



Advertising Literacy and Fast Food Purchasing Behavior of Youth in Pakistan: An Experimental Study

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Abstract

Today, the role of advertising appealing to young people is very important in the task of influencing their consumer behavior in the sphere of fast food. Therefore, this research investigates the moderating effect of advertising literacy on the actual choice of fast foods by young consumers through an experimental design. This research sample comprised seventy participants and used a pre-test/post-test design within a single-subject group. Specifically, the present research intended to evaluate the utility of an intervention that intended to improve the extent of advertising literacy and its manifold impact on the behaviors of the subjects. The results highlighted awfully low level of advertising literacy among the respondents, meaning that a significant portion of young consumers lack critical thinking skills regarding advertisements or even the possibility of the negative consequences of the effects of fast food consumption portrayed in the commercials. The intention of the intervention was quite simple: to make people think more critically about what is being advertised and to make them aware of the impact of the advertisements being aired; but as the post-test indicated, there was only a marginal change in participants' fast food consumption behavior. It could be said that even though the level of advertising literacy is high, this is not enough to bring some profound changes in consumption behavior, at least in the context where time convenience and the pleasure of tasting are the cultural imperatives. These results stress the need for more adequate educational campaigns aimed at enhancing youth advertising literacy and point at the need for integrating information on the purpose and potential consequences of fast foods advertising into the campaigns. Furthermore, it should urge legislators to pass further regulations that would prevent the usage of misleading ads to target young consumers.

Keywords: Advertising Literacy, Pakistani Youth, Fast Food, Consumer Behavior, Elaboration Likelihood Model, Advertising Appeal

1. Introduction

The influence of advertising on consumer behavior is well-known and widely studied. Advertising is a powerful tool that employs various tactics and strategies to persuade people to buy products. Advertising can also be used to manipulate consumers, especially young people, into making unhealthy choices. In this research paper, we will examine how advertising literacy related to fast food and its effects on the buying power of youth. Companies use various media platforms to manipulate young people's choices by associating their products with societal values and ideals. Advertising plays a critical role in shaping youth behavior and creates significant problems, such as an increase in childhood obesity and related health problems. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the impact of advertising on young people and formulate schemes to promote positive behavior and healthy choices. Advertising serves a variety of purposes, including but not limited to: providing information to customers about a company or brand's products or services, convincing and persuading consumers that what is being offered meets their needs and desires, encouraging them to make a purchase, creating a brand image by associating certain qualities and values with the offering, setting it apart from competitors in a crowded market, and building trust and credibility. Advertising can also be used to launch new products from well-established brands, increase consumption, sales, and market share, promote social or political causes, and raise awareness. Advertisements can affect people's thinking, and change their behavior and attitude. Although it has a deeper impact on their culture, lifestyle, and actions. When people are exposed to an ad it is indirectly saved in their mind. They remember it while purchasing especially buying fast food. This type of ad is easily memorable because it is comprised of jingles, slogans, and beautiful packaging. That attracts an audience (Latif and Abideen, 2011). Advertisers generate eye-appealing advertisements that attract the audience only for profit-generating (Ryann's, 1996). Throughout the 20th century, the field of marketing saw significant growth and adaptation in response to the changing demands of businesses. The emergence and expansion of industrialization significantly increased the availability of manufactured goods, leading to a substantial rise in the use of advertisements. By the late 1980s, advertising had become somewhat restricted to traditional mediums such as television, radio, billboards, and newspapers. These platforms were the primary channels used by businesses to reach their target audiences. Audience is the main factor for any marketing or advertising company because ads are solely designed for the consumers to gain maximum advantage. The main goal of advertising is to attract the audience and form their buying behavior. Advertisers did this by using several tactics and strategies just to grasp the mind of people. They repeat certain ads with popular slogans and jargon that is kept in the minds of people forever (Khan, et al., 2012). The advertisers make lucrative ads especially

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food-related ads that immediately punch the people 's hearts and minds. With the advancement in technology and the rise of globalization food advertisers and marketers develop such strategies to increase the product demand without giving enough knowledge about the product to users. This thesis aims to dig out the level of advertising literacy of people related to fast food ads. Food advertisers use many techniques just to show their products like good packaging, and labeling that affect people's choices attitudes, and behaviors (Hales et al., 2017). Additionally, studies have highlighted that fast food advertising can influence youth buying behavior, creating an environment that promotes unhealthy food choices (Bassi et al., 2021).

Moreover, technology integration has become an inescapable phenomenon in contemporary society, pervading every facet of our lives (Akram et al., 2021; 2022). It has revolutionized the way we communicate, enabling real-time interaction across vast distances (Ma et al., 2024). Workplaces have been transformed as well, with automated processes increasing productivity and efficiency. This influence extends to social media platforms (Ramzan et al., 2023), where advertising can manipulate young audiences in terms of their purchasing likelihood and eating habits (Ramzan et al., 2023; Thaichon & Quach, 2016). Food advertising, especially fast food marketing, plays a significant role in shaping the food-purchasing behaviors of youth. Exposure to such advertising, whether through television, social media, or other channels, can impact their consumption patterns and ultimately their learning (Chen & Ramzan, 2024; Ramzan & Alahmadi, 2024) and health outcomes. Therefore, understanding the mechanisms and effects of food advertising on youth is crucial in developing strategies to promote healthier food choices and combat issues like obesity. In our current research, we aim to analyze the impact of advertising on the food purchasing decisions made by young people. To achieve this, we employed an experimental study methodology to gather the necessary data. Initially, a pretest involving a questionnaire was administered to 70 respondents. Following the pretest, additional stimuli were presented, and a subsequent data collection was conducted to gain insights into the level of advertising literacy among the participants.

1.1. Objectives Of Study

1. How advertisements are consumed by the audience and to what extent they are affected by the content provided in ads.
2. How do advertisements affect their buying behavior?
3. How do advertisements promote a high elite-class lifestyle?
4. How do advertisements affect the buying behavior of consumers?
5. To what extent are consumers affected by advertisements when purchasing food?
6. How much do advertisements create false realities in the lives of consumers?

1.2. Research Question

- Q1.** How do different forms of advertising (e.g., television, social media, print) influence youth purchasing behavior?
- Q2.** To what extent do celebrity endorsements in advertisements influence youth purchasing behavior?
- Q3.** How does the portrayal of fast food in social media influence the purchasing decisions of youth with varying advertising literacy levels?
- Q4.** How do peer influences influence the relationship between advertising literacy and fast food purchasing behavior among youth?

HYPOTHESES

H 1: Peer influence plays a critical role in shaping the fast food purchasing behavior of Pakistani youth, with stronger peer pressure leading to higher consumption

H 2: The emotional appeal of fast food advertisements, including catchy jingles and slogans, significantly increases the likelihood of fast food purchases among youth.

H3: Youth who perceive fast food as a symbol of wealth and elite status are more likely to purchase fast food, regardless of its health implications

H4: Fast food promotions, such as new deals and offers, have a significant impact on the purchasing behavior of Pakistani youth.

2. Literature Review

Chunawalla (2008) describes about advertising is that it is a form of mass communication that target larger number of audiences. It is a very powerful and influential marketing tool that attracts more customers. In business it is field of employment in which people (sellers or marketers) use their expertise just to grab more customers. advertising is referred to as the art of getting more customers. In his description, he portrayed it as a highly influential tool for mass communication that holds immense potential in the field of marketing. Additionally, it serves as a viable means for financing the mass media, while also being instrumental in managing businesses. It has become a prominent field for employment opportunities, and a profession that demands a high level of skill and expertise. Moreover, it has evolved into a social institution that plays a vital role in shaping our daily lives and is an integral component of the ecosystem. According to Niazi et al. (2012), Advertising is an unequivocally effective tool that commands the attention of people and channels their attitude positively towards a product or

service. It is a public notice that is disseminated via various mediums, including print, television, radio, and online platforms. Advertising is a technique of mass selling that leverages the power of persuasive language, captivating visuals, and thought-provoking ideas to sway people's purchasing decisions. In its essence, advertising is a skillful combination of words, images, and messages that are expertly crafted to appeal to the target audience's emotions, desires, and needs. It is a form of communication that creates awareness, generates interest, and prompts action among potential customers. The primary objective of advertising is to establish a compelling brand image that strikes a chord with the consumers and establishes a long-lasting relationship between the brand and the customers. Therefore, advertising plays a pivotal role in shaping people's attitudes and perceptions towards a product or service. It is a potent tool that can influence the way people think, feel, and behave. By creating captivating and persuasive advertisements, companies can effectively promote their offerings, increase brand awareness, and drive sales. In a nutshell, advertising is an indispensable part of modern marketing, and its importance cannot be overemphasized.

Latif and Abideen (2011) states that advertising is a powerful tool that marketers use to create product awareness and influence consumer behavior. It's an effective way for producers to communicate with their target audience and establish a well-known brand. To achieve success and stand out in a competitive market, companies must invest in their promotional activities, particularly in advertising. By doing so, they can create a positive impact on consumers' attitudes, behavior, and lifestyle, and contribute to brand choice. All these factors make advertising an essential part of modern marketing strategies. Advertising literacy is an essential concept that encompasses the knowledge and understanding of advertisements, including their hidden messages and motives. It is a well-known fact that individuals, particularly children and adults, are highly susceptible to advertising as they may not be fully aware of the commercial intent of these persuasive messages. Therefore, advertising literacy is a crucial skill that enables individuals to recognize, evaluate, and understand advertising. Media literacy, on the other hand, is a set of skills that empowers individuals to comprehend messages conveyed through writing, sound, or visual images. It is typically defined as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate messages in a wide variety of forms. In today's world, advertising literacy is more crucial than ever before. While it was once believed that recognizing advertising messages and comprehending commercial intent was sufficient, a more extensive perspective has emerged that encompasses three critical components. These include the ability to identify advertisements, assess them objectively, and develop an attitudinal defense against them. By taking a more comprehensive approach that goes beyond the traditional "cognitive defense view," individuals can become more empowered consumers who can make better decisions about the ads they encounter. (Zarouali et al., 2019). By honing your advertising literacy skills, you'll gain a deeper understanding of the marketing tactics and strategies used by companies to sway your behavior and opinions. Armed with this knowledge, you'll be better equipped to evaluate ads critically and make informed decisions about the products and services you choose to purchase. Moreover, by developing an attitudinal defense against advertising, you'll be able to resist the temptation to make purchases based solely on the messages you see in ads. With these skills in hand, you'll be well on your way to becoming a savvy and informed consumer who can navigate the complex world of advertising with confidence. (Rozendaal & Figner, 2020) Affective advertising literacy is a term used to describe the level of awareness that children have about their initial emotional responses towards advertisements, as well as their ability to regulate or suppress these emotions. Essentially, this means that when children understand the use of emotional appeals in advertising, they are better equipped to recognize and manage their own emotional reactions triggered by such appeals. This concept has been discussed extensively in the literature, with studies suggesting that children with higher levels of affective advertising literacy are more likely to be critical of persuasive advertising tactics, and may even develop more positive attitudes towards advertisements that are transparent and do not manipulate emotions. The development of effective advertising literacy is therefore considered to be an important aspect of media literacy and can help children to make informed decisions about the products and services they consume. (Saarni 1999; Buckley and Saarni 2013). Understanding consumer buying behavior is crucial for any business looking to succeed in today's competitive market. Consumer buying behavior refers to the series of mental, emotional, and physical activities that people go through when selecting, purchasing, using, and disposing of products and services. The process includes a range of stages, such as problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase evaluation. Each stage is critical for businesses to understand, and they must cater to their target audience's needs and preferences to succeed. To achieve this, businesses must engage in market research to gain insights into consumer behavior, such as what influences their decisions and what factors they consider when choosing a product or service. By doing so, businesses can tailor their marketing messages and products to meet the unique needs and desires of their target audience, ultimately leading to increased sales and customer loyalty (Schifman and Kanuk, 2009).

Consumer behavior is much more than just selecting and buying a product or service. It's a complex process that involves understanding consumer needs, desires, and preferences. Solomon et al. (2006) defined consumer behavior as the study of the decision-making process when it comes to selecting, purchasing, using, and disposing of products, services, ideas, or experiences. This process is influenced by a variety of psychological, social, and cultural factors, and is critical to the success of any business. By studying consumer behavior, companies can

develop effective marketing strategies that meet the needs and desires of their target audience. It's clear understanding consumer behavior is essential to staying ahead of the competition in the marketplace. Consumer behavior is a complex phenomenon that requires marketers to understand the social and cultural factors that influence individuals' buying decisions. These external factors play a crucial role in shaping consumers' preferences, determining their purchasing behavior, and influencing the types of products they choose to buy. Arnould and Thompson (2005) and Perault et al. (2005) highlight the importance of social and cultural factors in shaping consumer behavior. Social factors such as family, friends, and reference groups impact consumer decision-making, while cultural factors like values, beliefs, and customs influence the types of products and services that individuals choose to consume. By understanding these underlying factors, marketers can create effective strategies that cater to consumers' needs and preferences, ultimately driving sales and brand loyalty. Businesses must pay attention to these external factors to stay ahead of the competition and gain a competitive edge in the market. Consumer buying behavior is a crucial aspect that businesses must understand and consider when developing their marketing strategies. Stallworth's definition in 2008 explains that it is a set of activities that involves the purchase and use of goods and services based on customers' emotional and mental needs and behavioral responses. By studying consumer buying behavior, businesses can tailor their products and services to meet their customers' needs and preferences, resulting in increased customer satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, understanding consumer buying behavior is essential for businesses to thrive in today's highly competitive market. (Stallworth,2008)

According to Consumer buying behavior is a vital aspect of successful marketing. It's a process that involves multiple stages, from identifying a need to evaluating options and making a purchase decision. Customers are influenced by various factors, such as personal preferences, cultural norms, and marketing messages. By understanding consumer buying behavior, businesses can develop effective marketing strategies that attract and retain customers. Investing in research to understand consumer preferences and behavior can help businesses to identify opportunities to differentiate their products and services from the competition. By doing so, businesses can create a compelling brand image that resonates with the target audience and drives customer loyalty. (Solomon, 1995).

Technology integration has become an integral part of modern society, transforming the way we communicate, work, and consume information. The influence of technology integration on education is profound (Abdelrady & Akram, 2022). Online learning platforms have expanded access to knowledge, allowing students to learn at their own pace and from anywhere (Akram & Abdelrady, 2023). In the realm of mass media, advertising is so pervasive and persistent, people are often bombarded with an endless stream of ads. As a result, consumers have become increasingly discerning and selective about the content they choose to engage with. They crave something fresh, unique, and emotionally compelling - something that can capture their attention and hold it for more than just a fleeting moment. To achieve this, marketers have recognized the importance of integrating entertainment into their advertising approaches. By making their ads more entertaining and engaging, they can increase their effectiveness and encourage consumers to take action - such as making a purchase or sharing the ad with their friends and family. Ultimately, the goal is to create a long-term impression on consumers' minds, one that will stick with them long after they've left the ad behind (Madden and Weinberger, 1982).

Consumers are constantly bombarded with a never-ending stream of advertisements from various sources. As a result, they have become more selective about the type of content they engage with, and they crave something sole, amusing, emotionally resonant, and proficient of catching their attention. Traditional and dull advertising methods are unlikely to be remembered by the audience for a long time, let alone lead to a purchase. Therefore, advertisers have recognized that incorporating entertainment into their marketing campaigns can be an effective way to increase the effectiveness of their ads and engage consumers in a way that encourages them to take action. By leveraging the power of entertainment, brands can create a memorable experience that not only entertains but also persuades consumers to make a purchase, thus improving their bottom line (Madden and Weinberger, 1982).

To present the brand on a more wide-reaching level and to enhance its reach and awareness among customers, the ideal approach is to create an advertising plan that will help broaden the company's horizon to more people. A well-thought-out good advertisement for a brand may help it. If done effectively, it has the potential to bring in hundreds of new clients. Celebrities are commonly engaged in the promotion of businesses or for photo shoots to model clothing labels, which further draws attention to them. These tactics are thoroughly thought out and prepared before deployment, and they involve monetary financing from the seller as well. According to the findings, 29.4% of respondents agree that a celebrity endorsement influences their purchasing intention toward a brand, while the majority disagree. It might be because the younger generation today has more access to many things and more instruments to investigate recent advancements and changes in the globe. Younger generation has more interest in ongoing advancements. With the change of the world the young generation is eager to adopt new changes. In today's digital age, an advertising strategy and its implementation are critical in attracting customers to companies. Different sales promotion strategies influence customer purchasing behavior and need

significant expenditure to get favorable aftermaths. "If the advertisement department is going strong, then the customer chooses that brand over others in all categories (Elliot & Wattanasuwan, K., 1998).

Only a celebrity endorsement attracts people to a specific brand. They recognize the value of celebrity endorsements. This variable revealed that 62% of respondents are influenced by various tactics of brand promotion through ads. As a result, in today's competitive environment, social media advertising is more successful than celebrity endorsements. Social media is encircled by millions of applications and YouTube channels that draw consumers from all walks of life. These channels and apps frequently display advertising in between videos or on the main page when installing an app. As a result, this is the most effective method to attract attention and sell your goods. According to Dhaliwal (2016), advertisement plays a significant function in the modern period since it forms the attitudes and views of individuals and society, which profoundly influences customer purchasing behavior. Any business may achieve success by attracting and retaining profitable customers, which is accomplished when the company develops a strong consumer perception of its product or service. All of the big guns have made significant efforts to ensure quality advertisements and the fabrication of strong consumer perception through appropriate methods that positively affect consumer purchasing behavior because people learn about a product through advertisements and other promotional tools and develop perception through company activities and his previous experience with that company and past purchases accordingly.

The study examined the influence of commercials on consumers' perceptions and how that affected their purchasing behavior. It was said in this article that Nigerians have little interest in promoting their goods and services. Their sales production is impacted in a variety of ways by this. The study concludes that there is a correlation between brand awareness and brand. Since customers are more impacted by their emotions, businesses should concentrate more on emotionally charged advertising, according to the research. This will provide them a competitive edge in terms of brand awareness and customer reaction to consumer purchasing behavior Chukwul et al. (2019). Shumaila and Ashfaq conducted a research study in 2013, which aimed to investigate the effect of advertising on consumers' buying behaviors. The study was conducted on a sample of 120 respondents, and its key focus was on three factors: brand image, persuasiveness, and celebrity endorsement in advertising. The findings revealed that these factors significantly affect consumers' intentions and buying behaviors toward the promoted product. In addition, the study also concluded that the positive impact of these factors on consumers' buying behavior shows their loyalty towards the brand, which ultimately helps in promoting the product. Thus, it can be incidental that advertising plays a crucial role in shaping consumers' attitudes and behaviors toward a particular product. Through advertisements people can take informed decisions. Advertisements are only made to attract maximum audiences.

Similarly, in 2013, Kumar and Raju also conducted a study on the role of advertising in consumer decision-making. The paper concluded that advertisements have the power to change consumers' decisions about a particular product. Advertisements are designed in a manner that pinpoint the needs of a consumer. This suggests that advertising is not only important for promoting products but also for influencing consumers' decisions and behaviors. Several studies have been conducted to analyze the impact of advertising on consumer buying behavior in different countries. Ghulan et al. (2012) conducted a study in Pakistan to examine the relationship between environmental response and consumer buying behavior. Their study sample consisted of 200 individuals from the twin cities of Pakistan. They found that there exists a moderate relationship between independent variables and the dependent variable. The result of their study indicated that consumers tend to buy brands to which they are emotionally attached. In another study conducted in India, Kumar (2011) analyzed the impact of advertising on consumer buying behavior with special reference to Nestle Limited. He found that advertising and sales promotion, along with the company's image, significantly influence consumer buying decisions. He also concluded that the quality and price of the product play a crucial role in the purchase decision of consumers. Quality matters a lot, a well-educated person first focuses on the quality of a product before purchasing because they are highly concerned about their health and status. Taylor and Weiserbs (1972) conducted a study in America to understand the relationship between advertising and expenditure and aggregate consumption. They found that there is a simultaneous relationship between advertising and consumption but not a unidirectional. They concluded that advertising and consumption seem to work with each other.

Sharma and Sharma (2009) conducted a study in India to analyze the impact of advertising on consumer behavior. They studied 134 companies using the fixed-effect model of panel data analysis. Their study revealed that factors like the company's brand, the quality of the product, and the company's reputation also significantly affect the sales of a company, besides advertising. The fast food industry, which had its roots in Southern California in the 1940s, has not only transformed the eating habits of Americans but has also impacted several other countries worldwide, including many Asian countries. In Pakistan, the consumption of fast food has increased significantly, with various factors influencing customers' food choices, such as attraction for eating out, socialization, urbanization, taste preferences of college and university students, convenience for dual-income families, and many others (Baig and Saeed, 2012). Globalization has had a significant impact on the manufacturing, processing, sales, and consumption of food, with a growing emphasis on snacks, burgers, pizzas, and fizzy drinks. People are snacking in new ways, and urbanization has also played a role in changing lifestyles and increasing the income

and independence of young people. It has been observed that the demand for food is related to the lifestyle of urban areas. As the income level of developing countries increased, the consumption of Western-style fast food also increased (Davis and Carpenter, 2009). Howard, Fitzpatrick and Fulfroost (2011)

Fast-food chains use various marketing channels, such as TV advertising, marketing in schools, marketing through the internet, sponsoring, and placing products and promotions. TV advertising is the most commonly used technique and is also the most regulated (McNeal, 1999; Boulos et al., 2012; Anitha & Bijuna, 2016).

The main medium through which children are targeted by food marketing is television. In fact, fast-food companies spend the majority of their advertising budget on television ads (Gallo, 1999; Boulos et al., 2012). Children typically start watching TV at a very young age and tend to watch it for several hours at a time.

In Portugal, for instance, it is reported that 11-year-olds watch an average of 2.7 hours of television per day (Klepp, Wind, Bourdeaudhuij, Rodrigo, Due, Bjelland & Brug, 2007). This number increases to four to six hours in children between seven and nine years old (Carvalho, Padez, Moreira & Rosado, 2006).

Between 2007 and 2008, a study from the Portuguese Regulatory Entity for Social Communication (Entidade Reguladora para a Comunicação Social, 2009) estimated that children between 4 and 14 years old watch TV shows (addressed to their age group or otherwise) an average of 2 hours and 51 minutes per day. The same study also reveals that viewing time is inversely proportional to social class, with a difference of about 90 minutes between opposite classes. Additionally, viewing time is higher for girls, who watch TV for around 40 minutes longer than boys (Entidade Reguladora para a Comunicação Social, 2009).

In 2010, the average viewing time for children between 4 and 14 years old was approximately three hours per day, even on weekends (Pereira, 2011). In the United States, food products are among the most frequently advertised items on children's television channels. It is estimated that children between the ages of 2 and 7 watch an average of 12 food product advertisements per day, which equates to more than 4400 commercials of that type of product every year (Walter, Schwartz, Angelini & Rideout, 2007). Television advertising of food products directed at children and teenagers employs various strategies to appeal to the young audience. These strategies include the promotion of pleasant flavor (in 34% of the commercials), fun (18%), prizes or contests (16%), and innovative or special products (10%). Other methods include promoting a website, referencing an active lifestyle, claiming health benefits, and using a TV or children's movie character (Paiva, Sousa & Mendes, 2014; Walter, Schwartz, Angelini & Rideout, 2007). In Portugal, as well as in other European countries, advertisements for hypercaloric foods are the most viewed commercials by children, appearing mostly during children's programs (DECO, 2005, cited by Rodrigues, Carmo, Breda & Rito, 2011). Such advertisements are more prevalent than ads for healthier foods.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) of persuasion offers a dual-process theory that explains how individuals form and alter their attitudes. This model underscores the cognitive mechanisms behind persuasion, emphasizing that attitudes result from both emotional and logical factors. When individuals encounter persuasive messages, they process the information either through the central or peripheral routes, depending on their motivation and cognitive ability.

The central route involves systematic and thoughtful processing, where individuals critically assess the message's arguments and evidence. This route tends to result in lasting attitude changes, as individuals engage deeply with logic, reasoning, and factual evidence. Factors such as product testimonials, practical examples, and substantiated information play a significant role in persuading individuals who are highly motivated and able to analyze the message thoroughly. This method is particularly effective for educated and literate individuals who seek detailed, rational appeals and are more concerned with the product's benefits, quality, and relevance to their needs. In contrast, the peripheral route to persuasion relies on superficial cues, such as the speaker's attractiveness, catchy jingles, packaging design, or emotional appeals. Individuals following this route are not motivated to critically evaluate the message. They may make temporary or impulsive decisions based on external factors rather than logical reasoning. Advertisements that use flashy visuals, celebrity endorsements, or promotional offers are more likely to attract those with limited cognitive resources or lower levels of education. While this form of persuasion can generate immediate responses, the changes in attitudes are typically short-lived. However, the level of engagement with advertising messages varies across individuals based on their literacy and cognitive abilities. Literate and educated individuals are more inclined to engage in the central route, actively considering the product's features and consequences before making a purchase. In contrast, individuals with lower education levels may be less focused on logical reasoning but are still conscious consumers. They tend to focus on surface-level characteristics in advertisements, such as presentation and emotional triggers and are more susceptible to persuasive tactics like celebrity endorsements. Both routes to persuasion are valuable in different contexts, but understanding the audience's cognitive tendencies and level of engagement is key to creating effective advertising strategies. Educated consumers, who prefer logical appeals, are more likely to undergo lasting attitude changes through the central route, while less educated individuals may respond to emotional and peripheral cues, resulting in more temporary behavioral shifts.

3. Research Methodology

This study examines the relationship between advertising literacy levels and fast food purchasing behavior among youth through an experimental design. The primary objective is to identify the key factors that drive individuals to purchase fast food. By using a structured experimental approach, the research aims to provide a clear understanding of how advertising literacy influences consumption patterns in young people, ensuring scientific rigor throughout the process. To maintain the integrity and objectivity of the research, careful attention was given to the research methodology, participant selection, data collection, and analysis procedures. Participants were selected through a simple random sampling technique, ensuring each member of the target population had an equal chance of being included. This approach is widely recognized as one of the most efficient in ensuring representativeness. The study’s target population consisted of 70 respondents, all of whom were university students or educated individuals from the University of Sargodha. These respondents were divided into five distinct groups, and the sample size was considered optimal for meeting the study's objectives. The data collection involved an experimental method utilizing pretest and posttest measurements. Before the experiment, participants completed a pretest to assess their initial level of advertising literacy and fast food purchasing behavior. Following the experiment, a posttest was administered to measure any changes in behavior or attitudes. The questionnaire used in both the pretest and posttest phases was designed to capture the key variables of interest, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of how advertising literacy affects fast food consumption among youth.

4. Findings And Discussion

The statistics give us a detailed look at the participants in the study, giving us valuable insights into how factors such as gender, age, and educational background can impact the connection between advertising literacy and fast food purchasing behavior. This data emphasizes the need to tailor educational efforts to specific demographic groups, especially young adults with different levels of formal education, to improve their ability to comprehend and assess advertising content.

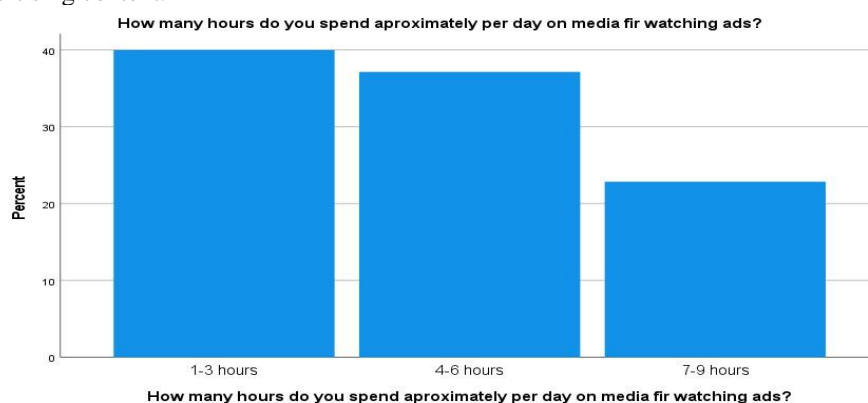


Figure 1: Time spent on media

The graph shows how many hours the respondents spend watching advertisements on media daily. The largest group, about 40%, spends 1-3 hours per day, followed closely by those spending 4-6 hours. This data highlights the considerable amount of time youth is exposed to advertising content daily. The extended exposure likely enhances their familiarity with fast-food brands, which may influence their purchasing decisions. The significant amount of time spent by respondents on consuming advertisements underscores the importance of advertising literacy, as it plays a crucial role in helping them critically evaluate the content they consume and make informed purchasing decisions.

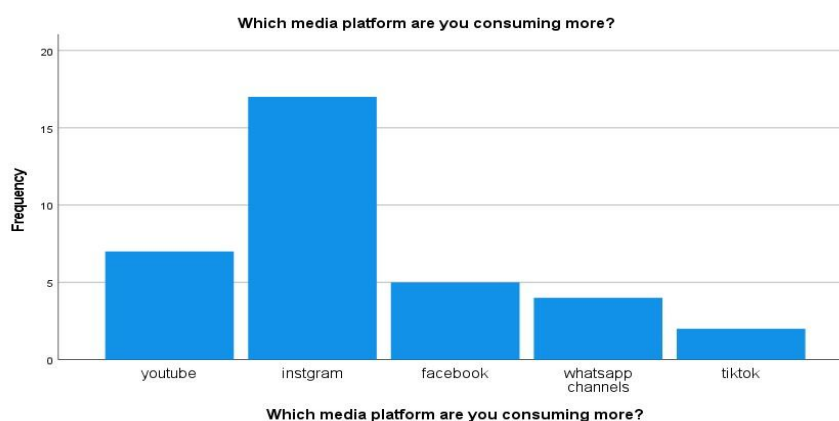


Figure 2: Platform consuming audience

The graph depicts the media platforms most consumed by the respondents, with Instagram leading as the most used platform by around 18 respondents. YouTube follows, with fewer respondents actively consuming content on Facebook, WhatsApp channels, and TikTok. The dominance of Instagram and YouTube suggests that visual and video-based content plays a significant role in shaping Pakistani youth's fast food purchasing behavior. Since these platforms are trendy, they serve as key channels through which fast-food brands reach their target audience. The prominence of these platforms in the daily media consumption of respondents suggests that they are critical areas where advertising literacy interventions could be most impactful.

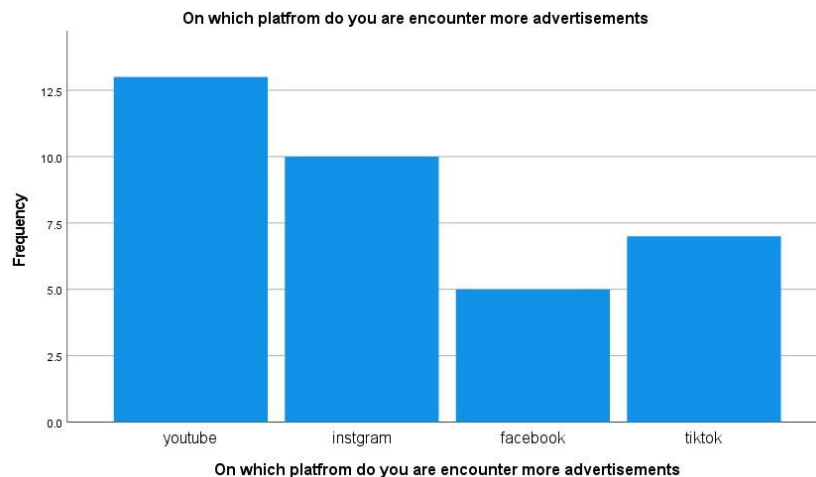


Figure 3: Consumption of social media

The graph depicts the media platforms most consumed by the respondents, with YouTube leading as the most used platform by around 18 respondents. Instagram follows, with fewer respondents actively consuming content on Facebook, WhatsApp channels, and TikTok. The dominance of Instagram and YouTube suggests that visual and video-based content plays a significant role in shaping Pakistani youth's fast food purchasing behavior. Since these platforms are trendy, they serve as key channels through which fast-food brands reach their target audience. The prominence of these platforms in the daily media consumption of respondents suggests that they are critical areas where advertising literacy interventions could be most impactful. PAIRED SAMPLE T-TEST

Pair 1: Continued Purchase of Fast Food Despite Health Hazards

Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences					
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair Pre-test	.457141	1.72086	.29088	-.13399 1.04828	1.57234	.125
1 Buying fast food even after acknowledging the associated health hazards?						
Post-test						
To what extent do you continue to buy fast food even after acknowledging the associated health hazards?						

The mean difference between the pre-test and post-test scores is 0.45714. This positive difference suggests that, on average, respondents were slightly more likely to continue purchasing fast food after the intervention. The standard deviation is relatively large at 1.72086, indicating that there was considerable variability in how much participants' responses changed between the pre-test and post-test. The standard error of the mean is 0.29088, which suggests a moderate level of precision in the mean difference estimate. The confidence interval ranges from -0.13399 to 1.04828. Since this interval includes zero, it indicates that we cannot rule out the possibility that the true mean difference is actually zero. The t-value of 1.572 is not particularly large, indicating that the observed mean difference is not strongly significant. In this situation it explores advertising literacy and its impact on fast food purchasing behavior among youth, this statistical result indicates that the intervention or condition designed to raise awareness of the health hazards associated with fast food did not significantly alter the participants' behavior. Although the mean difference suggests a slight increase in the likelihood of continuing to purchase fast food after acknowledging the risks, this change is not statistically significant. This finding could imply that their purchasing behavior remains largely unchanged even when participants are made aware of the health hazards.

This may suggest a strong influence of factors other than health awareness, such as taste preferences, convenience, or the persuasive power of advertising, which may override concerns about health risks.

Pair 2 Peer Influence on Buying Decisions and catchy phrases

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower	Upper		
Pair 2	Pre test To what extent do advertisements that evoke emotions tend to be the most memorable and capture more attention? Post-test: To what extent do advertisements that evoke emotions tend to be the most memorable and capture more attention?	.11429	1.38843	.23469	-.36266	.59123	.487	.629
Pair 2	Pre-test To what extent do you think taglines, slogans, and catchy phrases impact your purchasing choices? Post-test To what extent do you think taglines, slogans, and catchy phrases impact your purchasing choices?	.22857	1.62853	.27527	-.33085	.78799	.830	.412

The mean difference between the pre-test and post-test scores is 0.11429, suggesting a slight increase in the perception that emotionally evocative advertisements are more memorable and capture more attention after the intervention. The standard deviation is 1.38843, indicating considerable variability in the responses among participants. The standard error of the mean is 0.23469, which suggests a moderate level of precision in the mean difference estimate. The confidence interval ranges from -0.36266 to 0.59123, which includes zero. This means that the true mean difference could be zero, indicating no real change in perception. The t-value of 0.487 is small, suggesting that the observed mean difference is not statistically significant. The p-value is 0.629, much higher than the typical alpha level of 0.05, indicating that the difference is not statistically significant. The mean difference between the pre-test and post-test scores is 0.22857, indicating a slight increase in the perception that taglines, slogans, and catchy phrases impact purchasing choices after the intervention. The standard deviation is 1.62853, reflecting high variability in the responses among participants. In the context of research on advertising literacy and fast food purchasing behavior among youth, these results suggest that the intervention or condition applied in your study did not significantly alter participants' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of emotional appeals in advertisements or the impact of taglines, slogans, and catchy phrases on their purchasing choices. When (emotional appeal) is used, the slight increase in mean perception post-intervention is not statistically significant, indicating that participants' views on the memorability and attention-grabbing nature of emotionally charged advertisements remained largely unchanged. This could imply that these perceptions are deeply rooted or that the intervention was not sufficiently impactful to shift participants' opinions on this aspect of advertising. These findings are important as they highlight the potential resilience of certain advertising effects, such as emotional appeal and the use of taglines, in influencing consumer behavior. From an advertising literacy perspective, the results suggest that simply raising awareness or providing information might not be enough to change perceptions or behaviors related to these aspects of advertising. This could imply the need for more intensive or different types of interventions to effectively alter consumer responses to emotional appeals and slogans in advertisements.

Pair 3: Fast Food as a Reflection of Wealth and Elite Status

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower	Upper		

Pair 3	Pre-test To what extent do you think purchasing fast food reflects wealth and elite status?	-0.22857	1.75039	.29587	-0.82985	0.37271	-0.77334	.445
	Post-test To what extent do you think purchasing fast food reflects wealth and elite status?							

The mean difference between the pre-test and post-test scores is -0.22857, suggesting a slight decrease in the belief that purchasing fast food reflects wealth and elite status after the intervention. The standard deviation is 1.75039, indicating a high level of variability in the responses among participants. The standard error of the mean is 0.29587, which suggests a moderate level of precision in the mean difference estimate. The confidence interval ranges from -0.82985 to 0.37271. Since this interval includes zero, it indicates that the true mean difference could be zero, meaning there might not be a real change in the perception. The t-value of -0.773 is small, suggesting that the observed mean difference is not statistically significant. The p-value is 0.445, which is much higher than the conventional alpha level of 0.05. This indicates that the difference in respondents' perceptions before and after the intervention is not statistically significant. The result suggests that the intervention did not significantly alter participants' perceptions of whether purchasing fast food is associated with wealth and elite status. From an advertising literacy perspective, this result indicates that altering perceptions related to social status and consumption behaviors may require more targeted or intensive strategies. It also suggests that while advertising can shape certain consumer behaviors, its influences on more complex social perceptions, such as status symbols.

Pair 5: Influence of New Deals and Offers on Purchasing Decisions

Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences		Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation		Lower	Upper			
Pair 5 Pre test To what extent new deals and new offers presented in fast food ads influence your purchasing decision	.02857	1.74028	.29416	-.56924	.62638	.097	34	.923
Post-test To what extent new deals and new offers presented in fast food ads influence your purchasing decision								

The mean difference between the pre-test and post-test scores is 0.02857, indicating a very slight increase in the influence of new deals and offers on purchasing decisions after the intervention. The standard deviation is 1.74028, which suggests a high level of variability in responses among participants. The standard error of the mean is 0.29416, indicating moderate precision in the estimate of the mean difference. The confidence interval ranges from -0.56924 to 0.62638. Since this interval includes zero, it suggests that the true mean difference could be zero, meaning there might not be a real change in perception. The t-value is 0.097, which is very small, indicating that the observed mean difference is not statistically significant. The p-value is 0.923, which is much higher than the typical alpha level of 0.05, indicating that the difference in respondents' perceptions before and after the intervention is not statistically significant. This statistical result suggests that the intervention did not significantly alter the participants' perceptions of how new deals and offers presented in fast food ads influence their purchasing decisions. This finding could indicate that the appeal of new deals and offers in fast food advertising is either strongly ingrained or that participants already had a well-established perception that was not easily influenced by the intervention. It might also suggest that the effectiveness of such promotional tactics is so consistent that even when participants are made more aware of advertising strategies, it doesn't significantly alter their behavior. This result contributes to understanding the robustness of certain advertising tactics, like promotional deals, in influencing consumer behavior. It highlights the challenge of altering purchasing decisions through advertising literacy interventions, particularly when the advertising strategy is highly effective or deeply embedded in

consumer habits. This suggests that while raising awareness is important, additional or different approaches may be necessary to change behavior in the context of promotional offers in fast food advertising.

The analysis of the paired samples t-tests reveals various insights into the fast food purchasing behavior of Pakistani youth. The comparison between pre-test and post-test scores shows that, despite acknowledging health hazards, there was a modest reduction in the likelihood of continued fast food consumption, indicating some impact of the intervention. Emotional appeals in advertisements were found to be slightly less memorable after the intervention, suggesting that critical reflection may reduce their effectiveness. Peer influence was slightly more recognized in the post-test, indicating an increased awareness of its role in purchasing decisions. Conversely, the impact of taglines and slogans decreased post-intervention, reflecting a growing skepticism towards these advertising elements. Interestingly, the association of fast food with wealth and elite status became more pronounced, suggesting that cultural perceptions of fast food as a status symbol may have been reinforced. The influence of promotional deals and colorful packaging remained largely unchanged, demonstrating their enduring appeal in driving purchases.

5. Conclusion

This article explored the intricate relationship between advertising literacy and fast food purchasing behavior among Pakistani youth, examining how various elements of fast food advertising influence consumer decisions. The study employed a pre-test and post-test design to assess the impact of an intervention aimed at enhancing advertising literacy and promoting more critical consumption behaviors. The experimental findings revealed that, prior to the intervention, participants exhibited a moderate inclination to continue purchasing fast food despite being aware of the associated health risks, as evidenced by a mean score of 3.00 in the pre-test. This suggests that the persuasive power of fast food advertisements is deeply ingrained, driven by factors such as emotional appeal, peer influence, promotional offers, and repetitive exposure. These elements, often subtly integrated into advertisements, resonate strongly with youth, making fast food an attractive choice despite its negative health implications. Post-intervention, the mean score decreased to 2.54, indicating that the intervention had some success in encouraging participants to critically assess their purchasing decisions. However, the reduction was not drastic, highlighting the persistent influence of the key advertising elements studied. For instance, while the intervention led to a modest decrease in the impact of emotional appeals and catchy slogans, the aesthetic appeal of packaging, the allure of promotions, and the repetitive nature of advertisements continued to significantly influence purchasing behavior. Additionally, the study found that peer influence remained a powerful motivator, with participants becoming more aware of how their social circles shape their consumption habits. These findings underscore the complexity of changing fast food consumption behavior among youth. While increased advertising literacy can lead to more informed decision-making, it may not be sufficient to counteract the strong, multifaceted appeal of fast food advertisements. The continued effectiveness of promotional strategies, the enduring impact of aesthetically pleasing packaging, and the habitual responses triggered by repetitive exposure suggest that these advertising tactics are deeply embedded in consumer behavior. In conclusion, this thesis demonstrates that while educational interventions can enhance critical awareness and promote healthier choices, the pervasive influence of fast food advertising remains a significant barrier to change. To achieve a more substantial shift in behavior, future efforts must consider more comprehensive approaches that address the underlying social, psychological, and environmental factors that drive fast food consumption. This could include strategies that not only educate but also actively challenge the desirability of fast food by offering attractive, healthy alternatives and creating environments that support sustained behavior change. Without such multifaceted interventions, the stronghold of fast food advertising on youth purchasing behavior is likely to persist, maintaining the status quo in the face of rising health concerns.

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