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A STUDY ON CONSUMER MANIPULATION THROUGH ADVERTISEMENTS OF EDIBLE PRODUCTS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CHENNAI

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ABSTRACT:

Advertisement, a pervasive aspect of modern communication, employs diverse strategies to convey messages and promote products or services through various media channels. In a competitive global market, the art of advertising plays a crucial role in influencing consumer behaviour and shaping brand perceptions. Within the advertising domain, manipulating consumer behaviour is a nuanced practice utilising strategic techniques to influence perceptions. Advertisements frequently utilise psychological triggers and persuasive tactics to mould consumer choices, highlighting the complex interaction between marketing strategies and decision-making processes. Marketing strategies in advertisements for edible items are crafted to tantalise taste buds and evoke desire. From mouthwatering visuals to compelling storytelling, these strategies aim to create a sensory experience, establishing a strong connection between consumers and food products in the competitive world of culinary marketing. This paper focuses on the public knowledge about consumer manipulation through marketing strategies employed in the advertisements of edible items. The data is collected from 201 respondents through Google forms. The findings show that, there is a growing awareness among consumers about the marketing strategies employed by advertising agencies. While collectively, 65.67% have not noticed the brands of edible items changing their core objectives over time.

KEYWORDS: Advertisement, Consumer Behavior, Marketing Strategies, Edible Items, Consumer Awareness

INTRODUCTION:

Advertisements have now become an essential component of marketing. These advertisements strongly influence the consumer behaviour of the market. Product differentiation is solely dependent on advertisements, especially for edible items. The customers of edible goods brands are attracted through advertisements. Advertisements are made in a way that stays in the minds of the people no matter whether it's sensible or absurd. The manipulation of consumers through advertisements is a widespread phenomenon deeply embedded in contemporary marketing strategies. Advertisements, omnipresent in our daily routines, exert significant influence on consumer behaviour through diverse psychological tactics aimed at moulding perceptions, sparking desires, and steering purchasing choices. Advertising companies focus on the slogans and shingles that the people will remember in the long run rather than focusing on the objectives and the ingredients and factors of the edible item. For example, dairy milk chocolate when it was introduced was aimed to be conceived as a gift item. The Cadbury company has started to market the product as an essential that has to be in the fridge whenever someone opens it. In advertisements of food items, companies create a strong connection between the product and the emotions of the consumers. These emotional appeals doesn't stop at simply showcasing the features and flavours but further delves into the realms of sentiment, nostalgia and desire. The manipulation of consumers through advertisements is a widespread and complex facet of today's marketplace. Advertisements hold a pivotal role in moulding consumer behaviour, shaping preferences, and guiding purchasing decisions. In the midst of businesses competing for attention in a saturated and competitive market, the strategies utilised in advertisements frequently transcend simple product promotion. Grasping the intricacies inherent in advertisements is essential to untangle the intricate dynamics between consumers and the persuasive messages that inundate them on a daily basis. Consumer manipulation through advertisements spans a spectrum of techniques, from nuanced psychological cues to overtly persuasive tactics. Marketers harness psychological principles, including emotional appeal, social validation, and the fear of missing out (FOMO), to engage and influence consumers. These strategies are frequently crafted to access the subconscious, establishing a connection between the advertised product and the desires or aspirations of the consumer. As we traverse this terrain, it becomes evident that grasping the mechanisms of consumer manipulation is crucial for cultivating a consumer base that is both well-informed and empowered. The regulatory body known as the Advertisement Censorship Board in India monitors the content and communication conveyed in advertisements across diverse media platforms. Its responsibility includes ensuring adherence to ethical standards, cultural sensitivities, and legal frameworks, thereby striking a crucial balance between advertisers' freedom of

expression and the safeguarding of public interests. As a dynamic and adaptive institution, the Advertisement Censorship Board mirrors the diverse cultural tapestry of India, skillfully navigating the intricacies of contemporary advertising while considering societal norms and values.

OBJECTIVES:

- To analyse how often the public watches or comes across advertisements.
- To know whether respondents have noticed the brands changing the core objective of the usage of products overtime.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Christina Rathy A., (2015) aimed to identify product information factors affecting consumer attitudes towards advertisement among Malaysian consumers through a descriptive study. The findings indicate a positive correlation between consumers' attitudes toward advertising and factors such as product information and consumer manipulation. **Mohammed T. Nuseir (2018)** in their descriptive study to investigated how false or misleading advertisements influence consumer experiences and assess the prevalence of such practices, which are fueled by intensified competition among businesses. The research uncovers a discernible trend in the widespread occurrence of misleading ads, attributing this phenomenon to heightened competitive pressures. **Dr. Madhavi Sripathi (2020)** in their descriptive study aimed to examine the significance of improving marketing endeavours by incorporating accurate information, aiming to establish the credibility of the organisation, particularly in outward-facing activities like marketing, and ultimately aiding customers in making informed decisions. The study reveals that misleading advertisements often present excessively positive information, leading to negative experiences for customers. **Adrienne E. Faerber PhD et al., (2014)** aimed to assess the prevalence of false or misleading claims in consumer-targeted television drug advertisements by comparing them to the available evidence. The results indicate that potentially misleading claims are widespread in consumer-targeted television advertisements for both prescription and nonprescription drugs. **Caitlin Bohannon (2023)** in their research concentrated on the adverse effects of false advertising on young girls and explored potential public policies to alleviate both short- and long-term impacts. The results indicated that offering a tax or monetary incentive to businesses that demonstrate non-use of Photoshop could serve as a stronger motivation to promote the use of natural models. **Meerat Tayyab Mukhtar Qureshi (2023)** in their descriptive research aimed to examine the influence of false advertising present on social media and e-commerce platforms on

consumer purchasing behaviour, particularly focusing on young adults. The study's findings revealed that online platform advertisements influenced the buying behaviour of consumers, particularly among young adults in Malaysia. **Dalip Raina et al., (2012)** in their descriptive study investigated the motivation behind product purchases, the primary components of advertisements, and the degree to which advertisements convey a pertinent and credible message. The research determined that advertisements have a notable influence on these factors. **Pongiannan (2012)** in a descriptive study, aimed to assess the effectiveness of creative advertisements in TV media and their influence on the value of TV advertisements. **Ranghbir Singh (2012)** in a descriptive study, aimed to reveal the mediation strategies employed by mothers of both younger and older children in India. The study's findings and implications are subsequently elaborated upon. **Juao C. Costa (2012)** in a descriptive research conducted in Goa, delved into understanding the buying behaviour and spending patterns of consumers, particularly examining the influence of advertisements on these aspects. **Ranghbir Singh (2008)** in a descriptive study examined the necessity of distinct constructs for attitude toward the institution and attitude toward the instrument. The study demonstrated that these constructs are separate yet correlated. **Sangeeta Sharma et al., (2021)** aimed to explore the influence of women's role portrayal on consumers' purchasing inclination and to discern the variations in perspectives between Indian men and women regarding the stereotypical portrayal of women in advertisements. **Ajit Sadasivan (2022)** aimed to explore the factors affecting the attitude of youth towards advertisements and their impact on the likelihood of adopting suitable behaviour. The findings indicated that, among the four factors examined, only credibility, informativeness, and leisure/hedonic factors significantly influence the attitude towards the advertisement. **Srivastava et al. (2017)** aimed to investigate the prevalence of nostalgic advertising on Indian television, analysing its execution concerning the extent of information disclosure, level of involvement, types of products, and stages in the product life cycle. The results indicated that humour/happiness was the predominant emotional appeal, and nostalgic ads accounted for 12 percent of emotional advertisements on Indian television. **Dr. Jaspal Singh et al., (2011)** explored the influence of television commercials on social, moral, religious values, and human behaviour in India, given diverse accusations from prior research, the study revealed a perception that these commercials undermine social, moral, and religious values, exerting a negative impact on human behaviour. **Adesh Padival et al., (2019)** in an empirical analysis that examined the factors affecting consumers' behavioural intentions regarding social media advertisements, the study found that creativity and informativeness significantly influenced consumers' attitudes toward these advertisements. **Shahid Bhatt et al., (2015)** in their empirical study conducted in Ahmedabad, study identified factors shaping the audience's attitude toward

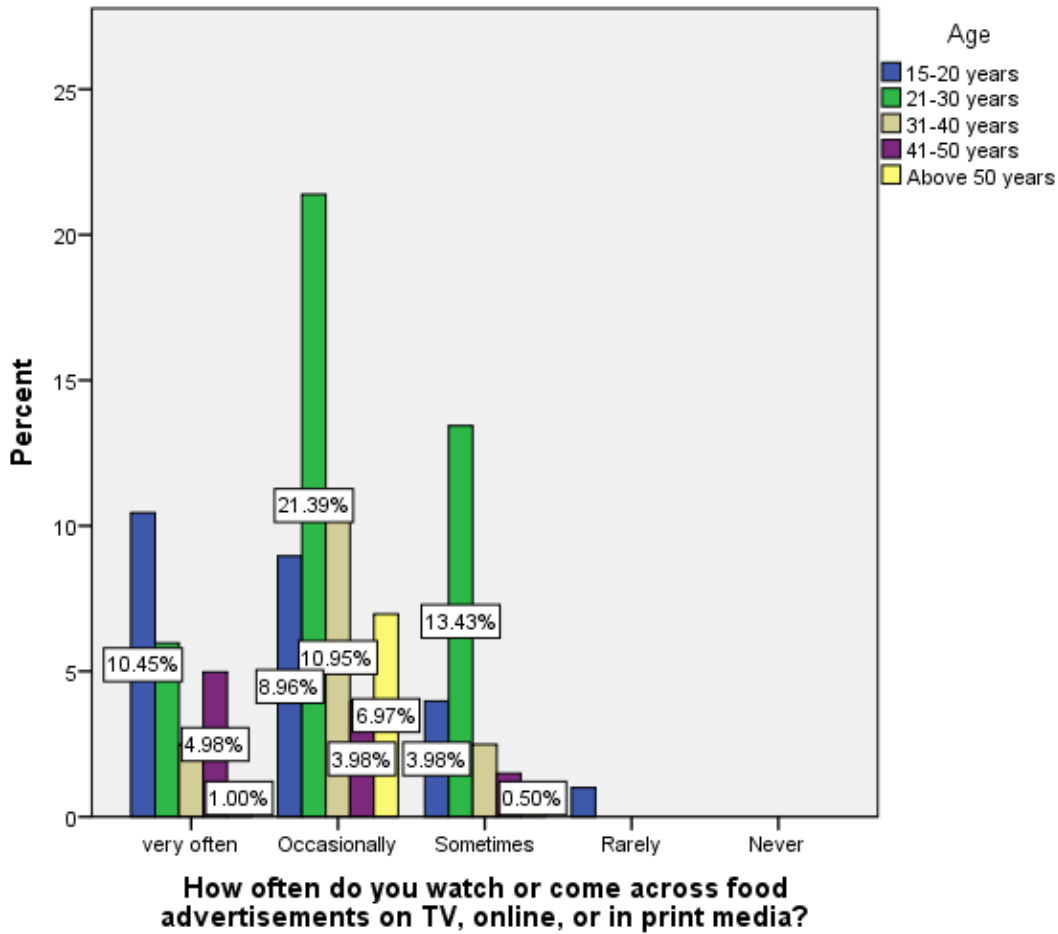
television advertisements and explores attributes leading to the avoidance of such ads. Five factors—Knowledge and Creativity, Credibility, Reliability, Likeability, and Economic development—influence consumer attitudes toward television advertisements. Additionally, when advertisements were perceived as obnoxious, females exhibited an even lower tolerance level than males. **Rajya Lakshmi. K., et al., (2021)** in an empirical study aimed to uncover the demeanours of female consumers in the Personal Care Products (PCP) industry, focusing on the role of Television/Radio/Social media advertisement effectiveness in influencing the usage preferences of female consumers. The findings revealed that the Deliberation Factor, Sophistication Factor, and Betterment Factor significantly and positively impact the PCP usage preferences of female consumers. **R Sama., (2014)** in an empirical study through online surveys examined the impact of advertisements across various media channels—television (TV), radio, newspapers, magazines, and the Internet—on consumer awareness (AWR), interest (INT), conviction (CON), purchase (PUR), and post-purchase (PPUR) behaviour. The findings suggest that newspaper advertisements influence all five stages of consumer behaviour (CB). **Manish Mittal (2011)** explored the efficacy of specific sales promotional tools in eliciting varied buying behaviours. The findings indicated that in India, sales promotions do not contribute to category expansion.

METHODOLOGY:

This paper is a descriptive study conducted through Google forms using Convenient sampling from 201 respondents in and around Chennai. The independent variables are name, age, gender, Occupation, Residential status and educational qualification. The dependent variables are how often the public watch or come across advertisements, whether food advertisements use emotional triggers, agreeability that food items in advertisements looking more appealing than they do in real life, how much advertisements influence the respondents on buying edible items, have respondents noticed the brands changing the core objective of the usage of products overtime, agreeability on the statement that advertisements often create unrealistic beauty or lifestyle standards, leading to body image issues, How often do respondents notice advertisements that target specific demographics or personal interests, agreeability on the statement whether there should be stricter regulations on the content and claims made in advertisements and whether the restrictions of ASCI must be made stricter.

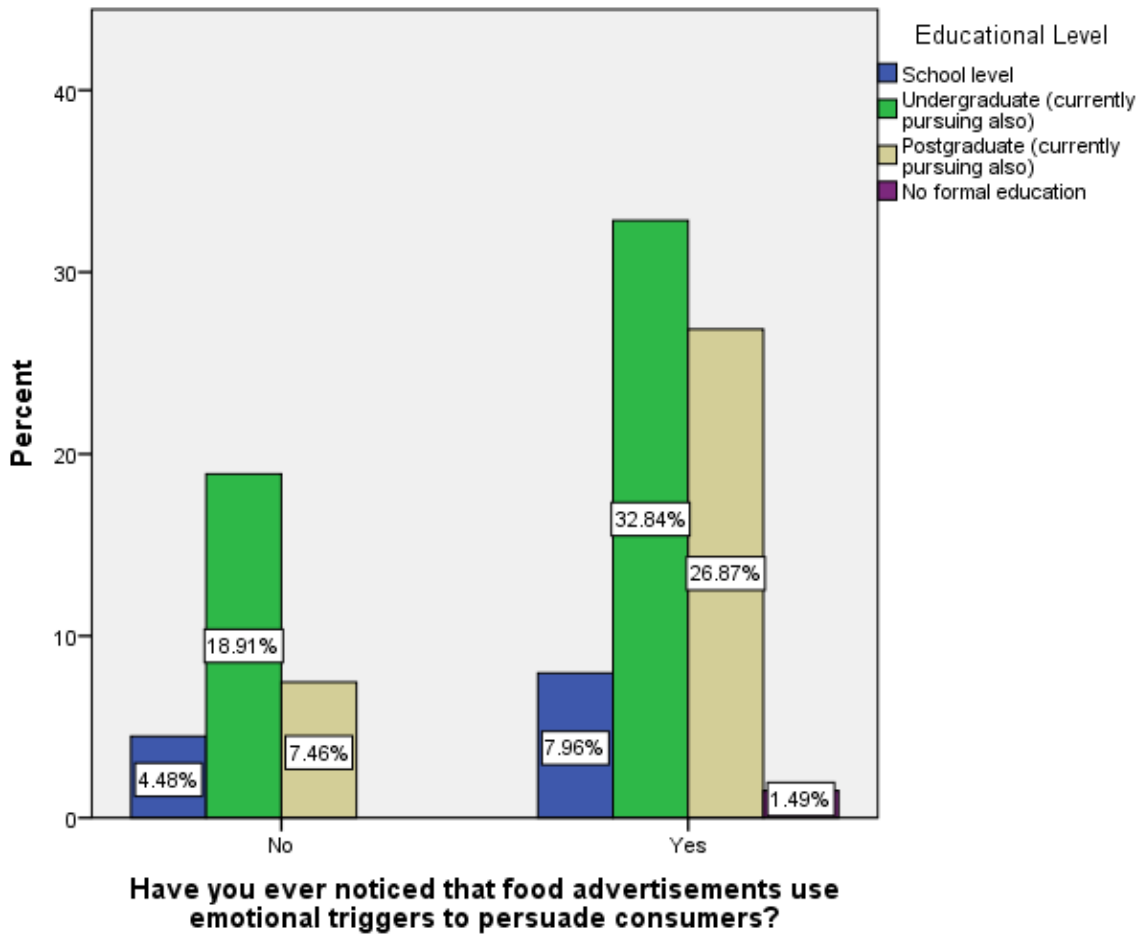
ANALYSIS

Figure 1



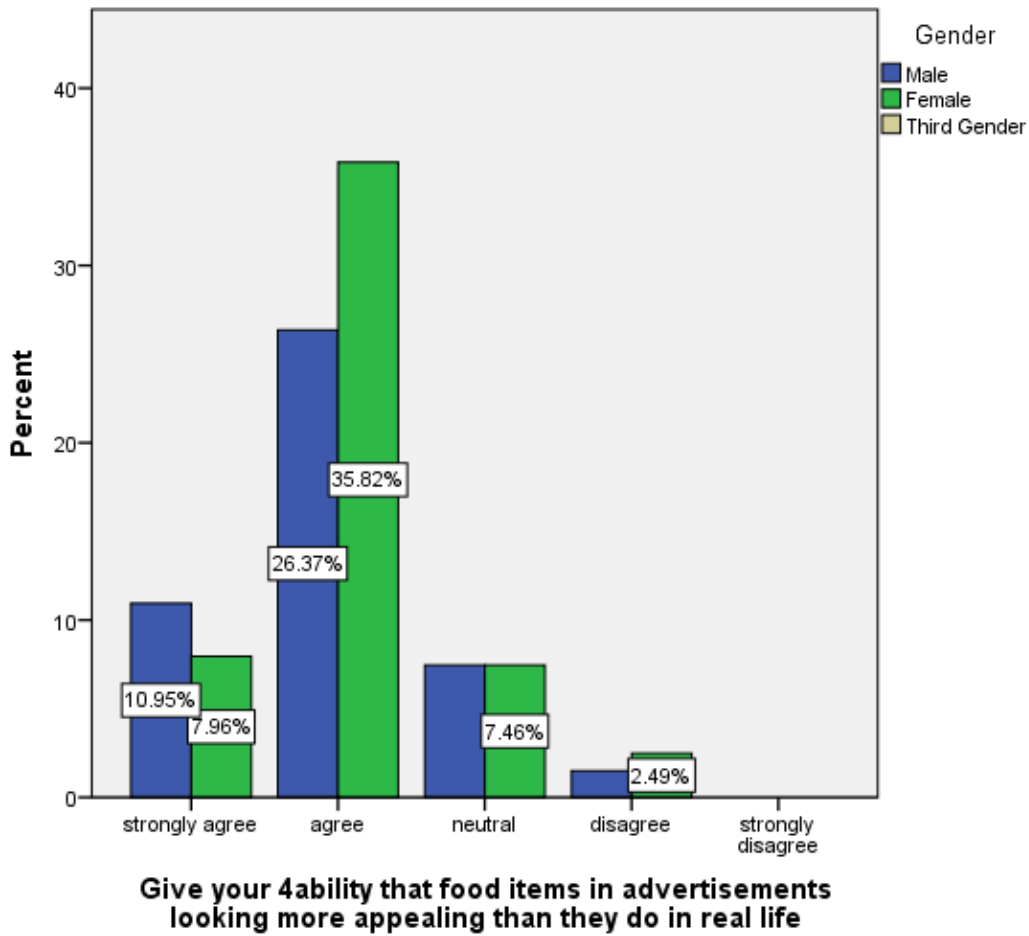
Legend: Figure 1 represents how often the respondents come across food advertisements on TV, online, or print media with respect to their age.

Figure 2



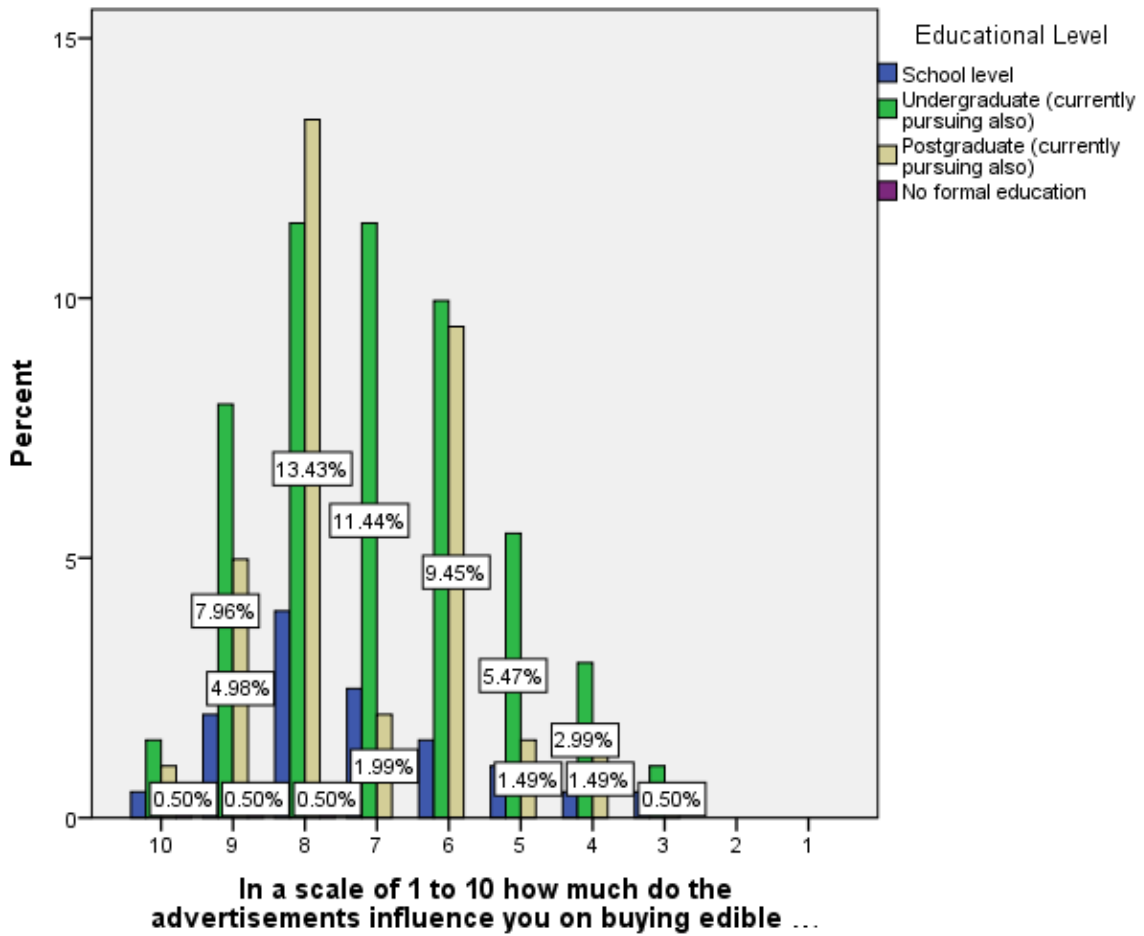
Legend: Figure 2 represents whether the respondents have noticed that food advertisements use emotional triggers to persuade consumers with respect to their educational level.

Figure 3



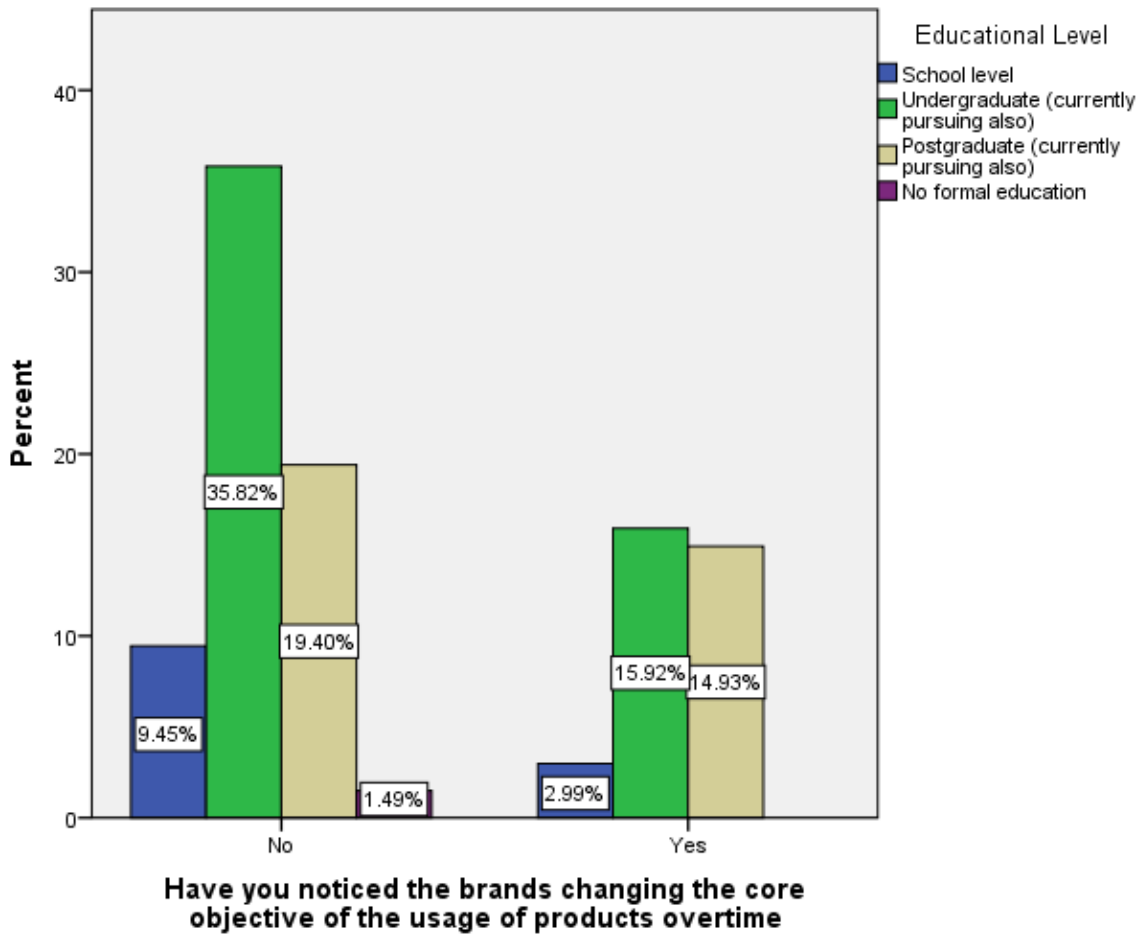
Legend: Figure 3 represents the respondents' agreeability on the statement that food items in advertisements look more appealing than they do in real life with respect to their gender.

Figure 1



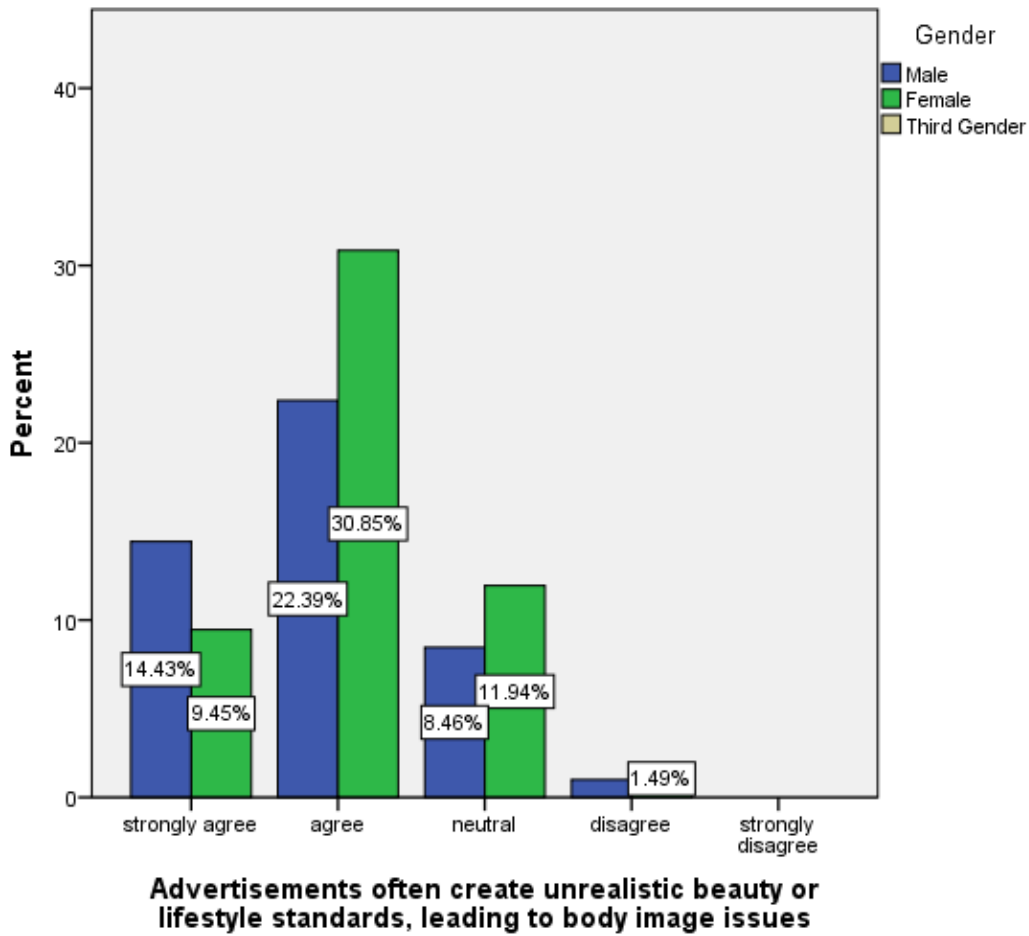
Legend: Figure 1 represents the respondents' opinion on a scale of 1-10, how much do the advertisements influence them to buy edible items with respect to their educational level.

Figure 2



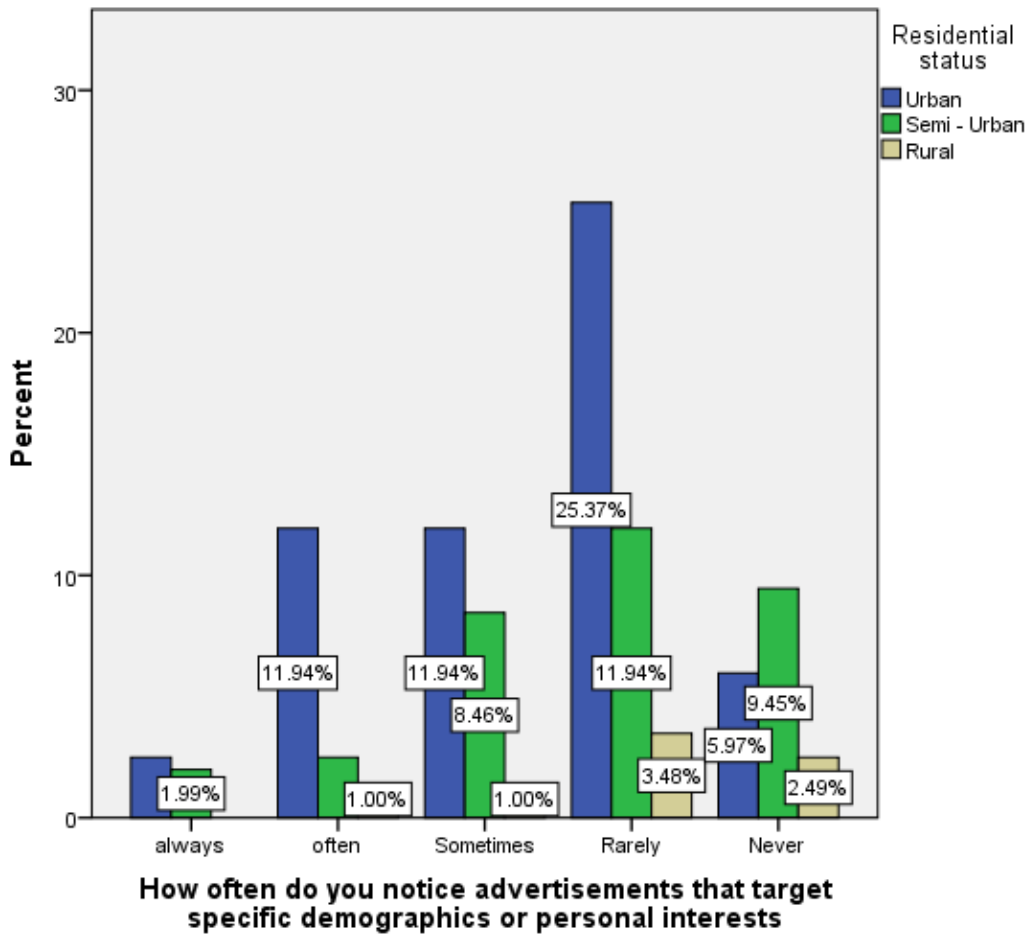
Legend: Figure 2 represents whether the respondents have noticed the brands changing the core objective of the usage of products over time with respect to their educational level.

Figure 6



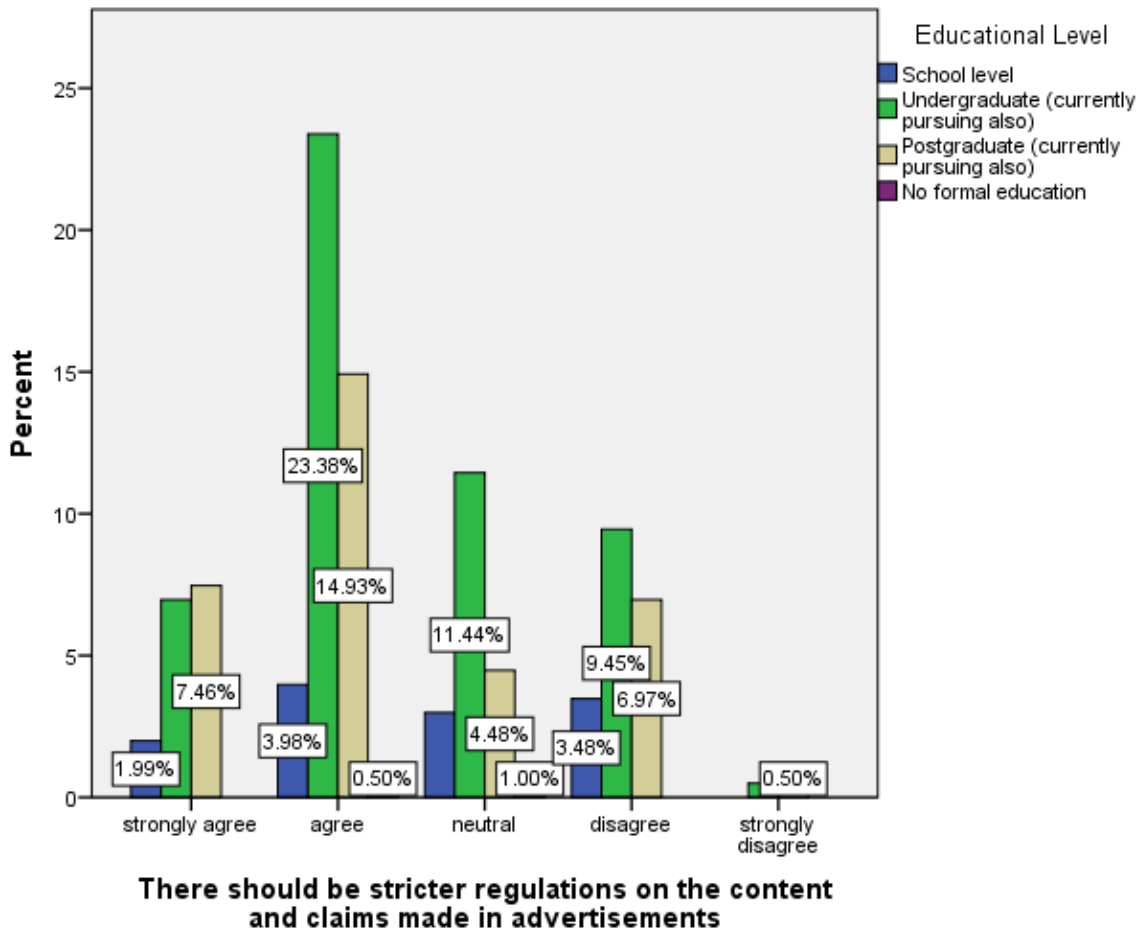
Legend: Figure 6 represents the respondents' opinion on whether advertisements create unrealistic beauty or lifestyle standards, leading to body image issues with respect to their gender.

Figure 7



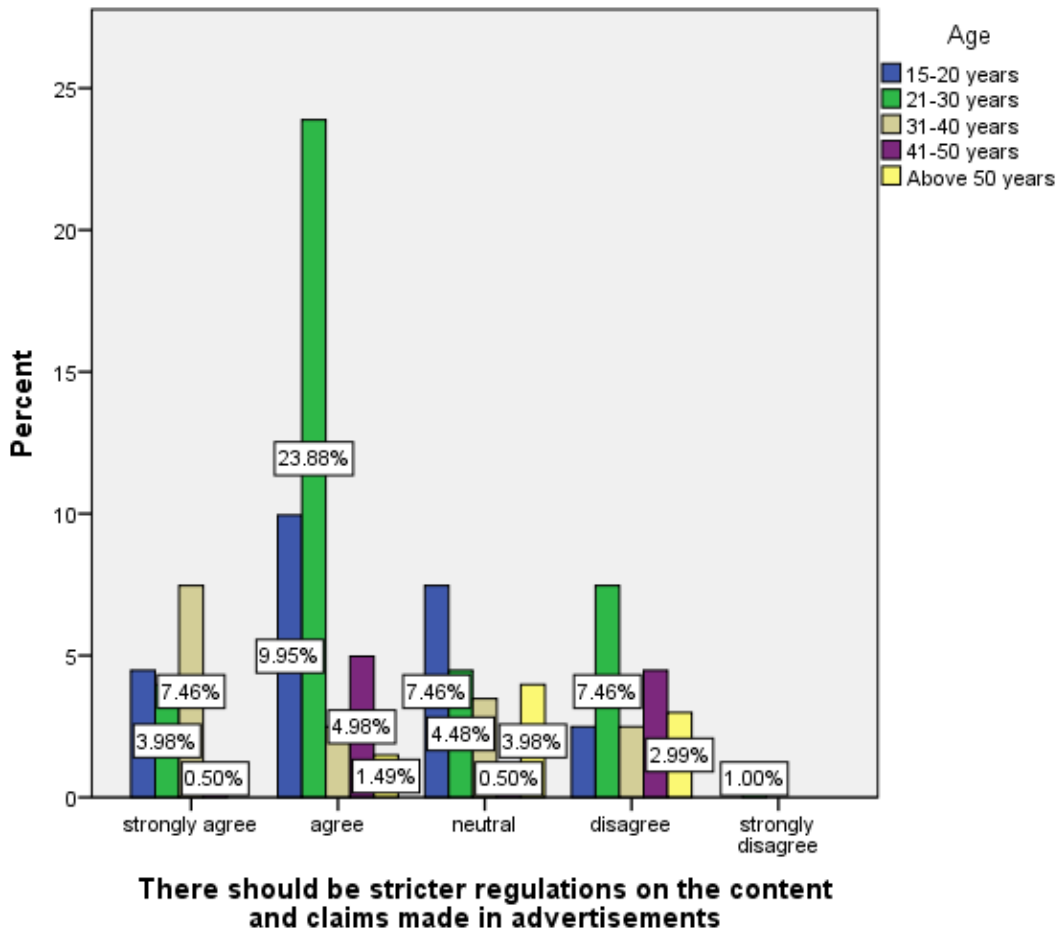
Legend: Figure 7 represents the respondents' opinion on whether they notice that advertisements target specific demographics or personal interests with respect to their residential status.

Figure 8



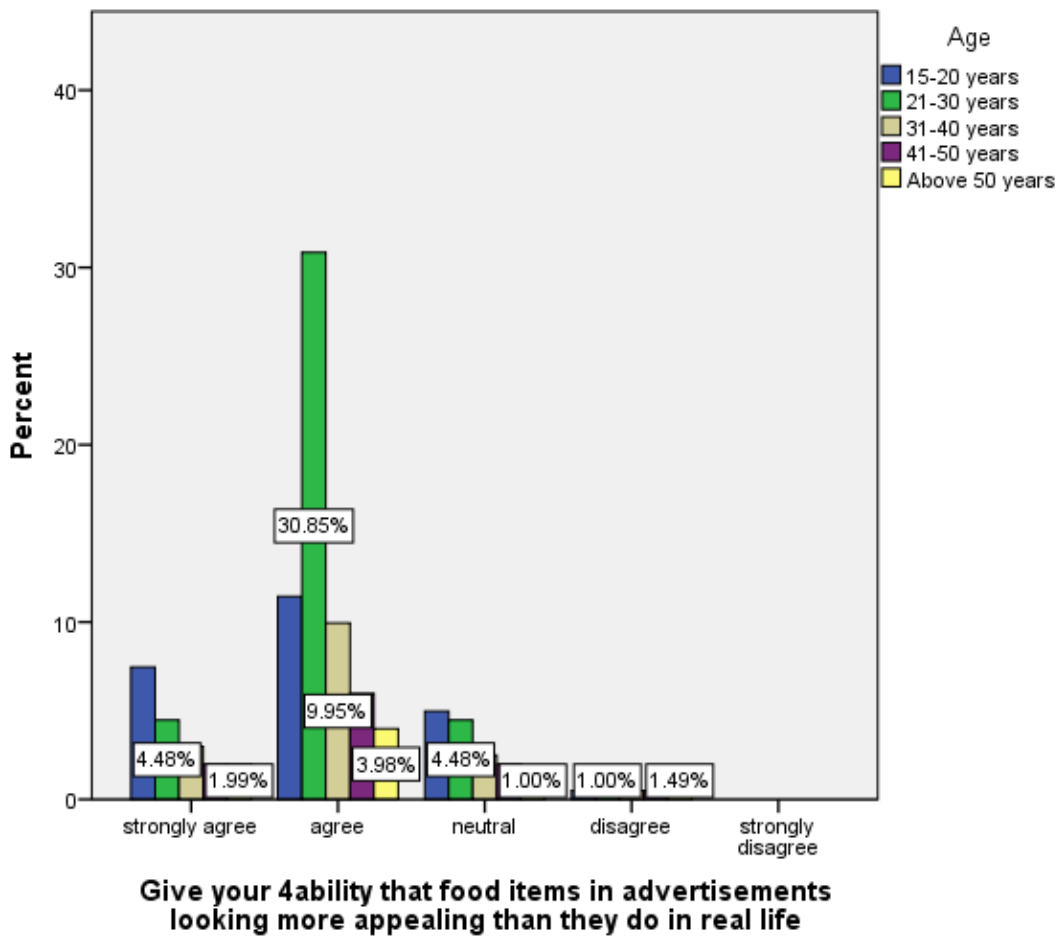
Legend: Figure 8 represents the respondents' agreeability on whether there should be stricter regulations on the content and claims made in advertisements with respect to their educational level.

Figure 3



Legend: Figure 33 represents the respondents' opinion on whether there should be stricter regulations on the content and claims made in advertisements with respect to their age.

Figure 10



Legend: Figure 10 represents the respondents’ agreeability that food items in advertisements look more appealing than they do in real life with respect to their age.

HYPOTHESIS

1) Null Hypothesis: There is no difference among different age groups about their opinion on whether advertisements often create unrealistic beauty or lifestyle standards leading to body image issues.

Alternate Hypothesis: There is a difference among different age groups about their opinion on whether advertisements often create unrealistic beauty or lifestyle standards leading to body image issues.

Table 1

Interpretation:

Discussion:

ANOVA

Advertisements often create unrealistic beauty or lifestyle standards, leading to body image

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	12.552	4	3.138	6.380	.000
Within Groups	96.403	196	.492		
Total	108.955	200			

RESULTS:

It is shown that 10.45% of respondents aged 15-20 years say that they watch advertisements on edible items very often in various forms of media. While every respondent of age above 50 years say that they watch advertisements on edible items occasionally (**Figure 1**). It is shown that most of the respondents are of the opinion that they do have noticed that food advertisements use emotional triggers to persuade consumers (**Figure 2**). It is shown that most of the respondents i.e., 35.8% of women and 26.37% of men agree that food items look more appealing in advertisements than in real life (**Figure 3**). It is shown that on a scale of 1-10 most of the respondents of all educational levels are of the opinion that advertisements influence them to buy edible items (**Figure 4**). It is shown that most of the respondents i.e., 9.45% of school level respondents, 35.48% of undergraduate respondents and 19.4% of postgraduate respondents say that they haven't noticed brands changing their core objectives overtime (**Figure5**). It is shown that, almost equal percentage of men and women strongly agree and neutral respectively that advertisements create unrealistic beauty or lifestyle standards, leading to body image issues (**Figure 6**). It is shown that an equal percentage of urban and semi urban respondents have noticed that advertisements target specific demographics or personal interests often and rarely respectively. While all rural respondents have rarely and never noticed them (**Figure7**). It is shown that equal percentage of school level respondents i.e.3.98% agree and disagree respectively that there should be stricter regulations on the content and claims made in advertisements (**Figure 8**). It is shown that most respondents of age 15-20 agree that there should be stricter regulations on the content and claims made in advertisements (**Figure 9**). It is shown that all the respondents of age above 50 years agree that food items look more appealing in advertisements than in real life (**Figure 10**). The calculated p-value is 0.000. Since, the p-value < 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected at a significance level of 5%. So, there is a difference among different age groups about their opinion

on whether advertisements often create unrealistic beauty or lifestyle standards leading to body image issues. (Table 1)

DISCUSSION:

The difference of opinion about how often the respondents come across food advertisements may be because of a shift in preferences towards alternative forms of entertainment or information. Factors like time constraints, lifestyle choices, or a diminished interest in actively seeking advertisements for edible items might also play a role in shaping these results (Figure 1). The unanimous opinion whether the respondents noticed that food advertisements use emotional triggers to persuade consumers could be a result of a consumer base that is becoming more sophisticated and media literate, demonstrating an understanding of the persuasive nature inherent in advertising strategies (Figure 2). Most of the respondents' agreement on food items that look more appealing in advertisements than they do in real life might suggest an increased awareness or heightened sensitivity to the visual aesthetics presented in food advertisements (Figure 3). The uniformity in responses across educational levels on whether advertisements influence them to buy edible items implies that the persuasive impact of advertisements goes beyond varying academic backgrounds, and has an influence on consumers regardless of their educational stage (Figure 4). Most of the respondents not noticing brands changing their core objective may be because of a widespread belief among participants that brands largely remain consistent in their fundamental objectives over time. A higher percentage among undergraduates and postgraduates indicates a more sophisticated comprehension of brand strategies among individuals engaged in higher education (Figure 5). The proportion of men strongly agreeing that advertisements create unrealistic beauty or lifestyle standards suggests that a segment of the male population acknowledges and affirms the impact of advertisements in leading to unrealistic standards, potentially influencing societal perceptions of body image. On the contrary, the neutral stance among women indicates a spectrum of opinions, with some expressing ambivalence about the direct influence of advertisements on body image issues (Figure 6). The prevalence of rarely or never noticing targeted advertisements among rural and some semi-urban respondents may be attributed to several factors. These could encompass limited exposure to a variety of advertising channels and restricted access to personalised online content (Figure 7). The result that some students in school agree, and an equal number disagree, about having stricter rules on ads shows that there are different opinions. Some students might see good things about having more rules on ads, while others might not think it's necessary or helpful (Figure 8). The agreeability of Young people between 15 and 20 years old that there should be stricter regulations on the content and

claims made in advertisements may be because they are more aware and involved in talking about what's right in advertising, avoiding wrong information, and how ads can affect what people buy. Since they use digital media and social platforms a lot, they understand how advertising is changing and what problems it might cause (**Figure 9**). The results may be because people in this age group might have cultivated a perceptive eye, noticing how food ads purposefully use visuals and enhancements to make the presentations look appealing. The unanimous agreement may also indicate a collective grasp of the wider strategies used in advertising to grab people's attention and evoke certain emotions (**Figure 10**). This difference of opinions about whether advertisements often create unrealistic beauty or lifestyle standards leading to body image issues among different age groups may be no because, Younger age groups may have greater digital connectivity and exposure to a diverse range of media, potentially shaping their perceptions in a distinct manner compared to older generations. Furthermore, changing societal norms and expectations may contribute to moulding age-specific attitudes toward the beauty ideals promoted by advertisements. (**Table 1**)

CONCLUSION:

Nowadays, you can find advertisements everywhere, and they serve as powerful tools to convey messages and capture people's interest in products or services through different media channels. In the competitive global market, advertising is incredibly crucial, influencing people's actions and shaping their opinions about brands. It's a blend of creativity and smart communication that connects brands with their target audiences. In the realm of advertising, a variety of strategies are employed to attract attention and convince people. However, there's a tricky aspect known as consumer manipulation. Understanding how this manipulation works is essential to address the ethical concerns that arise in the evolving landscape of advertising. This paper focuses on the public knowledge about consumer manipulation through marketing strategies employed in the advertisements of edible items. The findings show that, there is a growing awareness among consumers about the marketing strategies employed by advertising agencies. While collectively, 65.67% have not noticed the brands of edible items changing their core objectives over time.

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