

FAST FOOD ADVERTISING TO CHILDREN IN LEBANON
AND ITS POTENTIAL EFFECTS ON EATING HABITS AND OBESITY

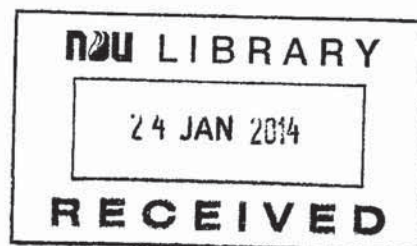
A Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master's of Arts in Media Studies/Advertising

by

Elise Elias Koukou

Department of Media Studies
Notre Dame University – Louaize
Lebanon

Fall, 2013-2014



FAST FOOD ADVERTISING TO CHILDREN IN LEBANON
AND ITS POTENTIAL EFFECTS ON EATING HABITS AND OBESITY

by

Elise Elias Koukou

Department of Media Studies
Notre Dame University – Louaize
Lebanon

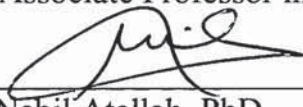
Fall, 2013-2014

Thesis Committee:

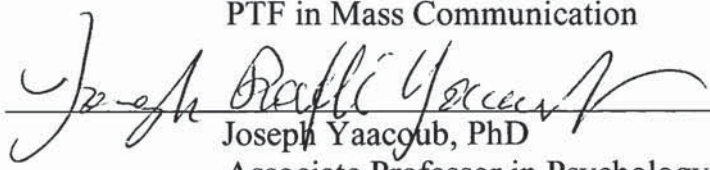
Thesis Adviser: _____


Joseph Ajami, PhD
Associate Professor in Mass Communication

First Reader: _____


Nabil Atallah, PhD
PTF in Mass Communication

Second Reader: _____


Joseph Yaacoub, PhD
Associate Professor in Psychology

Chairperson of the Department: _____


Sam Lahoud, MA in Media Studies

I, Elise Elias Koukou, authorize Notre Dame University - Louaize to supply copies of my thesis to libraries or individuals on request.



_____ 24/1/2014 _____

Table of Contents

I-	Acknowledgements	6
II-	Abstract	7
III-	Introduction.....	9
IV-	Review of Literature	13
A.	What Has Been Done Before.....	13
1.	Fast Food Advertising in Lebanon.....	17
2.	Food Advertising and Marketing Channels	18
3.	Disorders in Eating Habits	30
4.	Obesity	34
B.	Theoretical Framework.....	36
V-	Research Questions.....	39
VI-	Methodology.....	41
A.	Survey	41
B.	Interviews.....	41
VII-	Results & Analysis.....	44
VIII-	Conclusion and Recommendations for the Future.....	59
A.	Conclusion	59
B.	Limitations	60
C.	Future Research	61
IX-	Bibliography.....	62
A.	Books	62

B. Articles/Journals/Periodicals.....	63
C. Interviews.....	64
D. Websites.....	65
E. Miscellaneous	66
X- Appendices	67
Appendix 1: Survey.....	67
Appendix 2: Fast Food Advertisements	70
Appendix 3: Familiar Fast Food Brands' Logos to Children.....	78

I- Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Joseph Ajami for being an outstanding advisor and an excellent professor. His constant encouragement, support, and invaluable suggestions made this work successful. He has been everything that one could want in an advisor.

I am deeply indebted to my committee members Dr. Nabil Atallah and Dr. Joseph Yaacoub for their time and effort in reviewing this work and adding their insights to it.

I would also like to thank Mr. Sam Lahoud, chairperson of the department of Media Studies, for his continuous support and help.

I am deeply and forever grateful to my parents and friends for their love, support and encouragement throughout my entire life and in particular I must acknowledge my husband, Elie Salem, whose love, encouragement, and trust helped me finish this thesis.

Final thanks would be for my coming baby girl for being so calm helping me in finalizing the thesis and succeeding.

II- Abstract

In recent years, the food and beverage industry in Lebanon has viewed children and adolescents as a major market force. As a result, children and adolescents are now the target of intense and specialized food marketing and advertising efforts, especially fast food companies.

The Lebanese society has witnessed an increase in overweight children and diabetic ones. This increase is due to several factors related to the types of food marketed to this category of people:

- Food captures 12.5% of Lebanese consumer spending and so there is vigorous competition within this industry
- Food is a repeat-purchase item and consumers' views can change quickly
- Food has the most highly branded items, which lends itself to major advertising of various brands and food products
- Most famous fast food restaurants such as Mc Donald's, Burger King, and KFC are spending more on their advertising campaigns to reach a larger audience.

Fast food marketers are interested in children as consumers because of their spending power, their purchasing influence, and as future adult consumers. This study is done to show the potential effects of the advertising of fast food products that are displayed on TV, internet and billboards on children in Lebanon aged between 6 and 12 years old on potential disorders in their eating habits and obesity. The results of the survey and interviews show that:

- Media are the great influencers on children's demands and habits.
- Fast food advertising leads to many negative health-related consequences such as obesity.

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon

- 90% of parents think that fast food is a major type of food that interests their children
- 90% of parents admitted that their children will desire or demand the product advertised after they see it on TV, Internet, or billboard.
- Psychologists believe that parents should not use the gratification technique which reinforces the children's demand for fast food.
- Nutritionists trust that fast food should be consumed in moderation.

III- Introduction

Advertising on television, internet, and billboards has become an effective, persuasive, and popular methods of marketing products of many sorts and especially fast food products. Advertising is used to foster brand awareness, increase sales of a product, and encourage attitude change towards it.

Considerable sums of money are spent on advertising each year: global advertising expenditures reached around US\$ 519 billion in 2012 and was expected to hit nearly US\$ 540 billion in 2013 (World Advertising Research Center WARC, 2012), and maybe around US\$ 628 billion in 2016 (venturedata.org, 2012). Today's children and youth live in a media-saturated environment. There is evidence that children do not properly understand the nature of advertising. Chan (2000) tested 448 children aged 5–12 years in China, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and found that only half of those aged 11–12 years understood that television stations get paid to broadcast commercials.

Children in Lebanon represent 16.05% (escwa.un.org, 2010) (see table 1) of the overall Lebanese population.

Table 1: Population Size of Lebanon by Sex, 1980 to 2050

Year	Population Size (thousands)		
	Males	Females	Total
1980	1,382	1,413	2,795
1985	1,413	1,472	2,885
1990	1,430	1,518	2,948
1995	1,699	1,764	3,463
2000	1,828	1,915	3,742
2005	1,980	2,072	4,052
2010	2,064	2,163	4,228
2015*	2,140	2,245	4,385
2020*	2,203	2,313	4,516
2025*	2,256	2,368	4,624
2030*	2,294	2,407	4,701
2035*	2,315	2,427	4,742
2040*	2,319	2,430	4,749
2045*	2,310	2,417	4,727
2050*	2,288	2,390	4,678

Source: United Nations, World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision, Available on: http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/unpp/panel_indicators.htm

* Projections (medium variant)

They are increasingly being exposed to different cultures, absorbing new ideas and impressions about other cultures, although they hardly know their own culture. Many advertisements are catchy jingles or catch-phrases that generate sustained appeal, which may remain in the minds of television viewers long after the span of the advertising campaign. Nowadays, advertising reaches the entire world culture and influences society and fundamental patterns of life. Advertising can be seen as one of the factors that shape peoples' lives, their basic values, and attitudes. Actual picture may be different, according to Edgar "Advertising is the art of making whole lies out of half-truths. Advertising is seen, read, heard in many ways and in many forms"(pwkpr.com, 2012).

Some critics believe that children exposed to media messages may develop or acquire certain

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon

patterns or behaviors like aggressiveness and impatience , and are linked to what they watch, read, or listen to. Children have a remarkable ability to recall content from the ads to which they have been exposed. Product preference has been shown to occur with as little as a single commercial exposure and to strengthen with repeated exposures. Product preferences affect children's product purchase requests and these requests influence parents' purchasing decisions (apa.org, 2013).

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that in 2005, more than 1 billion people were overweight and 300 million obese, with projections of 1.5 billion people overweight by 2015, a majority of which are children. Worldwide, 44 percent of diabetes burden, 23 percent of ischemic heart disease burden, and 7 to 41 percent of the burden of some cancers can be attributed to overweight and obesity (globalizationandhealth.com, 2010), with one of its main factors being the excess of fast food intake.

Multiple techniques and channels are used to reach children, to foster brand-building and influence fast food product purchase behavior. These food marketing channels include television advertising, in-school marketing, product placements, kids clubs, the Internet, toys and products with brand logos, and youth-targeted promotions, such as cross-selling and tie-ins (see appendices 2 and 3).

The heavy marketing directed towards youth, especially young children, appears to be driven largely by the desire to develop and build brand awareness/recognition, brand preference and brand loyalty. Marketers believe that brand preference begins before purchase behavior does.

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon

Brand preference in children appears to be related to two major factors: 1) children's positive experiences with a brand, and 2) parents liking that brand. Thus, marketers are intensifying their efforts to develop brand relationships with young consumers, beginning when they are toddlers. Marketers know that toddlers and preschool children have considerable purchase influence and can successfully negotiate purchases through what marketers term the "nag factor" or "pester power" (ijbnpa.org, 2004).

The food, beverage, and chain restaurant industries say they are on the side of health, but their actions show otherwise. Food and beverage companies spend billions of dollars promoting unhealthy foods virtually everywhere kids go. The Interagency Working Group on Foods Marketed to Children (IWG) has proposed reasonable nutrition guidelines to help provide a model for companies that market to kids (preventioninstitute.org, 2012).

Eating fast food has pretty much become routine for many families, the researchers found. One-third of children and teens reported consuming fast food at least once a week, and 16% to 17% of adolescents' caloric intake came from fast food restaurants. On an average visit to a fast-food restaurant, teens ordered 800 to 1,100 calories in a single meal (30% of which came from saturated fat or sugar); that's half of their recommended daily caloric intake (time.com, 2010). "Going to a fast food restaurant" is no longer a special event, it's ingrained in our culture and that's why it's of concern," said Kelly Brownell, co-founder and director of the Rudd Center¹ (time.com, 2010).

¹ The Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity is a non-profit research and public policy organization devoted to improving the world's diet, preventing obesity, and reducing weight stigma.

IV- Review of Literature

A. What Has Been Done Before

Fast Food Advertising to Children, a land of speed and convenience becoming a big business everywhere and especially in Lebanon. Millions of dollars are spent annually on fast food advertising to children in numerous ways and fashions. The majority of these ads are for food and drink that is high in fat, sugar, calories, salt and low in nutrients (Grossman,2007). According to Becker and Murphy (1993), it is not as much the advertisement itself as much as it is the tactic used to entice our children to want their product. In addition, Grossman (2007) believes that people microwave their food, frequent fast food, drive-thru, and communicate via instant messaging and cell phone text messages. We are perpetually in a hurry that we can pop fast food from the freezer into the microwave at home and have the fastest and easiest things to eat. Busy parents juggling work and home are grateful for shortcuts that can save them time and workers expected to stay at their desks all day make use of quick meals.

Research links advertising to increased eating disorders in children because they are vulnerable to persuasive messages. According to media scholar George (Moy & Pfau, 2000, p.137), "Television has become unavoidable and unremitting factor in shaping that what we are and what we will become."

Advertising, whether on TV, internet, or billboards aimed at children is believed to be based on three concerns; first, advertising promotes superficial values founded in material goods and consumption. Second, children are considered inexperienced consumers and easy prey for the sophisticated persuasion of advertisers. Third, advertising influences children's demand for

everything from toys to snack foods (Thomas C. O'Guinn, Chris T. Allen, Richard J.Semenik,2011).

According to Brucks, Goldberg, and Armstrong (1986), children under the age of six are unable to critically comprehend televised advertising messages and are prone to accept advertiser's messages as truthful, accurate and unbiased. This is a critical concern because the most common products marketed to children are cereals, candies, sweets, sodas and snack foods. Advertising of such unhealthy food products to young children contributes to poor nutritional habits that may last a lifetime and be a variable in the current epidemic of obesity among kids (See Figure 2)

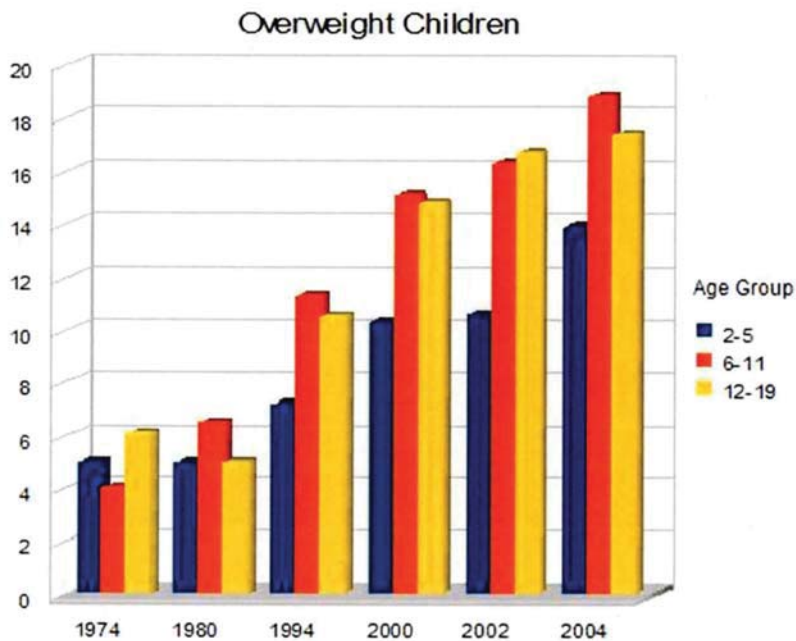


Figure 2: Overweight children by age group over the years.

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon

Central to any discussion on food advertising to children is the nature of children's comprehension of advertising. In addition, according to Strasburger, numerous studies have documented that young children have little understanding of the persuasive intent of advertising. Prior to ages 7 or 8, children tend to view advertising as fun, entertaining, and unbiased information (John,1999) An understanding of advertising intent usually develops by the time most children are 7-8 years old. Because of their level of cognitive development, children under 8 years of age are viewed by many child development researchers as a population vulnerable to misleading advertising(John,1999). The heavy marketing of high fat, high sugar foods to this age group can be viewed as exploitative because young children do not understand that commercials are designed to sell products and they do not yet possess the cognitive ability to comprehend or evaluate the advertising. Preteens, from ages 8-10 years, possess the cognitive ability to process advertisements but do not necessarily do so (Strasburger, 2001). From early adolescence (11-12 years), children's thinking becomes more multidimensional, involving abstract as well as concrete thought. Adolescents still can be persuaded by the emotive messages of advertising, which play into their developmental concerns related to appearance, self-identity, belonging, and sexuality (Strasburger, 2001).

“Going to a fast food restaurant” is no longer a special event, it’s ingrained in our culture and that’s why it’s of concern,” said Kelly Brownell, co-founder and director of the Rudd Center (time.com, 2010).

Kids often crave bad-for-you food because they've been wired by ads and commercials to associate the related brands with pleasure "The brains of children are 'imprinted' with food

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon

logos," Bruce² says (yaleruddcenter.org, p. 5, 2012). Without the necessary inhibitory processes to aid in decision-making, youths are particularly susceptible to making poor choices about what to eat (yaleruddcenter.org, p. 5, 2012).

The food logos triggered increased activity in areas of the brain known to be involved in reward processing and in driving and controlling appetite (Lazarus, 2012).

Tests were conducted on children ages 10 to 14. They were exposed to 60 foods and 60 non-foods logos. "Research has shown children are more likely to choose those foods with familiar logos,"(see Appendix III) says Dr. Amanda Bruce "That is concerning, because the majority of foods marketed to children are unhealthy, calorifically dense foods high in sugars, fat and sodium" (yaleruddcenter.org, p.5, 2012).

A similar effect is nowhere to be found when logos for non-food brands are flashed. So, when a logo for a fast-food chain comes up ,i.e Mc. Donald's, "the pleasure centers of kids' brains light up, showing that a connection is being made to something considered a treat or a reward"(Lazarus,2012).

Researchers at the University of Missouri in Kansas City and the University of Kansas Medical Center did MRI scans of kids' reactions while showing them assorted corporate logos. Purveyors of fast food such as Mc. Donald's try to make an impression on young consumers, adds Dr. Bruce." (yaleruddcenter.org, p.5, 2012). The kid customers have become a huge consumption group to fast food companies. These corporations try to infiltrate teen cultures and find out what appeals to teenagers in order to market their products more successful.

²Dr. Amanda Bruce Clinical Ph.D. Program Faculty, Assistant Professor B.R.A.I.N. Lab Research Interests: Neuroimaging of obesity; Childhood obesity and eating behaviors; Neuroeconomics and neuromarketing; functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI); feeding interventions for medically complicated children.

1. Fast Food Advertising in Lebanon

Lebanon has experienced alarming increases in obesity among children and adolescents because of fast food and especially those promoted in advertisements. The current trend towards obesity is influenced by more than the shift from traditional Mediterranean to fast food. The creative industries such as media, culture, fashion, television, advertising, and communication represent 4.5% of the Lebanese GDP³ (Anima Investment Network, 2011). Children in Lebanon tend to change the eating habits they were used to when exposed to fast food ads which are practically available in so many places (Anima Investment Network, 2011).

Evidence suggests that "going into" a commercial viewing situation, children have a generalized awareness of the selling intent of commercials. Yet there is also evidence that "coming away" from a commercial, children tend to manifest attitudes and behavior suggesting that any generalized awareness has not operated as an effective defensive mechanism and children will keep thinking about it (Brucks, 1986). What if these commercials were related to fast food which is a great influencer on children?

Several researchers have tended to focus on environmental factors such as the availability of highly palatable and calorie dense fast food to promote high energy intake as well as the appeal of television, video games, and internet to discourage energy expenditure and as a result, increase child obesity (Grossman, 2007).

³ Gross Domestic Product is one the primary indicators used to gauge the health of a country's economy. It represents the total dollar value of all goods and services produced over a specific time period - you can think of it as the size of the economy. Usually, GDP is expressed as a comparison to the previous quarter or year (investopedia.com, 2007)

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon

The prevalence of overweight (% of children under 5) in Middle East and North Africa was 16.48 in 2009, according to a World Bank report, published in 2010. Prevalence of overweight children is the percentage of children under age 5 whose weight for height is more than two standard deviations above the median for the international reference population of the corresponding age as established by the WHO's new child growth standards released in 2006 (2010) (See Figure 3).

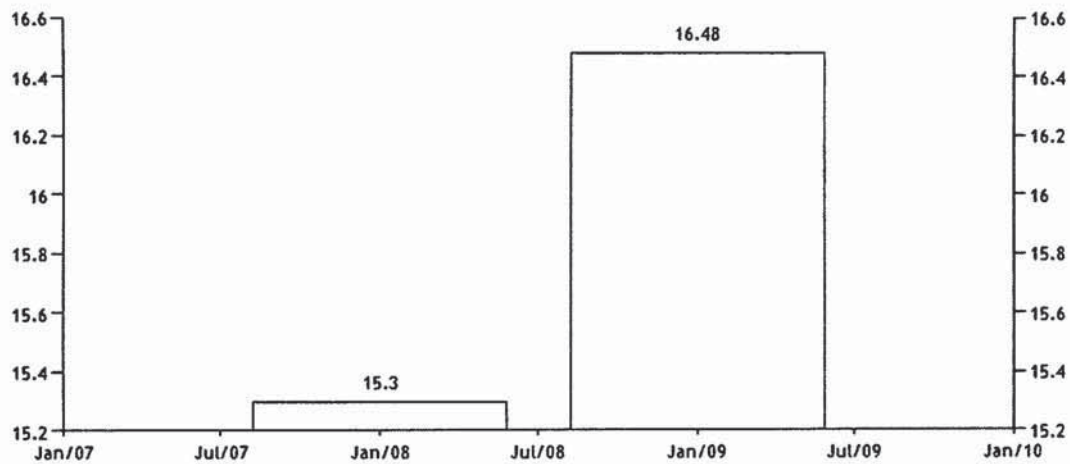


Figure 3: Prevalence of overweight (% of children under 5) in Middle East and North Africa

2. Food Advertising and Marketing Channels

Many channels are used to reach children in order to foster brand-building and influence food product purchase behavior. Marketing channels and techniques include television advertising, in-school marketing, product placement, kids clubs, the Internet, billboards, toys and products with brand logos(see Appendix II).

a) Television advertising

TV can be considered the largest source of media messages about food to children, especially younger ones. Over 75% of US food manufacturers' advertising budgets and 95% of US fast-food restaurant budgets are allocated to television (AE, 1999, p.173-180).

Kids who are between the ages of 2 and 4 years watch around 2 hours of television daily; this could increase to over 3.5 hours near the end of grade school, then drops off to about 2.75 hours in later adolescence (Roberts, Foehr, Rideout, Brodie, 1999). US children in low-income families and minority youth tend to watch more television (Gentile & Walsh, 2002). As a result these children have greater exposure to food ads.

Food is the most frequently advertised product category on US children's television and food ads account for over 50% of all ads targeting children (Gamble & Cotunga, 1999). Children view an average of one food commercial every five minutes of television viewing time, and may see as many as three hours of food commercials each week (Kotz & Story, 1994). In a descriptive study that examined US food advertising during 52.5 hours of Saturday morning children's programming, 564 food advertisements (57% of all ads) were shown. (Kotz & Story, 1994).

In summary from the 19 commercials viewed by children per hour, 11 were related to food and 44% of these ads were about junk food, such as candy, soft drinks, chips, cakes, cookies and pastries, and 11% advertised fast-food restaurants.

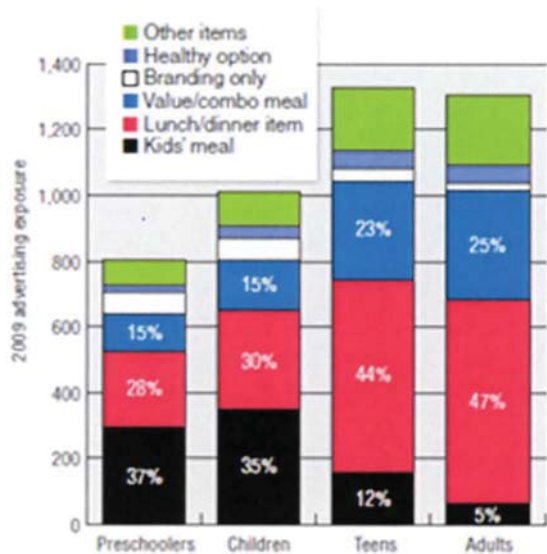


Figure 4: Composition of advertising exposure in 2009 by product category and age group*

According to the Nielsen statistics company in 2009, preschoolers and children viewed the most ads for kids' meals: approximately 1 ad per day for children and 8 per day for preschoolers. Although ads for lunch/dinner items were not targeted to preschoolers and children, these items were the second most commonly viewed product category for this age group.

Preschoolers and children viewed about 1 ad for healthy food options every two weeks. Figure 4 presents the composition of advertising exposure for each age group by product category.

According to Allen Hamilton (2007), the Arab media market is strong and flourishing in terms of television viewership. The report concluded that demand for and consumption of TV broadcasting is clearly higher in the Middle East than in most developed countries. In addition, Booz Allen Hamilton considers that this is an industry that is generating momentum, with

measured year on year increases. The study also found that competition has intensified due to the rapid proliferation of TV stations (csub.edu, 2008).

An increase in the number of satellite TV channels will likely bring advertising rates down with the influx of competitors on the market. This will in turn allow more companies to advertise their products on television.

The chief executive of Omnicom Media Group in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Elie Khoury said that The Arab world's US\$1 billion television advertising industry is forecast to be "under strain", as global firms cut spending on publicity and digital media continue to rise (thenational.ae, 2012).

Television is considered the backbone of the Arab media industry, although the print sector – newspapers and magazines - still attract more advertising revenue (thenational.ae, 2012).

b) In-school marketing

Reasons for the increase in in-school marketing to children and adolescents include the desire to increase sales and generate product loyalty, the ability to reach large numbers of children and adolescents in a contained setting, and the financial vulnerability of schools due to chronic funding shortages (Consumers Union Education Services,1995). In-school commercial activities related to food and beverages include 1) product sales; 2) direct advertising; 3) indirect advertising; and 4) market research with students. (Nestle, 2002).

There is a growing trend of fast food vendors in schools. About 20% of US high schools offer brand-name fast foods, such as Pizza Hut, Taco Bell, or Subway (Craypo, Purcell, & Samuels, 2002). The results from the 2000 California High School Fast Food Survey conducted in 171 US school districts with 345 public high schools found that 24% of districts with a fast food or beverage contract gave exclusive advertising promotion rights to that company, including placement of the company's name and logo on school equipment and facilities (Craypo, Purcell, & Samuels 2002). Only 13% of the districts did not allow advertising on campus.

There are many types of direct advertising in schools, such as soft drink, fast food, or snack food corporate logos on athletic scoreboards, sponsorship banners in gyms, ads in school newspapers and yearbooks, free textbook covers with ads, and screen-saver ads on school computers for branded foods and beverages. The US GAO report found that the most visible and prevalent types of direct advertising in schools were soft drink advertisements and corporate names and logos on scoreboards (US General Accounting Office, 2000). Recently, food marketing to youth in schools has become even more intense, persuasive, and creative. Some schools are now selling food advertising space on their athletes' warm-up suits, as well as inside and outside of school buses. A large multinational food company tested an advertising campaign in 2001 that paid ten elementary school teachers in Minneapolis, MN, US to drive cars to school that advertised Reese's Puffs, a sweetened cereal (ijbnpa, 2004). The cars were wrapped with a vinyl ad and teachers earned a \$250 monthly stipend for their efforts as "freelance brand managers." The campaign was to last from early August through the first month of classes in September but was canceled after 3 weeks due to public protest (ijbnpa, 2004).

Indirect advertising includes corporate-sponsored educational materials and corporate-sponsored incentives and contests. Many US elementary school programs promote a reading incentive program that rewards students with a free pizza for reading a required number of books. When students reach their reading goal they are given a certificate for a free pizza (US General Accounting Office, 2000). McDonald's McSpellit Club rewards perfect scores on spelling tests with coupons for free hamburgers, cheeseburgers, or Chicken McNuggets (ijbnpa, 2004). Local McDonald's restaurants provide schools with coupons redeemable for french fries and soft drinks (ijbnpa, 2004).

c) Product placements

Product placement is increasing in popularity and becoming more acceptable as a standard marketing channel. It typically involves incorporating brands in movies in return for money or promotional support. Fees are variable depending on the relative importance of the placement in movies, and are usually around \$50,000 to \$100,000 (ijbnpa, 2004). Producers contend that product placement makes sets look more realistic and that brands help define characters and settings. In addition, product placement can help offset production costs. Product placement in the movies first gained attention in 1982 when it was reported that sales of the peanut butter candy Hershey's Reese's Pieces increased by 65% within a month due to its placement within E.T., The Extra Terrestrial (Gupta, 1997, p.19). It is reported that placement is being used more in radio, music videos, books, comic strips, plays, and songs (ijbnpa, 2004) and that product placement agencies are increasing in number (ijbnpa, 2004).

d) Internet

"TV has always been considered the backbone of the industry in this part of the world, and I think today we're starting to see that other media types are taking over from TV: that being the digital, the emphasis on social media, and search. All these things are growing phenomenally still," said Elie Khoury, the chief executive of Omnicom Media Group in the Middle East and North Africa (Mena) (thenational.ae, 2012).

In the US, online media play an increasingly significant role in the lives children and teenagers. US Census data indicate that between 1998 and 2001 the proportion of US adolescents (ages 14–17 years) using the Internet increased from 51% to 75% and the proportion of US children (ages 10–13 years) online increased from 39% to 65% (Kaiser Family Foundation ,2002). Families with children represent one of the fastest growing segments of the population using the Internet(Montgomery, 2000) US Census data from 2001 indicate that half (51%) of US children 10–13 years old and 61% of those 14–17 years old have Internet access at home.

Advertisers and marketers have begun to target the rapidly growing number of US children online with a variety of new interactive advertising and marketing techniques (Montgomery D, 1996). The forms of advertising and marketing on the Web differ significantly from television commercials. Utilizing the unique features of the Internet, companies can seamlessly integrate advertising and Web site content (Montgomery KC, 2001). Almost all of the major companies that advertise and market to children have created their own websites, designed as "branded environments" for children (Montgomery D, 1996; Montgomery KC, 2001). This electronic advertising "environment" and on-line infomercials is evident with food companies, which offer

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon

multiple entertaining, animated and interactive areas developed specifically for preschoolers and children around their food products. These sites include games, word-find puzzles, contests, quizzes, riddles, music, e-mail cards, clips of commercials, sweepstakes, downloadable recipes, desktop wallpaper and screensavers that feature their products, and on-line stores that sell licensed merchandise. Children can also sign up to receive electronic newsletters with news about products and promotions. The sites often feature popular product spokes-characters and animated cartoon characters, such as Tony the Tiger, Chester Cheetah, Toucan Sam, and Snap! Crackle! And Pop! The integration of products into games is commonplace. The company's website is frequently featured on ads or product packaging. Examples of food branded environments for children on food company websites are shown in Table 5.

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon

Examples of Food Corporation Websites in the US Geared to Children and Adolescents	
Food Company	Example of Web Site Content*
<p>BURGER KING http://www.burgerking.com website</p>	<p>Games, toys, tunes, and other downloads are promoted along side their food items. There is a special <i>Big Kids Club</i> link on the home page where 4–12 year olds are encouraged to become club members.</p>
<p>DUBBLE BUBBLE GUM http://www.dubblebubble.com website</p>	<p>Animated site includes games (<i>Gum Ball Drop</i>, <i>Pud's Gum Factory</i>, <i>Bubble Breakout</i>) contests, cartoons, e-cards, and a virtual tour of a bubble gum or gumball factory.</p>
<p>FRITO-LAY http://www.fritolay.com website</p>	<p>Homepage displays logos of all of this corporation's food products. Each logo links to individual product's homepage (i.e., Doritos, Cheetos, Cracker Jack, Fritos, etc.) These websites contain flashing icons and banners, music, games, e-cards, and special offers featuring the products and/or its characters, (i.e., Chester Cheeto, the hip animated character that advertises Cheetos).</p>
<p>GENERAL MILLS http://www.youruleschool.com website</p>	<p><i>You Rule School</i> is the kids' link for this site and features the Trix rabbit and the Lucky Charms leprechaun leading kids through the <i>Homework Free Zone</i> schoolhouse of games and activities for kids.</p>
<p>HERSHEY'S http://www.kidztown.com website</p>	<p>Kids' link from Hershey's homepage that welcomes viewers to the "sweetest place on the web." There are animated games all promoting the company's brands, i.e., <i>Milk Duds Trivia</i>, <i>Hershey's Syrup Flavor Farm</i>, <i>Twizzlers Slider Puzzle</i>, <i>Hershey's Kisses Way to Go</i>, and recipes using Hershey's candy.</p>
<p>KELLOGGS http://www.kelloggs.com website</p>	<p>Homepage includes a link to <i>Save Our Apple Jacks</i>, an interactive page aimed at kids to tell them that the taste of Apple Jacks will not be changed: "Great news, NO apple taste" is the slogan. There is also an interactive Frosted Flakes Hockey Game that kids can play with Tony the Tiger, replete with the sound of a cheering crowd.</p>
	<p>Kids' link features photos of the KFC latest "laptop" meal available at KFC and a link where kids can send an e-card with a photo of a KFC entrée.</p>

KENTUCKY FRIED CHICKEN

(KFC)

<http://www.kfc.com> website

LIFESAVERS

<http://www.candystand.com>
website

Links at the top of the website provide a variety of games: 15 arcade games, 20 sports games, 8 action "extreme" sports games, 11 card games/puzzles, 3 trivia games, 6 multiplayer sports games, and a list of 5 prizes you could win if you play certain games that advertise Lifesavers, including the game pieces.

M&M's

<http://www.mms.com> website

All games actively involve the M&M's characters and promote its candy. Downloads include M&M desktop wallpaper, icons, sounds, stationery, and autographed pictures. E-cards of characters can be sent from this site. In the Colorworks section, you can play a melody on a keyboard of colorful M&M's and order special M&M's color combinations of your school's colors.

McDONALD'S

<http://www.mcdonalds.com>
website

Main page links to Ronald.com with the slogan "You found the Internet's land for fun. Ronald.com!" There are many games, puzzles, quizzes, and coloring pages all with Ronald McDonald and other McDonald's characters, as well as the food entrées available at the restaurant.

SNICKERS

<http://www.snickers.com>
website

"Don't let hunger happen to you" is the slogan of this web site. Games (i.e., *Hunger Attack*), jokes, videos, and e-cards all feature and promote Snicker bars.

* The content on the websites changes frequently

Story and French *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity* 2004 1:3 doi:10.1186/1479-5868-1-3

Table 5. Examples of Food Corporation Websites in the US Geared to Children and Adolescents

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon

In addition to food company sites, there are also several other commercial sites that advertise food products to children. Internet sites aimed at preschoolers have proliferated in recent years (Tarpley,2001). Popular sites include Disney.com, NickJr.com from cable television network and Nickelodeon, and FoxKids.com from the Fox Kids cable channel. All of these websites are supported by advertising. It is reported that more than two-thirds of all Internet sites designed for children and adolescents use advertising as their primary revenue stream (Montgomery K,2001). Content analyses studies to document television food advertising have not yet been conducted with the Internet sites oriented to children. Due to criticisms from consumer advocacy groups, many children's websites and food company web pages for children now put "ad bugs" or the word "advertisement" next to a sponsor's hotlink (Montgomery KC, 2001). However, these can be easily missed, especially by young children.

e) Toys and products with brand logos

There has been a recent trend among food companies to market toys and products with brand logos to preschoolers and young children to develop an early and positive relationship with the child and thereby promote brand awareness and preference. The food industry has partnered with toy manufacturers to create toys that advertise food. General Mills last year partnered with Target stores to create a line of children's loungewear based on iconic cereal brands like Trix and Lucky Charms(Reyes,2003). The M&M's candy company offers a catalog of items including toys and clothing. Examples of toys with brand logos are shown in Table 6.

Examples of toys with food brand logos in the US



Barbie Dolls (Mattel)

• Jello Barbie

Barbie wears a t-shirt with "Jello" written on it. Set comes with Jello and mold for making Barbie's pink Jello.

• McDonald's Barbie

Barbie is dressed in a McDonald's clerk outfit. She has a tray of French fries, hamburger, soft drinks. Comes with Barbie's little sister Kelly who has a Happy Meal.

• Little Debbi Barbie

Barbie is dressed to go shopping. In her Little Debbie shopping bag are authentic miniature boxes of Little Debbie snack cakes.



McDonald's Play Sets (Creative Design)

• McDonald's Food Cart with Play Food

Features a cart and drive-through window with a play cash register, grill, deep fryer, and McFlurry machine. 30 food accessories including burgers, fries, Chicken McNuggets, pies, soft drinks.

• McDonald's Fast Food Center

Story and French *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity* 2004 1:3 doi:10.1186/1479-5868-1-3

Table 6. Examples of toys with food brand logos in the US



Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon

Several companies sell counting and reading books for preschoolers and young children for brand-name foods. For example, Kellogg's Frui Loops! Counting Fun Book, The M&M's Brand Counting Book, and the Oreo Cookie Counting Book. There are numerous math books for children such as Reese's Math Fun: Addition 1 to 9, Skittles Riddles Math, and the Hershey's Kisses Addition Book. On the Amazon.com website there are over 40 children's brand food name counting and reading books available for purchase.

Billboards are often used for fast food promotion. Billboards are placed in high-traffic areas, such as streets that host heavy work commutes and freeway exits. This type of fast food advertising is also used to encourage motorists to use drive-through services. The strategy with billboards is often to include the company logo, a visually striking image or message, and directions for the motorist to locate the nearest restaurant (wisegeek.com)

3. Disorders in Eating Habits

Of critical importance is whether youth-targeted marketing and advertising of food products has any impact on children's food behaviors or body weight. Almost all of the studies on the impact of food advertising on children's food preferences and behaviors were conducted in the mid 1970s and the 1980s. These studies focused on the relationship between children's exposure to television advertising and their food preferences, food choices, food intake or purchase requests. A review (Coon,Tucker,2002) on the effects of television food advertising on preschool and school-age children's food behavior concluded that: 1) studies of food preferences using experimental designs have consistently shown that children exposed to advertising will choose advertised food products at significantly higher rates than children who were not exposed; 2)

findings from food purchase request studies based on surveys, diaries, experimental trials, and direct observation of mother-child pairs shopping have consistently shown that children's exposure to food television advertising increases the number of attempts children make to influence food purchases their parents buy; 3) purchase requests for specific brands or categories of food products also reflect product advertising frequencies; and 4) fewer studies have been conducted on food advertising effects on actual food intake, in part due to difficulty in controlling children's exposure to advertising or to foods outside experimental settings (Coon,Tucker,2002).

A variety of study designs have been used to study the effects of food advertising on children's food behavior and food preferences but most are field experiments or survey research/ cross-sectional correlational studies. Further, the studies to date have focused almost exclusively on television food advertising. However, considering all the evidence to date, the weight of the scientific studies suggests that television food advertising is associated with more favorable attitudes, preferences and behaviors towards the advertised product (Coon, Tucker, 2002; Horgan & Brownell,2001). The research evidence is strong showing that preschoolers and grade school children's food preferences and food purchase requests for high sugar and high fat foods are influenced by television exposure to food advertising (Robinson, Borzekowski, 2001).Only a few studies have been done on food advertising and the effects on children's actual food intake. Gorn and Goldberg conducted a novel, well-designed experimental field study which randomly assigned children ages 5–8 years old attending a summer camp to one of four conditions to examine television exposure of snack food commercials to actual food consumption. Daily for two weeks, children watched 30 minutes of a television cartoon with about 5 minutes of

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon

advertising embedded. The four experimental conditions differed in the type of food advertising included with the cartoon: ads for candy and Kool-Aid; ads for fruit and fruit juice; control (no ads); and public service ad announcements for healthy foods. Each day after the television exposure, the children were given a selection of fruits, juices, candy, or Kool-Aid to choose to eat. Children in the candy/Kool-Aid commercials condition selected the most candy/Kool-Aid and the least fruit and juice. For example, those in the candy commercial condition selected significantly less fruit (25%) than those in the fruit commercial condition (45%).

A new WHO/FAO consultation report on diet and prevention of chronic diseases examined the strength of evidence linking dietary and lifestyle factors to the risk of developing obesity (2003). Diet and lifestyle factors were categorized based on the strength of scientific evidence according to four levels of evidence: convincing, probable, possible and insufficient. The report concluded that while the evidence that the heavy marketing of fast food outlets and energy-dense, micronutrient-poor food and beverages to children causes obesity is equivocal, sufficient indirect evidence exists to place this practice in the "probable" category for increasing risk of obesity (WHO, 2003). For comparative purposes, other factors placed in the "probable" category were: high intake of sugar-sweetened soft drinks and fruit juices; and adverse socioeconomic conditions (in developed countries, especially for women). Clearly, additional research is needed to examine possible links between exposure to food ads, food consumption patterns and obesity.

Children are addicted to viewing TV. Their average of watching is more than three hours per day, so they are heavy viewers. After/during watching TV ads, most of the children demand drinks i.e. coca-cola, Pepsi; these drinks develops unhealthy habits of children (WHO, 2003). In

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon

addition, the author believes that some children age 8-12 are trying to imitate the same actions they see during those ads, which are dangerous for their lives.

Moreover, fast food ads on Television are increasing with the use of famous celebrities to promote it, for example the ad of the Argentinean football player Messi for KFC products which are very high in fat. Children seeing this ad on all channels keep on nagging to buy the product or brand they are seeing whether breakfast, lunch, dinner or at any time of the day which may directly affect their eating habits.

Fast food advertising to children is not only limited to television. The internet; which is more cost efficient and viral marketing has also become popular advertising venues. Internet marketers know how kids use the net and how popular sites such as Twitter and Facebook are. They also know that children love to click on links. If it says click here, they do. Many websites offer free ring tones and music downloads. In order to get the freebie an e-mail address is required and thus cross promotion campaigns begin creating fast food advertisement to children via e-mail marketing.

In addition, billboards that children see on the roads can be very effective; the author believes that an ad for Burger King may directly affect children's senses and desires of becoming kings; as the ad shows on the billboards so they shift their behavior from kids to kings.

For all these causes, children are bombarded by fast food advertisements which are a great appeal for them so their insistence on purchasing such food products increases and whenever they are faced by a negative response from their parents, the distance increases between them and children become more aggressive with the people around them till they get what they want (Khoury, 2013).

4. Obesity

Childhood obesity around the world, and particularly in Lebanon, is an escalating problem that is especially detrimental as its effects carry on into adulthood. Even though the obesity epidemic continues to grow in various parts of the world, recent reports have highlighted disparities in obesity trends across countries. There is little empirical evidence on the development and growth of obesity in Lebanon and other countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region (Sibai, 2012). In less than thirty years, the prevalence of overweight children and adolescents in Lebanon has more than doubled.

In the 1963-1970 period, 4 percent of children aged 6 to 11 years and 5 percent of adolescents aged 12 to 19 were defined as being overweight. The percentage of children who are overweight has more than tripled by 1999, reaching 13 percent. For adolescents, the incidence of overweight has nearly tripled in the same period, reaching 14 percent (Centers for Disease Control, 2001).

Finding the causes of this dramatic increase in obesity among children and adolescents is an important input in designing prevention policies. On the simplest level, weight gain is caused by more energy intake than energy expenditure over a long period of time. Researchers have tended to focus on environmental factors such as the availability of highly palatable and calorie dense fast food to promote high energy intake as well as the appeal of television, video games, and internet to discourage energy expenditure.

Children and adolescents are increasingly engaging in sedentary behavior, spending less time exercising outdoors and more time watching television, playing video games, internet, and if outside home, they are faced by the fast food billboard ads on the roads.

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon

How the commercial advertising of foods contributes to the epidemic of obesity among children and adolescents is still an ongoing debate. There is widespread speculation, however, that the exposure to food advertising may contribute to unhealthy food choices and weight gain. Children are easily molded by what they see in television commercials and internet. Studies indicate that the more children watch television or surf the internet, the more they specifically request the brand-name products that are advertised at the grocery store. Consumer behavior in response to advertising could be explained using Becker and Murphy (1993), where a model in which a brand's advertising level interacts with consumption in the consumer's utility function is proposed. In this model, by treating advertising as a complementary good, consumers may simply derive more utility from consuming a more advertised good. As an example, it may be that a child values the toys that go together with the commercial products, and advertising may then serve as an input that enables the consumer to derive more utility when the advertised product is consumed. Moreover, children, especially younger ones, may not be able to distinguish advertisements from regular programs and have little understanding of their persuasive intent (Ross, 1981).

Using children's favorite characters and linking products with concepts such as fun, happiness, and well-being, food advertisements can successfully entice children to consume their products. Nevertheless, the effect of television advertising on childhood obesity is complex, dealing with the interplay between the characteristics of the children, the attitudes of their parents, and environmental settings (Grossman, 2007).

Besides obesity, following a report published by MTV Lebanese television on February 3 (2013), children eating fast food 3 times per week are subject to Eczema and Asthma. Researchers have examined 500,000 children from 50 different countries and noticed that children between 13 and 14 years old having fast food 3 times per week have 39% more probability of having Eczema, Asthma, and eye itching, as for those who eat fruits have 11 to 14% less probability of getting these diseases.

B. Theoretical Framework

Based on the cognitive development theory (Piaget,1967), the cognitive-behavioral therapy theory (Meichenbaum, 1977), and the Socio-cultural theory (Vygotsky, 1930),this study is done to show the potential effects of the advertising of fast food products that are displayed on TV, internet and billboards on children in Lebanon aged between 6 and 12 years old on potential disorders in their eating habits and obesity.

Reference to the survey's answers, a deductive reasoning will be used to be able to explain from the general concern (children's health) to details and deduct from them.

The traditional cognitive development approaches view progress in children's cognitive skills as a series of stages through which children pass as they grow from infancy to adulthood. Piaget's (1896 – 1980) theory is the best known of the stage theories. According to this theory, cognitive development occurs in four main stages: the sensorimotor stage (0-2 years), the preoperational stage (2-6 years), the concrete operational stage (7-12 years), and the formal operational stage (12 through adulthood) (Brucks, Goldberg, & Armstrong, 1986) (see figure 7).

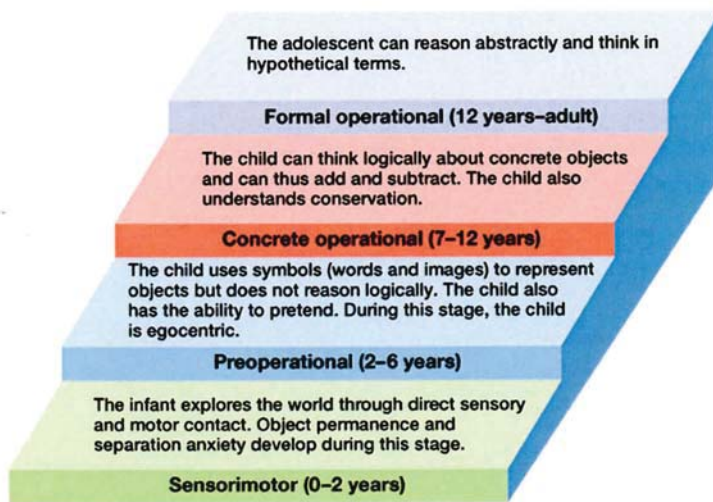


Figure 7: Cognitive Development Stages

In the sensorimotor stage, the infant's behavior is not at all mediated by thought. In the preoperational stage, the child develops the ability to think in terms of symbols (language and mental imagery), but has poorly organized ways of thinking- about objects, events, and ideas. The preoperational child tends to focus on dominant percept attributes of objects (e.g., height) while ignoring other attributes (e.g., width). Thought is guided almost entirely by the perceptual characteristics of the immediate environment. Thus it is highly unlikely that elaborative cognitive responses to advertising messages would occur in this stage (Brucks, Goldberg, & Armstrong, 1986).

Cognitive-behavioral therapy theory (Meichenbaum, 1977), is an action-oriented form of psychosocial therapy that assumes that maladaptive, or faulty, thinking patterns cause maladaptive behavior and "negative" emotions. (Maladaptive behavior is behavior that is counter-productive or interferes with everyday living). Theoretically, cognitive-behavioral

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon

therapy can be employed in any situation in which there is a pattern of unwanted behavior accompanied by distress and impairment (medical-dictionary.com). Meichenbaum explains that children opt to isolate themselves from their peers and family to watch TV and feel part of the content they are seeing. For advertising, children tend to think, feel, and then be motivated positively toward fast food ads which are in reality a faulty thinking leading to a faulty behavior of desire and demand of the product advertised.

According to Vygotsky, "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (inter psychological) and then inside the child (intra psychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals" (Vygotsky,1978, p.57). This theory suggests that social interaction leads to continuous step-by-step changes in children's thought and behavior that can vary greatly from culture to culture. Vygotsky places considerably more emphasis on social factors contributing to cognitive development (See figure 8) (Vygotsky,1978, p.57).

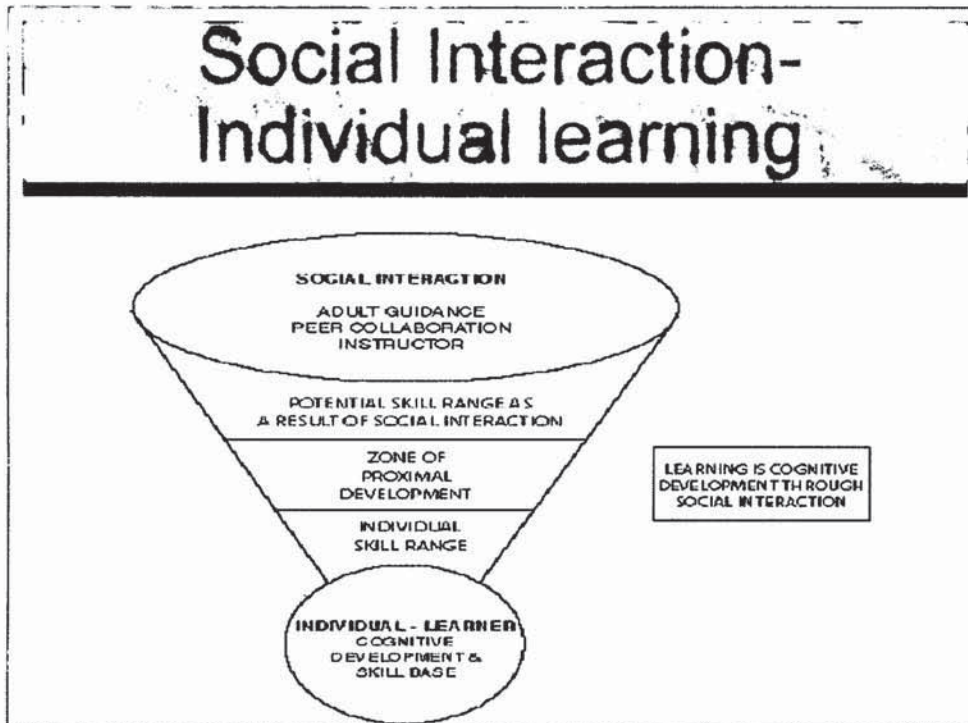


Figure 8: Social Interaction Leading to Individual learning

V- Research Questions

In this thesis, the advertised brands on television, internet, and billboard are the independent variables whose variation does not depend on that of another or in other words, the variables that may have an effect on the dependent variable, whereas the children observing them were the dependent variable, which is what you measure in the experiment and what is affected during the experiment (ncsu.edu,2012). Both variables interact in the contextual surrounding. Those variables are affected by several factors; mainly, the parents' interaction and reaction, and the cultural and psychosocial factors.

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon

Parents' interaction during the watching process of children, in terms of type of advertising they are being faced by, and their reactions toward it which lead to parents' type of reaction. In addition, the cultural and psychosocial learning of children acquired from their parents is measured to deduct their behavior. Several examples can be taken from the daily Lebanese families' life, such as children watching TV while having dinner, children preference to watch TV instead of having dinner with their parents, and largely the way parents' raise their children.

The two hypotheses tested were:

H1: Children exposed to fast food advertisements might engage with these ads and demand the products advertised for (cognitive development and cognitive-behavioral theories) and

H2: Parents affect children's choices of fast food products (socio- cultural theory).

To ensure valid and reliable results for the survey, the research includes a survey based on a representative sampling of 130 married parents that are varied from different areas in Lebanon (Metn, Keserwan, Beirut...), different religions, and social classes... to represent a larger group of parents. During the study, people were asked to answer few questions related to their children's response to ads.

This study is cross sectional since it works on a representative subset of a population (married people) and provides data on the entire population under study, this type of study is conducted to estimate the prevalence of interest for a given population, commonly for the purposes of public health which is, specifically in this study, the health of children (ijbnpa, 2004). The study follows a deductive reasoning/logic proceeding from the general concern which is the health of children and their development to the particular details (Stempel & Westley, 1981) of the effect of fast food advertising to children or parents' effect on children toward this issue.

VI- Methodology

A. Survey

Through quantitative analysis, the data was collected from a “structured” questionnaire distributed to a representative sample of 130 married parents (per individual and not couples) in Le Mall-Dbayeh, and Beirut Mall–Tayouneh. The sample chosen is supposed to have represented the Lebanese parents having children between 6 and 12 years old. The sample chosen was not related to the population size since it focuses on a specific target which is the opinion of married parents having children in the average age under study. The survey was done directly on spot on an I-Pad, through an online survey system.

Parents were asked questions about their children’s behavior/ reaction toward fast food advertising and other questions related to the topic so it will be based on a representative purposive sampling that is constructed to serve a very specific need or purpose to a specific target.

The rate of response was average because not all people have time or patience to participate in a survey and for sure that many of them were not hundred percent transparent in their answers to show the idealistic side of them, of their children and of their education.

B. Interviews

Two one-on-one interviews were done with two accredited persons that can help in elaborating more the subject.

The first interview was done with Mrs. Marie-Adele Khoury, psychotherapist using artistic mediated techniques and family systemic approaches with children and families.

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon

She received her bachelor degree in Psychology from the Lebanese University and an Executive Masters from Saint Joseph University (USJ) and the Lebanese University and the International Organization for migration. The interview discussed the children's cognitive development, reactions, and behavior, and psychosocial and cultural factors toward advertising they observe on television, billboards, and internet.

Interview questions were as follows:

- 1) a) As a psychologist, how do you observe or define advertising?
b) Who are the people most affected by advertising?
- 2) At what age do children start to be affected by the advertisements they see, and how?
- 3) What are the usual behaviors of children when they watch or are faced by fast food advertisements?
- 4) What is the cognitive effect of ads on children?
- 5) What is the most effective medium on children's reactions? and why?
- 6) What do you think is the effect of toys given to children in fast food restaurants?
- 7) Does parents' background and education have any relation with their children's reactions?
- 8) a) How parents usually react toward child's fast food behavior?
b) How parents should react toward such behavior?
- 9) What is the effect of fast food products on obesity?
- 10) Do you think child needs psychotherapy when it comes to an excess demand of fast food?

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon

11) What is the final word you could say about fast food advertising to children?

Another interview was done with Mrs. Joanna Khalil Atallah, Clinical Dietitian and Public Health Practitioner, specialized in Children diets and health behavior. She has a Bachelor of Science degree in Nutrition and Dietetics and Master of Public Health degree, concentration Health Behavior and Education, from the American University of Beirut.

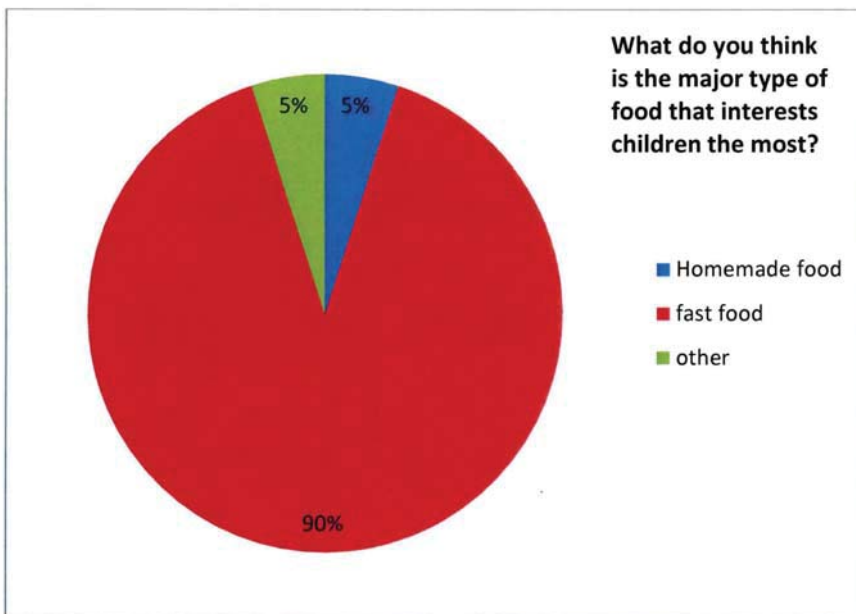
Interview questions were as follows:

- 1) To begin with, how do you define a nutritional behavior?
- 2) How is the perfect body weight of a child calculated?
- 3) When is a child considered to be obese?
- 4) Facing the current enormous advertisements of fast food, how do you deal with the increase of children's demand for it?
- 5) With your experience, what is the medium that affects children's reactions and desires the most?
- 6) How is the biological behavior of a child explained, i.e. craving for an X fast food restaurant?
- 7) What should the people responsible for media content do to help and be part of a healthy nutritional intake of children?
- 8) Are there any recommendations given to parents about the nutrition and diet of their children?

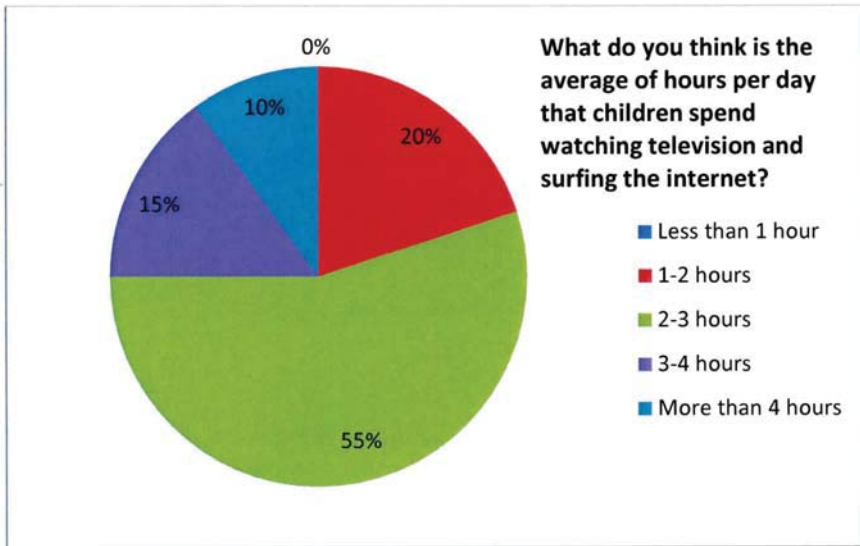
VII- Results & Analysis

The survey results were compiled from the 130 parents approached at Le Mall Dbayeh and Beirut Mall Tayouneh.

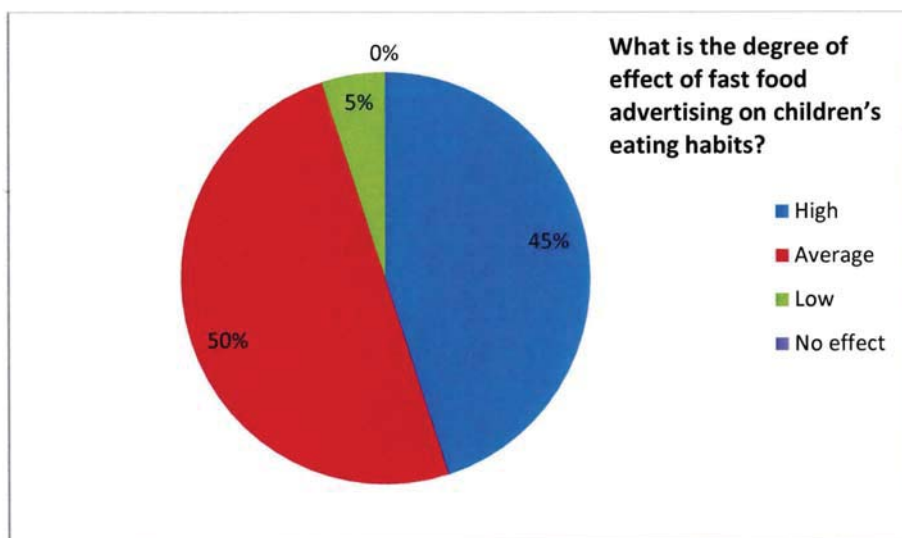
Answering question 1 in the survey, as shown in the below chart, 90% of the parents think that fast food is the major type of food that interests their children, 5% believe that homemade food are more interesting to their children, and 5% also believe that other types of food might be interesting to their children such as sweets, candies, non-fast food restaurants...



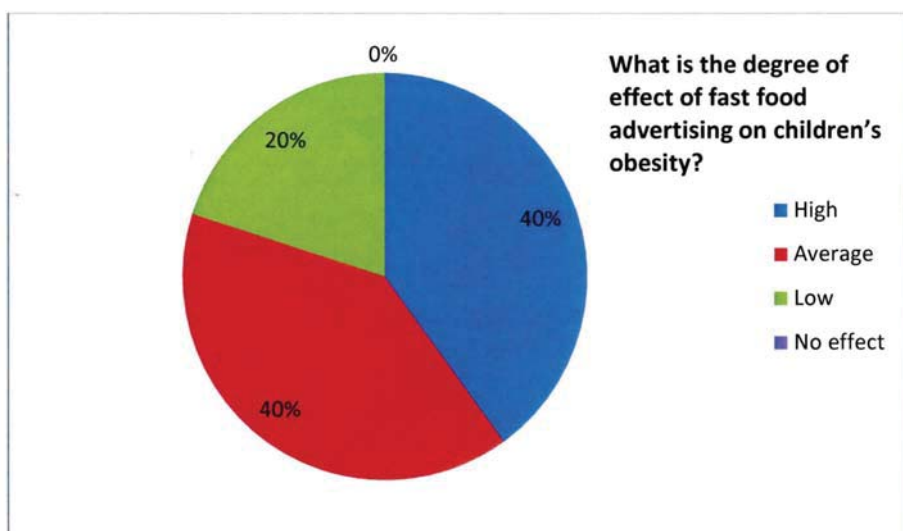
Answering question 2, 55% of the parents admit that the average of hours per day that their children spend watching television and surfing the Internet, or as a combination of the two, is 2 to 3 hours, which is considered to be a high number, and means that children are spending around 21 hours per week using this medium.



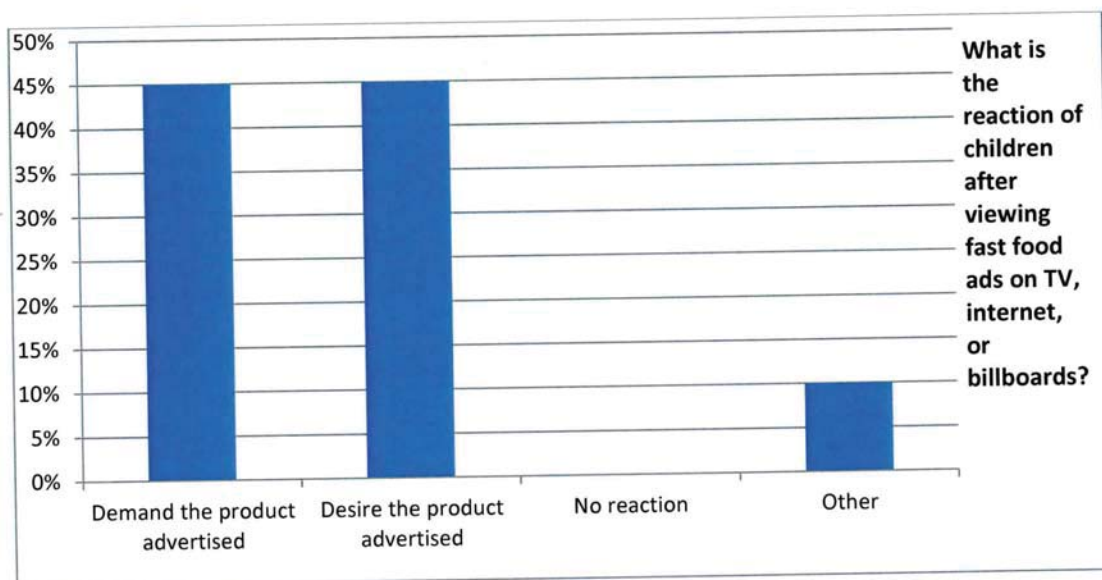
Answering question 3, 50% of parents see that fast food advertising has an average influence on children's eating habits, 45% believe that it has a high influence, 5% think it has a low influence, but no one believes that it doesn't have any influence. From those who believe that advertising has an average or high influence, parents commented that such advertising has an effect because their children are still in the developmental stage and anything can affect them. Even though children know very well how delicious fast food is, parents should know how to react and explain the importance of homemade food and the negative side of fast food. In addition, other parents see that there are many other influencers in addition to advertising such as family and school. If there is not a lot of possibility to eat fast food for any reason, advertising only could not really affect their habit.



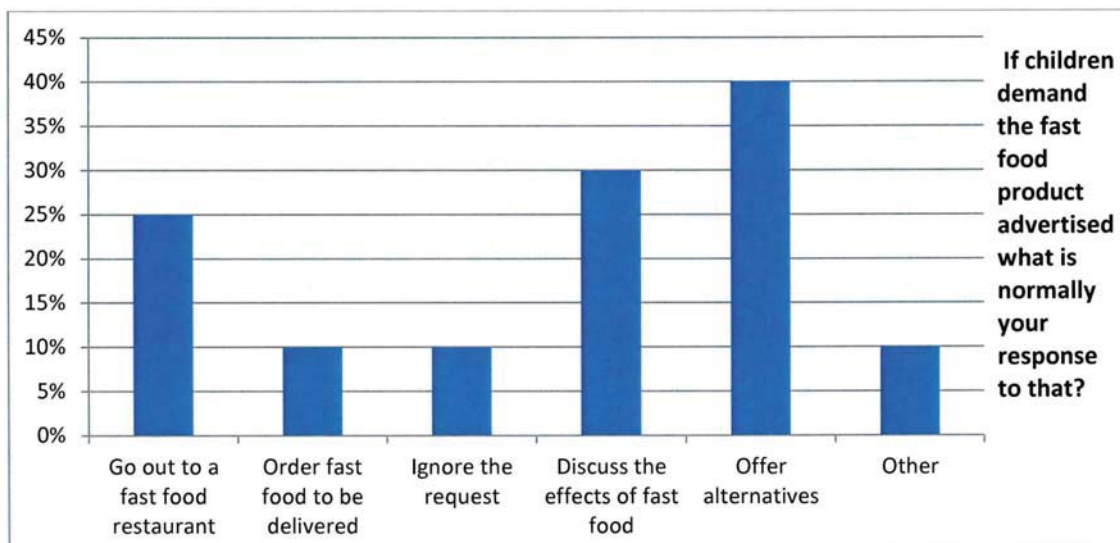
As for question 4, 80% of parents believe that fast food advertising has an average or high degree of effect on children's obesity because children can be influenced by anything they watch or see, and since most of the time children's obesity is linked to fast food, consequently the advertising effect will be high, so it is one of the main causes of obesity, it has minimal or zero nutritional intake. On the other hand, 20% believe that fast food advertising has low effect on obesity and see that it isn't related and it is one of the factors that can be linked to obesity, but other psychological, biological and familial factors can also have more effect.



In question 5, 90% of the parents' answers were that children's' demand and desire for the product advertised is certain after they view a fast food ad on TV, the Internet, or billboards. 10% of parents believe that children visit such fast food restaurants for fun more than to eat that's why they desire to go to a fast food restaurant and not the desire of the advertised product. None of the parents said that their children don't have reaction after viewing fast food ads.



As for the last question, parents were asked about their response to children's demand for the advertised product. 40% said that they will offer alternatives for their children like delicious homemade healthy food; 30% will discuss the effects of fast food, mainly the negative ones; 25% will answer their children's demand and go to a fast food restaurant, 10% will prefer to order fast food at home, which will diminish the possibility that children will ask for more unhealthy food when seeing the photos at the restaurant; another 10% of parents will ignore their children's request; and lastly 10% of parents did not choose any of the below answers, some of them said that they won't ignore the demand specifically but try to distract their children and shift to another subject.



Based on these survey's results and referring to hypothesis 1, "children exposed to fast food advertisements might engage with these ads and demand the products advertised for" is supported. Children increase their consumption of junk foods after seeing the advertisements. They are seen to be influenced by these ads that they almost double their consumption of these unhealthy snacks and foods. Yet, putting ads containing catchy pictures make children desire fast food unconsciously, and repeatedly. These advertisements will influence children and particularly Lebanese children to be more demanding of fast food as long as they are seeing it. In other words, children's habits of eating homemade healthy food will change and obesity rates among them will keep increasing.

In addition, based on hypothesis 2, "parents affect children's choices of fast food products" is also supported when used as a gratification technique and/or when children's demands are fulfilled by parents.

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon

As for the interview done with psychologist Marie-Adele Khoury, she believes that advertising is part of consumer tendency, regardless of the type of advertising and the brands advertised; it affects everyone, children and adults and is linked to the social problems in every country, especially in the Lebanese community where it lies a lot on the social-economic identity i.e. X person buys X high end car for a specific prestige even if he can't afford its maintenance.

Children are affected by advertising since they start watching TV, and since they are able to see the world of billboards around them. Entering messages in children's minds, which is the aim of advertising starts attacking the subconscious and unconscious. The objective of advertising is to deliver messages that create preferences. They start linking the acts and characters they see to their personal life. i.e. I can fly like Superman.

As for the behavior, it is generally linked to two factors, the biological and psychological.

- Biological factor is the appetite a child has when craving a specific brand.
- Psychological factor reinforced by the message delivered.

Behavior is the result of these factors; it is their consequence. According to B.F Skinner, in such a context, consequence reinforces the action. The behavior of children depends on the reaction of the parents; if they demand a specific product and the reaction to this demand was positive, this will lead to reinforcing this demand.

This doesn't mean that the child is automatically affected by the ads; the taste also plays an important role, that's why fast food advertising is appreciated by children, they have attractive and special taste i.e. An ad showing Popeye eating spinach and becoming strong, leads children

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon

to the desire of trying spinach, but since it is not as tasty as it looks like in the ad, children do not demand this product like they demand others.

Ms. Khoury also added on the cognitive part that children are usually raised on the learning process; they ask and discover information. The learning process is affected when they receive the selling techniques and messages in ads real and factual, i.e. if you eat Burger King, so you are a real King. Here the parents' role should be present to give children other facts, like informing them about the importance of eating healthy food and the negative results they can get from eating fast food.

One of the main effective sources where children discover information is TV since it is interactive, entertaining, funny..., and also, statistically speaking, the ads are more repetitive than on other media, and repetition leads to storing, remembering, and recalling the ad in the children's mind.

After TV comes billboards which are present everywhere, the child can clearly and repeatedly see the ads while sitting in the car and without parents' control.

Moreover, toys are a kind of gratification that reinforces the demand of the child. There are different factors present in the fast food restaurants that attract the child's attention, and are:

- Advertising itself
- Colorful surrounding
- Games (kid's playground, and toys in kid's meal)
- Characters (i.e. Mc. Donald's character).

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon

Here enters the classical conditioning process⁴ (Pavlov, 1927) that parents use i.e. if you finish your meal, you will get the toy, so they are reinforcing the fast food consumption. In Lebanon and many other countries, especially in the Middle East, it is used wrongly, because this will lead children to keep asking for fast food. When a child is rewarded with fast food, he will like it more.

Pavlov had come to learn this concept of conditioned reflex when examining the rates of salivations among dogs. Pavlov had learned then when a bell was rung in subsequent time with food being presented to the dog in consecutive sequences, the dog will initially salivate when the food is presented (1927).

When asked about the probable relation between the parents' background and education to children and their reactions, Khoury replied that important factors enter in eating disorders; culturally, when a person feels down or bad, he eats; so children focus a lot on such actions and imitate it, i.e if a child sees his mother, in a repetitive action of eating after getting angry or being sad, he will automatically imitate her. Thus, the education of parents (how to behave in front of their child) is linked to their awareness of such negative reactions. In addition, the facts of WHY this is important and the positive reaction with what they say, plays a very negative role. i.e. You should not eat French fries because it is not healthy, but they do eat it in front of the child. So, healthy nutritional behavior and the habits of eating at home are connected in a very important cycle that parents should follow. Unfortunately, parents are using advertising to get something from their children (gratification technique). i.e. if you stay calm, we will take you to KFC.

⁴ Classical conditioning (also Pavlovian conditioning or respondent conditioning) is a form of learning in which the conditioned stimulus or CS, comes to signal the occurrence of a second stimulus, the unconditioned stimulus or US

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon

Usually, the reaction of the parents towards their children's demands for fast food starts by ignoring them, but later on they use these demands for different purposes, so here again enters the gratification method they use.

The reaction of the parents depends on their ways of life; if they work, if they are individualistic with no social life, no communication or interaction with others, have many children, or if they have patience...As a psychologist, such issues are treated and recommendation is built based on the living ways of the families:

- First, they should be aware of the negative impact of such products on their children's health.
- Second, they should explain why they say NO; the negative impact of fast food on health such as obesity...
- Third, they should weaken the importance of such products
- Last but not least, they should allow this from time to time so the children won't feel frustrated and different from their friends.

Psychologists do not recommend the gratification technique used by most parents because by doing so, fast food products become more essential to the child.

Talking about obesity and fast food, Khoury believes that an overweight child doesn't have physical activity, so he/she is keen on eating and on watching more fast food advertising.

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon

In addition, if a child has less social activities, so the possibility of sitting alone increases, and watching advertisements on TV and internet increases, which may lead to more fast food demand and hence more obesity.

Focusing more on the psychological part and especially if psychotherapy is needed when it comes to over demand, the psychologist sees that it is not just the child that needs psychotherapy, but the family, and schools also need to be more trained and become aware of the child's problem, taken into consideration the technology (i.e. i-pad) entering more into people's lives.

The psychologist concluded the interview by saying that all people related to this issue such as mental health professionals, nutritionists, advertising people... should communicate more on how to deliver the message without causing other problems to the audience. More awareness about nutrition should be done; facts and effects on health should be mentioned on products (i.e. the note written on cigarettes boxes).

To end, awareness and the right to know are then main debate in this issue, in addition to how to deliver the message and spread it in the right way.

On the other hand, Ms. Joanna Khalil, the interviewed clinical dietician, answered the questions as follows:

Nutritional behavior is the overall healthy or unhealthy eating habits that are acquired with time, that involve the intake of different nutrients and food items, and that are repeated over time, be it weekly, daily or on every meal.

As for the question about child weight calculation, she said that the best tool to determine the ideal body weight of a child is the use of growth charts that consist of a series of percentile curves. A child is considered overweight when his/her weight-to-height is between 85th and 95th percentile, and obese if weight-to-height is above the 95th percentile.

In answering question 4 about the cognitive effect of ads on children, Khalil believes that fast food should not be totally forbidden, children can have it but in moderation. If a child is used to eating fast food, it can be allowed twice a month or up to once a week. A better alternative is to try to replace “extremely unhealthy” fast food with “healthier fast food”. Here, by healthier, it is meant to choose a restaurant that offers at least a better quality of meat and poultry. Nutritionists always advise to replace mayonnaise with ketchup and mustard, to skip the carbonated beverages, to omit the appetizers and desserts and just order the main meal, to reduce the intake of French fries to one small portion, and to order a green side salad along with the meal.

In question 5, Khalil considers television as the number one medium affecting children, nowadays the advertisements on the internet are being more and more viewed, and the least effective are the billboards. Also it is to be noted that competitions, offers, free meals and combos make it even more enticing for children to desire fast food.

When asking about how the biological behavior of a child explained, i.e. craving for an X fast food restaurant, Ms. Khalil also talked about Pavlov’s experience by trusting that the adjective “mouthwatering” really originates from the fact that once a person sees a delicious food item,

the glands in the mouth start producing saliva to be ready to start digesting the food once ingested. With fast food advertising, this is exactly the scenario they count on to get children more addicted to their food or more appealing. Food items illustrated in advertisement are always very appealing, with fresh vegetables, delicious buns, refreshing beverages served along... The addiction is worse when the child has already tasted that particular food. Then the image is not only appealing for the eyes, but it is associated with the taste and flavors that the child already knows. This high level of stimulation of all senses will surely lead to a feeling of craving for fast food.

Stopping all advertisements for fast food restaurants, is the only thing that media people can do to be part of a child healthy nutritional intake, but obviously this is not possible since it involves billions of dollars in return... To be more realistic, billboards of fast food restaurants can be banned at least from around schools, playgrounds, sports centers for children...

Having counter-advertisements along with fast food advertisements can be also a solution, that is media spots encouraging eating more fruits and vegetables, drinking water, exercising...

To conclude, as a nutritionist, exposing children to all kinds of food items, a wide selection of fruits and vegetables and avoiding as much as possible all canned and processed food and stick to fresh food items are the best recommendations, in addition to water and exercise that should be part of the daily activities. As for fast food and other sweet and salty snacks, these fast food marketed to children are predominantly high in sugar and fat, and as such are inconsistent with national dietary recommendations, so moderation is important. Total abstinence is not advisable

as children can crave the forbidden food items; especially when they are in a birthday party or the like, they would binge eat the forbidden items. Khalil added that it is better yet to postpone introducing fast food items to children as long as possible and leave it until they are exposed to it during outings with friends; meaning that we can still control the nutritional behavior of young kids as they go out with their parents and close family members most of the time. When they grow older and start mingling with friends, they are at a higher risk of getting exposed to unhealthy food choices. Only then parents can explain to them how harmful this food can be if eaten in excess and as much as possible try to offer healthier fast food choices.

Based on both interviews, hypothesis 1 is also supported, as well as hypothesis 2 “parents affect children’s choices on fast food products”.

Even in industrialized societies, where governments, parents, and civil groups fight for better child advertising standards and regulations, or improved food quality, the industry fights back preferring self-regulation (which rarely happens, or is intentionally weak), and arguing that it is individual choices and parents are one of the main players.

Parents are using several techniques to push their children to eat or to do X thing by offering them fast food as reward. These types of gratifications mainly strengthen children’s demand and desire for fast food products.

Children may make excessive demands on their parents for the products they see in the advertisements. At times, they cry, pinch, pull and will not keep quiet till the parents purchase the product. Some parents who can’t control their children may give up and are left with no choice but to comply with the demand which foster more connection of children to such products.

Based on the survey and interviews results, hypotheses 1 and 2 have been distinctively supported

looking at the impact fast food ads have on the children, their behavior, their physical and social activity as well as the socio-cultural impact parents and society have on children and on their choices and preferences.

VIII-Conclusion and Recommendations for the Future

A. Conclusion

Advertising of food products is causing a great parental concern, thus, parents try to control the television viewing of their children. This study showed that the exposure of children to such types of ads is seen by parents as detrimental to what they were raised on; it may change their behavior with their parents and diminish the connections between them; and it may probably increase the levels of fat in their bodies at early ages.

Children are consumers who need to be protected by adults because they are too young to protect themselves and may not be or are not aware of such negative consequences on them.

Parents and schools can and should do more to teach children how to make healthy choices and consume fewer calories, and why it is important to do so. Parents can research fast food menus online.

They can use the information on many websites such as fastfoodmarketing.org and many others to learn about healthy calorie and sodium consumption for their children and to find the best options available at restaurants. But such education will be in vain unless fast food restaurants also drastically change their current marketing practices. Children and teens should not receive continuous reminders every day about the great tasting food served by these restaurants that may severely damages their health.

If fast food restaurants are sincere about wanting to do what they can to prevent obesity, they must transform their marketing practices with substantial improvements to all components of

their marketing plans, including menu composition, external advertising, and marketing inside the restaurants, to substantially reduce the unhealthy impact of fast food on young people's diet and health.

In addition, when young people visit, the restaurants should do much more to encourage the purchase of more healthful options. Fast food restaurants must establish meaningful standards for child-targeted marketing.

Last but not least, unfortunately, this problem will persist and always be a debatable subject and might get worse in the coming years with all the technological and patterns of life changes.

B. Limitations

There are some limitations to this study. First of all, alternative methodology could have been deployed to test different attitudes of children through in-person or focus-group interviews to better understand the causes and effects of this problem. In addition, the opinions of the interviewed psychological and nutrition professionals could have been compared to the opinions of other professionals working in the same field in different countries.

Furthermore, it might be of value to analyze whether there are differences in the evaluation of children's reactions watching advertising of regular products versus fast food advertising.

Moreover, due to the unstable situation in Lebanon, the sample chosen in the research was limited to two areas whereas a larger sample could have been identified to have more accurate answers from different areas in Lebanon and different mentalities.

People's attitude towards media and advertising in general and towards fast food ads and products in particular might change from area to another. Future researchers could develop a study to determine the change in the attitude towards this type of advertising.

C. Future Research

Since the Lebanese advertising industry is ultimately expanding more and new advertising techniques are used to reach all audience in all sectors including fast food advertising to children, this study attempted to know the influence of the media on the children of a specific age.

In future research, it is essential to study the possible correlation between the children's way of thinking and their reaction and feedback while watching the ads directly.

In addition, the ads' effects that were studied revealed mostly the negative effect they have on children; future research may reveal the possible positive effects the fast food advertisements may have.

Moreover, an interview with a marketer or advertiser of fast food brands (such as Burger King) would be effective to study the counterpart opinion about the marketing strategies they build their ads on.

Last but not least, a deeper medical study on the effects of fast food not only on obesity but also on other diseases mentioned in the thesis such as asthma, eczema, and eye itching...

In the end, further research could have been done on non-fast food advertisement's effects on children, with their positive and negative impact compared to fast food advertising advertisements.

IX- Bibliography

A. Books

- AE, G. (1999). Food Advertising in the United States. In America's Eating Habits: Changes and Consequences. Washington, DC: Edited by USDA/Economic Research Service
- Belch, G. & Belch, M. (2008). Advertising & Promotion: An Integrated Marketing Communication Perspective (8th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.
- Coheb, L., Chavez, V., & Shehimi, S. (2007). Strategies for Community Well-being. USA: PB Printing
- Craypo, L., Purcell, A., & Samuels, S. (2002). Fast Food Sales on High School Campuses: Results from the 2000 California High School Fast Food Survey. J Sch Health.
- De Fleur, M. (1966). Theories of Mass Communication. New York: David McKay Company.
- Flavell, John H. (1963), The Developmental Psychology of Jean Piaget. New York: Van Nostrand Company.
- Gamble, M., & Cotunga, N. (1999). A Quarter Century of TV Food Advertising Targeted at Children. American Journal of Health Behavior.
- Gentile, D., & Walsh, D. (2002). A Normative Study of Family Media Habits. Applied Developmental Psychology.
- Kotler, P. (2002). Marketing Management, Millenium Edition. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Kotz, K., & Story, M. (1994). Food Advertisements During Children's Saturday Morning Television Programming: Are They Consistent With Dietary Recommendations? J Am Diet Association.

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon

- Lara Nasreddine, Farah Naja, Marie Claire Chamieh, Nada Adra, Abla-Mehio Sibai, and Nahla Hwalla, Trends in overweight and obesity in Lebanon: evidence from two national cross-sectional surveys (1997 and 2009), 2012, Lebanese National Council for Scientific Research
- McGinnis, J., Gootman, J., & Kraak, V. (2006). Food Marketing to Children and Youth. Threat or Opportunity. Chicago: The National Academies press.
- Meichenbaum, D. (1977). Cognitive Behaviour Therapy. Ontario.
- Montgomery, D., & Pasnik, S. (1996). Web of Deception. Washington DC: Center for Media Education.
- Montgomery, KC. (2001). Digital kids: the new online children's consumer culture. California: Sage Publications.
- Moy, P., & Pfau, M. (2000). With Malice Toward All? The Media and Public Confidence in Democratic Institutions. United States: Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Nestle, M. (2002). Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health. Los Angeles: University of California Press
- Ormrod, J. (2011). Human Learning (6th ed). France.
- Stempel, G. H. (1981). Research Methods in Mass Communication. N.J.: Prentice Hall.
- Tarpley, T. (2001). Children, the Internet, and Other New Technologies. CA: Sage Publications.
- Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). Mind in Society. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

B. Articles/Journals/Periodicals

- Becker, G. S., & Murphy, K. M. (1993). A Simple Theory of Advertising as a Good or Bad. The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 941-964

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2001). Guidelines for school health programs to promote lifelong healthy eating. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, p. 45.
- Grossman, M. (2007). Fast-Food Restaurant Advertising on Television and Its Influence on Childhood Obesity. *Law and Economics*
- Lazarus, D. (2012). Your brain on a Big Mac: Kids turned on by fast-food logos .
- Montgomery, K.C. (2000). Children's Media Culture in The New Millennium: Mapping The Digital Landscape. *The Future of Children*, 10:145-1667.
- Reyes , S. (2003). What will become of the box? . *Brandweek*, p. 44.
- Ross, R.P., Campbell, T., Stein, A., & Wright, J. (1981). Nutritional Misinformation Of Children: A Developmental And Experimental Analysis Of The Effects Of Televised Food Commercials. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, p. 329-347.
- Silverman, W.K., Jaccard, J., & Burke, A. (1986). Children's Attitudes Toward Products And Recall Of Product Information Over Time. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, p.365-381.
- Thomas N. Robinson, M. M., Borzekowski, D. L., Matheson, D. M., & Kraemer, H. C. (2007). Effects of Fast Food Branding on Young Children's Taste Preferences. *JAMA Pediatrics*, p. 161.
- VC, S. (2001). Children and TV advertising: Nowhere To Run, Nowhere To Hide. *J Dev Behav Pediatr*, 185-187.

C. Interviews

- Khoury, M. (2013, February 9). Child Psychological Status Toward Fast Food Advertising. (E. Koukou, Interviewer)
- Khalil, J (2013, March 3). Children Nutritional Behavior. (E. Koukou, Interviewer)

D. Websites

- (2010). Fast Food Advertising to Children. Retrieved December 26, 2010, from Ezine Articles website: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=James_Rouse
- (2010). Media Landscape. Retrieved December 26, 2010, from University of Michigan Health System website: <http://www.med.umich.edu/yourchild/topics/tv.htm>
- American Psychological Association. (2013). The Impact Of Food Advertising On Childhood Obesity. Retrieved February 2013, from apa.org: <http://www.apa.org>
- Anima Investment Network. (2011). Retrieved December 2, 2012, from animaweb.org: <http://http://www.animaweb.org>
- Bruce, A. (2012). Rudd Center for Food Policy And Obesity. Retrieved January 2013, from yaleruddcenter.org: <http://www.yaleruddcenter.org>
- Brucks, M., Goldberg, M., & Armstrong, G. (1986). Children's Cognitive Responses To Advertising. Retrieved from <http://www.acrwebsite.org>
- Global Ad Spend Growth in 2013: Warc. (2012, November 28). Retrieved January 2013, from <http://www.ft.lk>
- Global Ad Spending Will Reach \$ 628 billion in 2016. (2012, December 12). Retrieved January 2013, from [venturedata.org: http://www.venturedata.org](http://www.venturedata.org)
- Less Golden Days Loom for TV Advertising in the Arab World. (2012, January 19). Retrieved February 2013, from [thenational.ae: http://www.thenational.ae](http://www.thenational.ae)
- McLeod, S. (2009). Jean Piaget. Retrieved December 2012, from [simplepsychology.org: http://www.simplepsychology.org](http://www.simplepsychology.org)
- Shoaff, E. A. (2012). Quotations for Public Relations Consultants. Retrieved January 2013, from [parkerwaynekent.com: http://www.pwkpr.com](http://www.pwkpr.com)
- Story, M. (2004, February 10). Food Advertising and Marketing Directed at Children and Adolescents in the US. Retrieved February 2013, from [ijbnpa.org: http://www.ijbnpa.org](http://www.ijbnpa.org)
- Television Advertising in the Arab World. (2008, June). Retrieved January 2013, from [csb.edu: http://www.csub.edu](http://www.csub.edu)

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon

- The World Health Organization. (2010). Retrieved January 2013, from globalizationandhealth.com: <http://www.globalizationandhealth.com>
- Vygotsky Social Learning Theory. (2008). Retrieved February 2013, from <http://www.learning-theories.com>
- Why is GDP and why is it so important? (2007, September). Retrieved January 24, 2013, from investopedia.com: <http://www.investopedia.com>

E. Miscellaneous

- Health Section. (2013, February 3). *Be Aware Of Fast Food*. Lebanon: MTV television-News section.

X- Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for your attention and for your participation in this survey.

This is a thesis done by a master's student at Notre Dame University. The research attempts to analyze the fast food advertisements that are displayed on TV, internet and billboards and their potential effects on children in Lebanon aged between 6 and 12 years old on their 1) disorders in eating habits and 2) obesity.

Your survey responses will be strictly confidential and data from this research will be reported only in the aggregate. Your information will be coded and will remain confidential. If you have questions at any time about the survey or the procedures, you may contact me by email at the following email address: elise.koukou@hotmail.com

Thank you very much for your time and support. It will take approximately 5-7 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

1. a) What do you think is the major food type that interests children the most?

Homemade food

Fast food

Other

b) If other, please specify: -----

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon

2. What do you think is the average of hours per day that children spend watching television and surfing the internet?

Less than 1 hour

1-2 hours

2-3 hours

3- 4 hours

More than 4 hours

3. What is the degree of effect of fast food advertising on children's eating habits?

High

Average

Low

No effect

For any answer, please explain why: -----

4. What is the degree of effect of fast food advertising on children's obesity?

High

Average

Low

No effect

For any answer, please explain why: -----

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon

5. a) What is the reaction of children after viewing fast food ads on TV, internet, or billboards?

Demand the product advertised

Desire the product advertised

No reaction

Other

b) If other, please specify: -----

6) a) If children demand the fast food product advertised, what is normally your response to that?

Go out to a fast food restaurant

Order fast food to be delivered

Ignore the request

Discuss the effects of fast food

Offer alternatives

Other

b) If other, please specify: -----

Thank You

Appendix 2: Fast Food Advertisements



Television Advertisement

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon



Online advertisement

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon



Billboard advertisement

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon



Product Placements

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon



In School advertisement

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon



Kids' toys

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon



Video Games

Running Head: Fast Food Advertising to Children in Lebanon



Celebrities Endorsements

Appendix 3: Familiar Fast Food Brands' Logos to Children

