

A Study on the Ethical Issues With Respect to Marketing of Fast Foods

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ABSTRACT - The purpose of the paper is to study the ethical issues with respect to marketing of fast foods. This paper provides the preliminary understanding with the concerns of ethical marketing of fast foods and way to promote it. Future research should use alternative methods and conducts a survey on the topic. Fast Food Company has gotten more popular and the profit margins earned from all around the world have increased a lot. With a lot of money being earned from all around the world, fast food tends to ignore the ethics of marketers for their own benefits. With the help of advertising campaign and different marketing strategies, Fast Food Company gets more attention and these attentions leads to different health problems to kids and adults. In the paper the author highlights the concerns with ethical marketing and need of a regulatory framework to promote fast foods.

Keywords: *ethical marketing concerns, Fast food, profit margins, promote, regulatory framework*

I. INTRODUCTION

Variety, innovation, and fun are important to today's consumers. Something that is in their immediate vicinity for an extended period of time attracts them. With more disposable income, today's customers expect high-quality, nutritious food that is available at their convenience and meets their evolving needs. Their taste buds determine whether or not a restaurant or even the entire fast-food industry in the country exists. This has effectively posed a significant barrier for food marketers, who have resorted to unethical practices as a result. These have sparked a flurry of vigorous international discussions on ethical food marketing practices, as well as legislative action to enact necessary regulations where necessary to mitigate the negative impact on society. Fast food is becoming more prevalent in modern times as a result of the city's busy and hectic lifestyle, and people nowadays tend to purchase more outside food than home cooked food. Apart from restaurants, it seems that everyone is getting fast food. People nowadays enjoy fast food because it is cooked quickly and deliciously, and it is fairly inexpensive. The so-called "fast food culture" is fueled by youth and children. Quick food products are common due to their convenience, taste, low cost, marketing strategies, and peer pressure. Fast food restaurants are primed to maximize the speed, efficiency and conformity. The menu is kept simple and uniform in order to reduce wait times and ensure that customers eat quickly and leave. Fast food sales are boosted by event sponsorships and attractive special deals. The sponsors have cash discounts on their brand purchases. Celebrities from the entertainment industry and

athletes are often used to promote goods. Fast foods are marketed to children through television advertisements by use of animation and favorite cartoon characters¹

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

- Mustafa Soba, Erhan Aydim, Ethical Approach to Fast Food Product Contents and Their Advertisement Strategies, (2011)
One of the most significant subjects worthy of academic study in marketing and production fields has been described as the ethics of fast-food industry applications. The author of this paper investigates whether or not businesses in the fast-food industry are ethical. Since fast food corporations claim to act ethically. The fast-food industry is a major economic force in the world. We know that a large number of fast-food restaurants open every day around the world, and the fast-food industry is rapidly expanding. The author examines Fast-Food product contents and their advertisement strategies.
- G.R. Jayadevan, Ethics and Marketing of Processed Foods in India, (2020)
One of the most significant topics worthy of academic study in the marketing and producing fields has been identified as the ethics of food industry applications. Changing lifestyles, eating habits, and working conditions have presented customers and advertisers with numerous challenges in attempting to strike a balance between ethics and benefit. Many food business owners not only engage in unethical activities, but also have a variety of negative social consequences as a result of their use of different media. These factors necessitate the development of a

¹ Hawkes C., 2002. Marketing activities of global soft drink and fast-food companies in emerging markets: a review, In:

Globalization, Diet and Non communicable Diseases. World Health Organization

strong regulatory structure for food marketing activities, as well as guidance to marketers about how to conduct themselves ethically. In this paper the author particularly examines the ethical issues raised by the fast-food sector companies in India and a few strategies which could be adopted by food products marketers to perform ethical business.

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To highlight the growing concerns with ethical marketing of fast foods.
- To highlight the need of regulatory framework to promote ethical marketing of fast foods.
- To highlight the importance of labelling and packaging in marketing of fast foods.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Considering the nature of the topic and the research objectives, secondary research method is used by the researcher. Various articles in newspapers, journals, and books, and research papers written by renowned authors were referred to for collection of data. The literature relevant to the study was collected and analysed and post that it was reviewed in the study. The referencing is done following APA 6th edition style of citation.

V. LIMITATIONS

The study is limited because the research is not explanatory or empirical as it is predominantly based on secondary data like journal articles, research papers, newspaper articles etc.

VI. GROWING CONCERNS

In general, everyone understands that fast foods are unhealthy, and fast-food places must sacrifice the wellbeing of their customers in order to save money. This typically results in their loyal customers gaining more weight and developing health complications. Healthy foods have become an exception rather than the norm in many situations. Foods with low nutrient value have become a large part of many children's diets, accounting for about one third of average calorie intakes². Children's nutritional needs for health, development, and optimal school success are being squeezed out at these levels. Though these food products claim to be made with the latest technology and under the strictest hygienic conditions by trained professionals, they are generally nutrient-poor and high in saturated fats, sugars, and salt (HFSS foods), which contribute to obesity and diet-related diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, and cancer.

It's also eye-opening to see how many calories are in a McDonald's cheeseburger: 630 calories, 24 grammes of fat,

28 grammes of sugar, and 930 milligrams of salts in a Happy Meal with French fries and apple juice. Furthermore, paying exorbitant rates and consuming unhealthy food are bad enough, but some fast-food restaurants sell expired foods. KFC was caught selling expired chicken that had been kept in boxes for more than 16 days, which is 6 days longer than the KFC policy's expiration date, and the former KFC manager was forced to sell chicken that had turned green.³ This has fouled the ethics of restaurant and also the standard rules of Environmental Health Service Department. Advertising is an important part of marketing, and nearly any project needs an advertising campaign. The brands' marketing campaigns are aimed at consumers, and they use free toys to entice children. This is an unacceptable way of exploiting children for personal gain without considering future generations. After that, unethical commercials shown on children's television programmes have resulted in children developing dental problems in addition to obesity.

The majority of food ads on television are for foods that do not contribute to a balanced diet for children. Advertised foods and beverages include added sugar, confectionery, and non-carbonated soft drinks, both of which have the potential to damage dental health. In order to sell their products, fast food marketers take advantage of a variety of creative methods as well as dishonest deeds and techniques. While most of the techniques used by food marketers seem to be ethical and legal, they are only discovered to be immoral when thoroughly investigated, making it difficult to judge and draw a straight line between standard marketing practise and unethical marketing conduct. We are all victims of various corporations' marketing gimmicks of some form or another, such as the 'Buy Two Get One Free' offer; pop-ups appearing on the screen while surfing the Internet telling us that we have won a prize; or a sponsor's banner displayed at the venue during an event attended, and so on. Once a customer is drawn in by this "publicity stunt," he is enticed to become a customer, and then a loyal customer. Offering junk and unhealthy food to valued consumers and then chasing them back to visit on a daily basis is a matter of ethics on the part of food companies. There is nothing here to condemn the food industry in terms of the nature of its goods or services provided, or even to cast doubt on its reputation. It is solely based on the type of food they have. It is accepted that there is no such thing as "poor food," but it is primarily the type of food that does not contribute to people's wellbeing. It functions more like nutrient-deficient fast food, with negative consequences for consumer health.

VII. NEED OF REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Individuals have the freedom to reduce their intake of health-damaging junk foods. As a result, the role of

² Kaushik, et al. 2011. "Fast food consumption in children", Indian Pediatrics, Volume 48, February 17 Issue, 2011, pp: 97-101

³ (Polis, 2012)

government/regulatory bodies and public interest groups in intervening and regulating marketing strategies of fast-food business operators, especially branded players, has become a subject of controversy these days. Many countries have imposed numerous controls and limitations on fast food marketers' advertising practises in order to limit their use and mitigate the negative consequences. In their search for profit, these advertisers focus on the most vulnerable and naive segment of the population: children and youth, who are found to be the most powerful decision makers during any purchase. They use a variety of methods to target this demographic, including in-school marketing and social media. In India, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting is in charge of media advertising and publicity (Government of India). The ministry has formed a committee to investigate the allegations, determine if the commercial is in breach of the law, and send a warning to TV stations in the event of a violation. In India, the cable television network act of 1994 and the Advertisement Quality Council of India create media rules and regulations (ASCI). Guidelines for the quality of food products advertised in Indian media should be established as soon as possible. Companies with extensive experience in persuasive strategies can help the government and regulatory bodies in communicating the harmful effects of various "junk foods" on a person's health. By using powerful media such as television to inform the target audience of low-nutrition foods that do not favour them in any way and only harm their health, such as cartoon characters, celebrities, competitions, and so on, they would be discouraged from purchasing these foods, thus indirectly helping society to improve. A body should be set up by the Health Ministry to see that the intentionally deceptive or misleading marketing interaction should be avoided, and products should be appropriate for its intended uses. To protect the rights of consumers, ethical ideals should be accepted, expressed, and exercised by the brands. They should be accountable for any marketing decisions and tactics and recognise the consequences, be fair by attempting to align the needs of the consumer with the interests of the seller, and value the basic human integrity of all stakeholders.

VIII. IMPORTANCE OF LABELLING AND PACKAGING

Marketers use labelling to bring identification to their products. This kind of labelling helps a customer to differentiate the product from the rest of the products of different brands. Labelling can be used for various purposes. In marketing, a marketer can also use a sticker inedible product to impart knowledge of the ingredients to customers of the food items that has been used and also helps to mention ingredients. Labelling is crucial and essential for the commercialization of movement's food products. Because that label give guarantee which the product has specific

standards for production. In addition, much as with certified organic foods, the guarantee provided a niche product. Knowing whether or not customers understand food label information, the type of information customers looks out for and whether customers choice of food is affected by food label information will help the brands make informed decisions in this regarding concern. Improvement on the part of these manufacturing firms in turn will help customers make well-informed choice, reduce the risk of food poisoning, buying fake products etc. Health claims means claim that states, implies or suggests that a relationship exists between food or one of its constituents and health and food category. These details help customers make cautious choice about the health risks and to stabilize it. Mainly, the customers always seek for reassurance about the products such as no sugar, no fat, vegan, no caffeine. Some customers also seek about the health consciousness attached with the fast-food products.

Labelling is used for packaging the product. The basic function of packaging is to "preserve product integrity" by protecting the actual food product against potential damage from different climatic, bacteriological and transit hazards.⁴ However, the packaging can be also described as silent salesman⁵, as the packaging role comes up at the point of purchase, in order to represent the salesman. If we see the scenario of market, we can observe that only a small minority of brands are strong enough to justify the investment that advertising standard requires, for the rest of the brands, packaging represents one of the most important vehicles for communicating the brand message directly to the target consumer beacons as flag of recognition and a symbol of values. As the fast-food environment has more and more cut throat competition growing in the last years, the competitors are competing for customers' attention, packaging has to work harder than ever if the product should be eye catching through the wide range of competitive products. Alongside this challenge, fast food brands are faced with the realisation that customers not only see packaging to differ the wide range variety of fast-food brands but also how they relate themselves to the brands.

FINDINGS

In the perspective of brands, the best and easiest method to achieve this is to generate more money, become a globally recognised brand, and build new outlets as much as is possible. Certainly, their marketing techniques have a direct impact on them according to their goal. This means that if you want to grow into a global firm, you'll need to develop very effective marketing methods to help you generate more money. There is nothing incorrect up to this point, but when we look at company marketing techniques, we see that the majority of them are not in our advantage, but rather in the interests of the business. That is what we attempted to

⁴ Stewart, 1995

⁵ Pilditch, 1957

discuss in our research of the fast-food industry. In the majority of the circumstances in which we informed you, we can observe that the majority of fast food firms are unconcerned about people's health. They just undertake promotions to comply with the law. They are constantly trying to figure out the greatest marketing strategies for attracting more clients amid the laws. However, no one can claim that laws alone are sufficient to protect people's health. As a result, we know that the majority of fast-food clients are teenagers and children. A child who is unaware of the differences between which foods are healthier than others is subjected to all of the fast-food giants' marketing incursions. Is there an ethical aspect to it? No, it's not true. Should it have a moral component? There are still disagreements. But all it can be said is that using a child's emotion as a branding strategy is not a good idea. Labelling and packaging roles should be more customer centric, since having the right amount of information on product can be helpful for customers. One thing that author feels is there should detailed amount of information related to ingredients that can help customer figure out what advantages or disadvantages it can cause.

IX. CONCLUSION

Even though fast food is dangerous to all, it is difficult to shut it down in any part of the world. We must learn to be smart and stop eating fast food in order to protect ourselves and those around us. It is self-evident that the world is becoming smaller for all of us by the day, and that a slight shift in one part of the world today has an impact all over the world. This is also true for the vast majority of businesses. When they make a business decision, it has far-reaching consequences since most of them are no longer small businesses. They're all trying to gain more strength and influence over us, so they're trying to get bigger. The Ministry of Health should also restrict advertisements that are seen during peak viewing hours for children, as well as prohibiting the broadcast of unhealthy foods on television. This is one of the ways that using an advertisement strategy will help to stop fast food marketing strategies. Instead of allowing fast food advertisers to sell more unhealthy food, policy and legislation should be established on magazines to promote healthier food for readers. Furthermore, fast food firms should be subjected to stringent guidelines on the use of prohibited foods in order to prevent them from using unsafe products. If fast food restaurants continue to serve unhealthy food, their loyal customers will dwindle and their reputation will suffer. Consumers' health would be jeopardised if fast food advertisers were not held to a high standard when it came to the ingredients they used. To sum everything that have been stated so far, creating a healthier society is not solely in the hands of food producers, governments, or other concerned groups; more patronage and sustained commitment is needed from customers themselves to make the planet a safer place to live a productive life. Future scope of the research could include

identifying, through primary research, what consumers think about the branding advertising strategies that have been used till now, the information that is mentioned on packaging should be more detailed in future compared to now.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I express my gratitude to my management professor Dr. Karishma Desai under whose guidance this study has been conducted.

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