e., health related ingredient claims), 72% presented only brand benefit claims, and 6% depicted exclusively health claims. Conclusion This study revealed that Guatemalan TV channels featuring children's shows have a high frequency of energy-dense food ads and of persuasive marketing techniques in them. There is a need of monitoring and regulating food advertisements in TV channels featuring children's shows to reduce exposure. Support or Funding Information International Development Research Center (IDRC)

Tousi & Altinkaya (2017) This study is proposed to discover the effect of TV food advertising on children as a target group. This survey will make use of statistical techniques Hypothesis was conveyed to show the significance ANOVA and factor analysis used. Also, SPSS statistical tool used for analyzing hypothesis. Results show that all of the four factors, food advertisement, TV advertisement, musical advertisement and musical advertisement affects the children's food consumption behavior, the results emphasis on the reality of this hypothesis and its true, and importance of it and also show that in this research obtained the result which wanted. However, regression equation can be used to estimate. In this case, according to regression analysis, TV Advertisement and Musical Advertising can be used to estimate children's food consumption behavior scores.

3. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Aim

To examine the influence of celebrity endorsements in television commercials on the food choices of children in Gujarat, with a specific focus on fast-food products.

Objectives

- To analyze the extent of children's exposure to TV commercials featuring celebrity endorsements for fast-food products
- To assess the overall impact of celebrity endorsements on children's fast-food consumption behavior
- 4. METHODOLOGY

Study area: The study was conducted in Gujarat

Study population: The study included 100 children. A structured questionnaire was distributed till the target was achieved.

Sampling and Sample: This study was conducted in Gujarat. Simple random sampling technique was used to collect data.

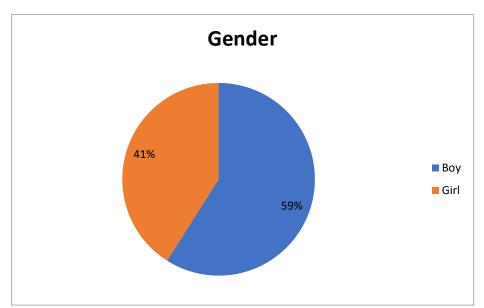
Inclusion and exclusion criteria: Children between the age group of 5-15 years were included in the study. Those who are below and above the age group of 5-15 years were excluded. And children with special needs (physically and mentally handicapped) and those who did not want to participate in this survey were also not included.

Statistical analysis: Data collected was entered into the spreadsheets. IBM SPSS statistics Software version 20.0 was used for data analysis. As descriptive statistics, frequencies and percentages were calculated whereas comparison was done using T - test.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

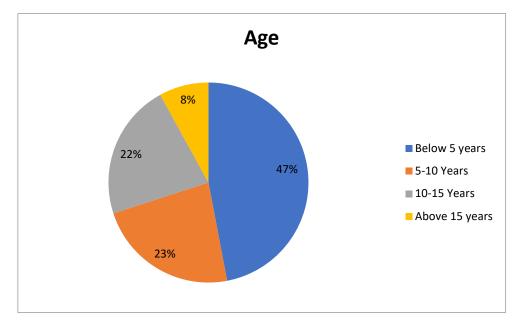
Section A: Demographic Data

Gender					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Boy	59	59.0	59.0	59.0
	Girl	41	41.0	41.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	



From the above chart and number, it is visible that in the sample of 100 respondents, there are 68.0% respondents are boy and 32.0% respondents are Girl.

Age								
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent			
Valid	Below 5 years	47	47.0	47.0	47.0			
	5-10 years	23	23.0	23.0	70.0			
	10-15 years	22	22.0	22.0	92.0			
	Above 15 years	8	8.0	8.0	100.0			
	Total	100	100.0	100.0				

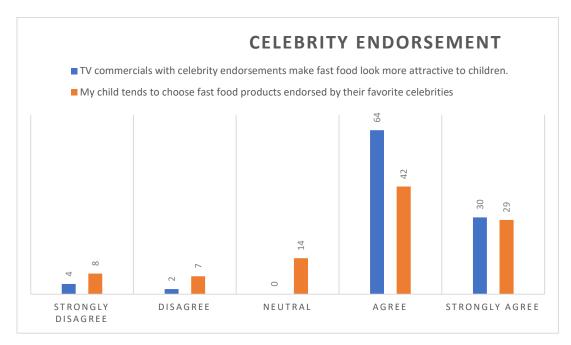


From the above

chart and number, it is visible that in the sample of 100 respondents, there are 47% respondents belongs to below 5 years age group, 23% respondents belongs to 5-10 years age group, 22% respondents belongs to 10-15 years age group and 8% respondents belongs to above 15 years age group.

Section B: Celebrity Endorsement

Celebrity Endorsements		Frequency	Percent
TV commercials with	Strongly Disagree	4	4.0
celebrity endorsements	Disagree	2	2.0
make fast food look more	Neutral	0	0.0
attractive to children.	Agree	64	64.0
	Strongly Agree	30	30.
	Total	100	100.0
My child tends to choose	Strongly Disagree	8	8.0
fast food products endorsed by their favorite	Disagree	7	7.0
	Neutral	14	14.0
celebrities.	Agree	42	42.0
	Strongly Agree	29	29.0
	Total	100	100.0



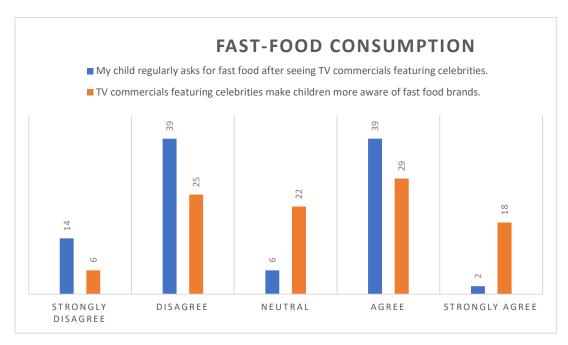
The data presented provides insights into the perceptions of parents regarding the influence of celebrity endorsements in TV commercials on their children's food choices, particularly with reference to fast-food products.

For the first statement, "TV commercials with celebrity endorsements make fast food look more attractive to children," the majority of respondents (64%) agreed, and an additional 30% strongly agreed, indicating that 94% of the respondents believe celebrity endorsements significantly increase the appeal of fast food to children. Only a small percentage of parents disagreed (2%) or strongly disagreed (4%), and none were neutral on the matter. This suggests a broad consensus among parents that celebrity endorsements play a powerful role in enhancing the attractiveness of fast-food products to children.

In response to the statement, "My child tends to choose fast food products endorsed by their favorite celebrities," a significant proportion of parents agreed (42%) or strongly agreed (29%), with a total of 71% acknowledging the direct influence of celebrity endorsements on their children's food preferences. Meanwhile, 14% of respondents remained neutral, indicating that their children may be indifferent to celebrity endorsements, and 15% (8% strongly disagree, 7% disagree) did not perceive a strong connection between celebrity endorsements and their child's fast-food choices.

Section C: Fast-Food Consumption

Fast-Food Consumption		Frequency	Percent
My child regularly asks	Strongly Disagree	14	14.0
for fast food after seeing	Disagree	39	39.0
TV commercials	Neutral	6	6.0
featuring celebrities.	Agree	39	39.0
	Strongly Agree	2	2.0
	Total	100	100.0
TV commercials	Strongly Disagree	6	6.0
featuring celebrities make	Disagree	25	25.0
children more aware of	Neutral	22	22.0
fast food brands.	Agree	29	29.0
	Strongly Agree	18	18.0
	Total	100	100.0



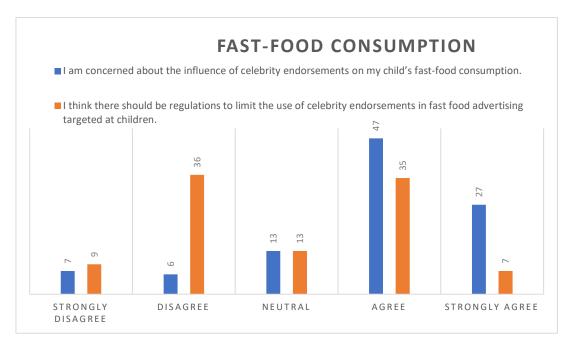
The data on fast-food consumption provides insights into the behavioral impact of celebrity endorsements on children's requests for fast food and brand awareness.

In response to the statement, "My child regularly asks for fast food after seeing TV commercials featuring celebrities," a considerable portion of respondents disagreed (39%) or strongly disagreed (14%), indicating that more than half of the parents (53%) believe their children do not frequently request fast food based on celebrity endorsements. On the other hand, 39% agreed, and 2% strongly agreed, suggesting that around 41% of the respondents recognize a direct connection between celebrity endorsements and their children's fast-food requests. A small percentage of respondents remained neutral (6%), showing some ambiguity in responses.

For the statement, "TV commercials featuring celebrities make children more aware of fast food brands," the results are more balanced. A significant 29% agreed and 18% strongly agreed, suggesting that 47% of parents acknowledge that celebrity endorsements heighten their children's awareness of fast-food brands. However, 25% disagreed, and 6% strongly disagreed, indicating that nearly a third of respondents do not feel that celebrity-driven commercials contribute much to brand awareness. The neutral responses (22%) reflect a notable portion of parents who might be unsure about the influence of such advertisements on brand awareness.

Section D: Parental Influence and Concerns

Parental Influence and Concerns		Frequency	Percent
I am concerned about	Strongly Disagree	7	7.0
the influence of	Disagree	6	6.0
celebrity endorsements	Neutral	13	13.0
on my child's fast-food	Agree	47	47.0
consumption.	Strongly Agree	27	27.0
	Total	100	100.0
I think there should be	Strongly Disagree	9	9.0
regulations to limit the	Disagree	36	36.0
use of celebrity endorsements in fast	Neutral	13	13.0
	Agree	35	35.0
food advertising	Strongly Agree	7	7.0
targeted at children.	Total	100	100.0



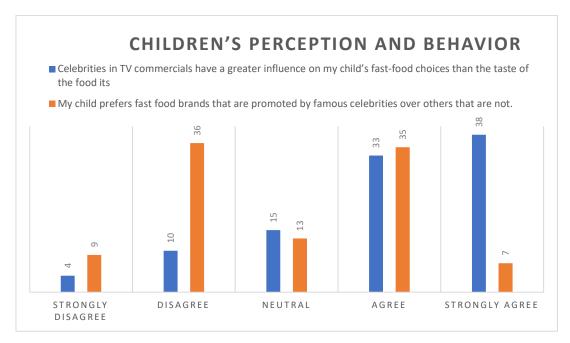
The data on parental influence and concerns reflects the varied opinions among parents regarding the impact of celebrity endorsements in fast-food advertisements and the need for regulations to limit their reach.

For the statement, "I am concerned about the influence of celebrity endorsements on my child's fast-food consumption," a significant majority of parents expressed concern, with 47% agreeing and 27% strongly agreeing, totaling 74% of respondents who believe that celebrity endorsements influence their child's fast-food consumption in a concerning way. However, 7% strongly disagreed, 6% disagreed, and 13% were neutral, indicating that a smaller group of parents either do not perceive this influence as a problem or are unsure about the extent of its effect on their child's eating habits.

Regarding the statement, "I think there should be regulations to limit the use of celebrity endorsements in fast food advertising targeted at children," opinions were more divided. While 35% agreed and 7% strongly agreed (totaling 42%) in favor of regulatory measures, a notable portion of respondents disagreed (36%) or strongly disagreed (9%), indicating that 45% do not support the idea of regulation. This suggests that many parents may believe that other factors, such as parental guidance, should be more effective than regulations in controlling the influence of celebrity endorsements. Meanwhile, 13% of respondents were neutral, possibly reflecting uncertainty about the need for such regulations.

Section E: Children's Perception and Behavior

Children's Perception and Behavior			
Celebrities in TV	Strongly Disagree	4	4.0
commercials have a	Disagree	10	10.0
greater influence on my	Neutral	15	15.0
child's fast-food choices	Agree	33	33.0
than the taste of the food	Strongly Agree	38	38.0
itself.	Total	100	100.0
My child prefers fast food brands that are promoted by famous celebrities over others that are not.	Strongly Disagree	9	9.0
	Disagree	36	36.0
	Neutral	13	13.0
	Agree	35	35.0
	Strongly Agree	7	7.0
	Total	100	100.0



The data on children's perception and behavior provides a clear indication of the role celebrity endorsements in TV commercials play in shaping children's fast-food preferences and choices.

For the statement, "Celebrities in TV commercials have a greater influence on my child's fast-food choices than the taste of the food itself," a significant 33% of respondents agreed, and an even larger portion (38%) strongly agreed, indicating that 71% of parents believe celebrity influence often surpasses the actual taste of the food in determining their children's choices. Meanwhile, 10% disagreed, 4% strongly disagreed, and 15% remained neutral, suggesting that for a minority of children, the taste of the food is still a dominant factor, or parents are uncertain of the relative influence of taste versus celebrity endorsements.

For the statement, "My child prefers fast food brands that are promoted by famous celebrities over others that are not," the responses were more divided. While 35% agreed and 7% strongly agreed (totaling 42%), showing that nearly half of the respondents recognize the influence of celebrity endorsements on brand preference, a significant 36% disagreed, and 9% strongly disagreed, indicating that for 45% of the respondents, their children's brand preferences may not be driven solely by celebrity endorsements. The 13% of neutral responses reflect a portion of respondents who may not observe a clear connection between celebrity endorsements and their child's brand preferences.

Hypothesis

- Null Hypothesis (H₀): Celebrity endorsements in TV commercials have no significant impact on children's fast-food choices.
- Alternative Hypothesis (H₁): Celebrity endorsements in TV commercials have a significant impact on children's fast-food choices.

One-Sample Statistics								
	N	Mean	Std.	Std.	Error			
			Deviation	Mean				
TV commercials have a significant impact on children's fast-food	100	2.2500	1.34371	.13437				

One-Sample Test								
	Test V	alue = 0						
	T	Df	Sig. ([2-	Mean	95% Confidence Interval of		
			tailed)	`	Difference	the Difference	ee	
						Lower	Upper	

TV commercials have	16.745	99	.000	2.25000	1.9834	2.5166
a significant impact on						
children's fast-food						

The one-sample t-test conducted to assess the impact of celebrity endorsements in TV commercials on children's fast-food choices shows significant results. The sample size (N = 100) had a mean score of 2.25, with a standard deviation of 1.34371. The test value was set at 0, and the t-test resulted in a t-statistic of 16.745 with 99 degrees of freedom (df). The p-value (Sig. 2-tailed) was found to be .000, indicating that the results are highly statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

The mean difference between the test value and the observed mean was 2.25, with a confidence interval ranging from 1.9834 to 2.5166. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis (H₀) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H₁). This means that celebrity endorsements in TV commercials have a significant impact on children's fast-food choices. The large t-value further supports the strength of this relationship, indicating that children's fast-food preferences are influenced by these advertisements.

6. CONCLUSION

The study on the *Impact of Celebrity Endorsements in TV Commercials on Children's Food Choices* with specific reference to fast-food products in Gujarat reveals significant findings regarding the role of advertising and its influence on young consumers. Celebrity endorsements, as a marketing strategy, have a profound impact on shaping children's food preferences, particularly in promoting fast food. The data suggests that the majority of parents believe TV commercials featuring celebrities make fast food more attractive to children, often leading to increased requests for these products.

A considerable portion of parents acknowledges that their children are highly influenced by celebrity endorsements, sometimes even valuing the association with celebrities more than the taste or quality of the food itself. This trend is especially concerning as fast food, typically high in calories and low in nutritional value, is being promoted by trusted and admired public figures, thereby normalizing its consumption among children. The study highlights how such endorsements play a significant role in brand awareness, with children showing a marked preference for fast-food brands endorsed by celebrities over those that are not.

However, the findings also show variability in children's behavior, with some parents noting that their child's food choices are more driven by taste or parental influence than celebrity advertisements. This suggests that while celebrity endorsements are powerful, they do not have a universal impact across all children, and other factors such as family influence and personal taste preferences also come into play.

Parents express concern about the influence of these advertisements, with a majority believing that celebrity endorsements contribute to unhealthy eating habits among children. Nevertheless, there is a division of opinion regarding whether regulations should be imposed to limit the use of celebrity endorsements in fast-food advertising targeting children. While many support regulatory intervention to mitigate the negative impact of these commercials, others believe that parental control and education may be more appropriate solutions.

In conclusion, the study emphasizes the need for a more responsible approach in advertising, particularly in the fast-food industry, where children's health is at stake. While celebrity endorsements are effective in driving sales and brand loyalty, they also contribute to unhealthy eating patterns, making it essential for policymakers, advertisers, and parents to address this issue. Educating children about healthy eating, empowering parents with tools to mediate advertising influence, and exploring potential regulations are critical steps toward promoting healthier food choices among children in Gujarat.

7. RECOMMEDATIONS

It is not possible to put a ban on advertisements. Rather children must be educated and made aware to make intelligent decisions for themselves. Food advertisement should be restricted before, during and after all the television programs aimed specifically for children. An approach for active promotion of the choice of healthy food from the time birth onwards should be proposed.

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