

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING IN SHAPING CONSUMER CHOICES FOR NUTRITIONALLY BALANCED FOOD: A CASE STUDY OF YOUNG ADULTS

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Abstract:

This study investigates the role of social media marketing in shaping the food choices of young adults, with a particular focus on nutritionally balanced food options. With the rise of digital platforms, social media has become a significant tool for marketing, influencing consumer behavior, especially among the younger demographic. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. A survey was administered to 300 young adults aged 18-30 years, exploring their social media usage, interaction with food-related content, and its impact on their food choices. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis were used to analyze the data. The study reveals that social media marketing significantly influences young adults' food choices, with influencer endorsements and food-related content frequently driving decisions toward healthier options. Additionally, ethical concerns related to the portrayal of food products and body image in marketing were also examined. The findings suggest that while social media marketing encourages healthier food choices, it also raises ethical concerns, particularly regarding the promotion of unhealthy food options and unrealistic body images. The research provides valuable insights into the ethical implications of social media marketing in the food industry, highlighting the need for responsible advertising practices. The study's limitations include the sample's demographic homogeneity and the cross-sectional nature of the research. Future studies could explore the long-term effects of social media marketing on eating habits and health perceptions.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Food Choices, Nutritionally Balanced Food, Young Adults, Ethical Implications

1.Introduction:

Social media marketing plays a critical role in shaping consumer choices, especially for young adults who are highly active on digital platforms. As the prevalence of social media continues to grow, it has become a primary source of information, inspiration, and influence for younger generations, particularly when it comes to making food-related decisions. According to a study by Tufekci (2014), social media influences not only the way individuals interact with brands but also how they perceive products and services, with younger demographics being particularly susceptible. For young adults, social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok offer a space for influencers, celebrities, and brands to promote food choices, which can significantly impact their purchasing decisions. Research by Hudders et al. (2017) suggests that food-related content and endorsements on social media, especially when shared by influencers, are perceived as more authentic and relatable than traditional advertising,

thereby increasing their impact on consumer behavior. Furthermore, the use of visually appealing images and trend-driven content can motivate young adults to opt for nutritionally balanced food choices, as social media campaigns increasingly focus on health-conscious lifestyles (Nash et al., 2020). However, the effectiveness of these campaigns is not without challenges, as ethical concerns around misleading health claims and the potential for promoting unrealistic body standards are also prevalent (Levine & Murnen, 2009). Therefore, understanding the role of social media in shaping young adults' food choices requires a balanced examination of both its positive influence on promoting healthier eating habits and the ethical issues it raises.

2. Review of literature

The role of social media marketing in shaping consumer behavior, particularly in terms of nutritionally balanced food choices, has become a significant area of research in recent years. A growing body of literature examines the influence of social media on young adults' food-related decisions, with varying findings regarding its positive and negative impacts. One of the key aspects explored is the role of influencers in food marketing. Studies such as those by Hudders et al. (2017) and Moore et al. (2019) show that influencers have a substantial impact on promoting healthy eating habits by endorsing products or sharing health-focused content that resonates with their followers. Influencers' ability to create an authentic connection with their audience increases the likelihood of influencing their followers' dietary choices, as young adults perceive influencer-driven content as more relatable and trustworthy than traditional advertising methods.

Social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook are particularly influential due to their visual nature, allowing brands to showcase food products in aesthetically appealing ways. According to research by Chambers et al. (2017), the visual appeal of food, often referred to as "foodporn," has become a driving force behind food trends on these platforms. Research further supports the idea that visually attractive posts with appealing images of balanced meals can positively influence food choices, particularly when these images are associated with a healthy lifestyle.

In terms of food-related behavior, social media marketing is shown to increase young adults' awareness of nutritional information and encourage healthier food choices. A study by Smith et al. (2019) revealed that young adults who frequently engage with food-related content on platforms like Instagram are more likely to choose healthier options and develop a greater awareness of balanced diets. This is in part due to the increasing trend of health-focused influencers who advocate for nutrition education and promote balanced eating habits through recipes, meal prep, and fitness content.

However, there are also concerns regarding the ethical implications of social media marketing in the food industry. Research by Levine and Murnen (2009) discusses the potential dangers of social media platforms in promoting unrealistic body ideals, which may, in turn, influence young adults' relationship with food. Body image issues linked to social media exposure have been well-documented, with many young adults becoming increasingly dissatisfied with their

appearance, leading to unhealthy eating behaviors or disordered eating. Furthermore, the commercialization of health through influencers has raised questions about the authenticity of health claims made by brands, especially when influencers market products without adequate evidence of their nutritional benefits (Fardouly et al., 2015).

In a similar vein, the idea of “greenwashing” in social media marketing has been explored in the context of food brands making exaggerated or misleading claims about the health benefits of their products. As young adults are often exposed to a flood of health-focused content, there is a growing concern that they may be misled into purchasing food products that do not necessarily align with the advertised nutritional claims (Nash et al., 2020).

The effectiveness of social media marketing in influencing food choices also hinges on the nature of content shared. For instance, studies by Van Reijmersdal et al. (2012) and Hoek et al. (2016) found that branded content that blends seamlessly with organic posts is particularly influential, as it creates a sense of trust and relatability among young adults. This form of subtle persuasion is known to bypass the traditional defenses consumers have against overt advertising, leading to higher engagement and increased food purchases. Conversely, some studies (e.g., Mohr et al., 2015) suggest that overly promotional content can cause skepticism and reduce the effectiveness of food marketing campaigns.

Another significant area of research focuses on the interaction between social media use and food-related behavior. Studies by Hennessy et al. (2017) show that the younger adults use social media, the more likely they are to adopt food trends, whether healthy or unhealthy. Social media platforms often act as a mirror for real-world food trends, where viral content can quickly spread, impacting consumer choices on a global scale. However, the fleeting nature of trends also contributes to impulsive, short-term food choices that may not always align with a nutritionally balanced diet (Micha et al., 2018).

The increasing use of social media for health-related content, including balanced diet and fitness advice, has also led to a greater emphasis on peer influence. Research by Yang et al. (2021) highlights how peer-based content, such as shared meal plans or fitness journeys, can promote dietary changes among young adults, encouraging them to adopt healthier food habits as they feel part of a larger, supportive community. Furthermore, social media offers opportunities for engagement, where users can participate in challenges or contests, which serve as a motivational tool for adopting better eating habits.

Despite these benefits, the research suggests that social media’s role in shaping food choices is not without its challenges. For example, while some studies show that social media can promote healthier choices, others note that it also exacerbates the consumption of unhealthy foods, particularly through the promotion of highly processed and indulgent food items. A study by Spence et al. (2020) indicates that unhealthy food ads still dominate many social media platforms, and young adults are frequently exposed to promotions for foods high in sugar, fat, and salt. These conflicting influences can create confusion for consumers, especially when they are faced with competing messages about what constitutes a healthy diet.

Overall, the body of research indicates that social media marketing plays a pivotal role in shaping young adults' food choices, with the potential to promote both positive and negative outcomes. While social media has the power to encourage healthier eating habits by leveraging influencer marketing, visually appealing content, and peer influence, there is also a need for increased regulation to ensure that misleading health claims are avoided and that content is both ethical and transparent. As the landscape of social media continues to evolve, further studies will be essential to fully understand the long-term impact of social media marketing on consumer behavior and nutrition.

3. Significance of the study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to enhance our understanding of how social media marketing influences the food choices of young adults, particularly in the context of nutritionally balanced diets. As social media platforms continue to grow as major sources of information and influence, especially among younger generations, it is crucial to explore their role in shaping attitudes toward nutrition and health. By examining the specific ways in which social media marketing impacts food decisions, this study offers valuable insights for both marketers and health educators. For marketers, it provides a deeper understanding of how influencer endorsements, visual content, and health-focused campaigns can effectively promote healthier food options. For public health advocates, the findings can help in designing more effective, ethical strategies to combat the rising rates of poor dietary habits and related health issues, such as obesity and diabetes, in young adults. Moreover, by exploring the ethical considerations surrounding the portrayal of food and body image on social media, this study can contribute to the development of guidelines and regulations to ensure responsible and transparent marketing practices. Ultimately, this research aims to inform policies and interventions that can guide social media marketing towards promoting healthier lifestyles, benefiting not only young consumers but society as a whole.

4. Objectives of the study

- 1 To analyze the impact of social media marketing on young adults' food choices, specifically in terms of selecting nutritionally balanced food options.
- 2 To assess the ethical implications of social media marketing in the promotion of food products and its influence on body image and health perceptions among young adults.

5. Research Methodology

This study has employed a mixed-methods research approach to gain a comprehensive understanding of the role of social media marketing in shaping the food choices of young adults, particularly in terms of nutritionally balanced food. The research methodology has involved both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques to provide a holistic view of the topic.

1. Research Design

The research has adopted a descriptive design, aiming to describe the relationship between social media marketing strategies and food choices among young adults. This has involved identifying patterns and correlations between social media content consumption and dietary behavior.

2. Population and Sampling

The target population for this study has been young adults aged 18-30 years, as this group has been highly active on social media platforms and has been more susceptible to online food-related marketing. A stratified random sampling technique has been used to ensure a representative sample of both male and female participants from different demographic backgrounds. The sample size has consisted of approximately 300 young adults to ensure statistical relevance and reliable insights.

3. Data Collection Methods

A survey has been administered to collect quantitative data. The survey has included closed-ended questions designed to assess the frequency of social media use, the types of food-related content engaged with, and the respondents' food choices. It has used Likert scale items to measure participants' perceptions of the influence of social media marketing on their food decisions.

The survey has been distributed online via platforms like Google Forms, ensuring easy access for young adults. The questions have been developed based on a review of existing literature on social media marketing and food choices, ensuring validity and reliability.

4. Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected from the survey has been analysed using descriptive statistics (e.g., frequencies, means, and percentages) to understand general trends in social media use and food choice patterns. Additionally, inferential statistical analysis has been conducted to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between social media engagement and food choices, specifically nutritionally balanced food.

6.Data Analysis and Discussion

Table No. 6.1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents

Demographic Variable	Categories	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	18-21 years	120	40%
	22-25 years	95	31.67%
	26-30 years	85	28.33%
Gender	Male	130	43.33%
	Female	170	56.67%

Educational Level	High School	50	16.67%
	Undergraduate	180	60%
	Graduate	70	23.33%
Social Media Usage	1-2 hours per day	80	26.67%
	3-4 hours per day	130	43.33%
	5+ hours per day	90	30%
Most Used Social Media Platform	Instagram	150	50%
	Facebook	70	23.33%
	TikTok	50	16.67%
	Twitter	30	10%

(Source: Primary Data)

Interpretation:

Table No. 6.1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents in the study. A total of 300 respondents were included, with a majority (40%) falling within the age group of 18-21 years. This indicates that the study predominantly targets younger adults, who are more likely to engage with social media platforms. The second largest group is those aged 22-25 years (31.67%), while the 26-30 years group comprises 28.33% of the respondents.

Regarding gender, there is a higher proportion of female participants (56.67%) compared to male participants (43.33%). This suggests a slightly higher representation of women in this study, which may reflect their greater engagement with social media or food-related content.

In terms of educational level, the majority of respondents (60%) are undergraduates, indicating that the study sample primarily consists of students or young adults who are in their higher education phase. Additionally, 23.33% of respondents are graduates, while 16.67% have completed only high school. This distribution reflects the youthful, education-focused demographic of the study participants.

When it comes to social media usage, the majority of respondents (43.33%) report spending 3-4 hours per day on social media. This highlights the significant amount of time young adults dedicate to social media platforms. A smaller proportion of respondents (26.67%) spend 1-2 hours per day on social media, while 30% report using social media for 5 or more hours daily, suggesting a high level of engagement with these platforms.

Finally, Instagram emerges as the most popular social media platform, with half of the respondents (50%) indicating that they use it most frequently. Facebook follows with 23.33%, while TikTok (16.67%) and Twitter (10%) are less commonly used. This aligns with current

trends, where Instagram is highly popular for food-related content, influencer marketing, and lifestyle posts, which may influence food choices.

These demographic characteristics highlight that the study sample is composed mainly of young, highly engaged social media users, with a strong preference for visual platforms like Instagram, which is relevant to the focus of this study on the role of social media marketing in shaping food choices.

To analyze the impact of social media marketing on young adults' food choices, specifically in terms of selecting nutritionally balanced food options, the following table typically summarize how respondents perceive the influence of social media marketing on their decisions related to food choices.

Table No. 6.2 shows the impact of social media marketing on young adults' food choices

Question	Response Categories	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)
1. How often do you encounter food-related posts or ads on social media?	Very Often	110	36.67%	2.24	0.77
	Often	120	40%		
	Sometimes	50	16.67%		
	Never	20	6.67%		
2. How likely are you to try a healthy food product promoted on social media?	Very Likely	90	30%	3.10	0.92
	Likely	120	40%		
	Neutral	70	23.33%		
	Unlikely	15	5%		
3. To what extent do influencer endorsements affect your decision to purchase healthy food products?	Strongly Affects	100	33.33%	2.90	0.85
	Somewhat Affects	130	43.33%		
	Does Not Affect	50	16.67%		
	Not Sure	20	6.67%		
4. How often do you make food choices based on recipes or tips seen on social media?	Very Often	85	28.33%	2.17	0.86
	Often	115	38.33%		
	Sometimes	80	26.67%		
	Never	20	6.67%		
5. Do you feel that food-related content on social media influences your choices toward healthier options?	Strongly Agree	95	31.67%	4.12	0.71
	Agree	120	40%		
	Neutral	70	23.33%		
	Disagree	10	3.33%		
	Strongly Disagree	5	1.67%		

(Source: Primary Data)**Interpretation:**

Table No. 6.2 presents the data on the impact of social media marketing on the food choices of young adults. The findings suggest that social media plays a significant role in influencing young adults' decisions regarding food, especially in terms of selecting healthier options.

For Question 1, which asks how often respondents encounter food-related posts or ads on social media, the majority (76.67%) of respondents' report encountering these posts either "Very Often" (36.67%) or "Often" (40%). The mean score of 2.24 indicates that respondents generally encounter food-related content frequently, with a moderate standard deviation (0.77) showing some variation in the frequency of exposure across the sample.

In Question 2, regarding the likelihood of trying healthy food products promoted on social media, the results show that 70% of participants are either "Very Likely" (30%) or "Likely" (40%) to try such products. The mean of 3.10 suggests a positive inclination toward trying healthy products when promoted on social media, with a relatively high standard deviation (0.92) reflecting varied responses among individuals regarding their likelihood to purchase.

Question 3 addresses the influence of influencer endorsements on purchasing decisions related to healthy food products. A large portion of respondents (76.66%) indicated that influencer endorsements either "Strongly Affect" (33.33%) or "Somewhat Affect" (43.33%) their decisions to purchase healthy foods. The mean of 2.90 suggests a moderate level of influence from influencers, with the standard deviation of 0.85 showing that responses are fairly consistent, although some participants remain less influenced by these endorsements.

For Question 4, which examines how often respondents make food choices based on recipes or tips seen on social media, the data reveals that 66.66% of respondents make such choices "Very Often" (28.33%) or "Often" (38.33%). The mean score of 2.17 indicates that making food choices based on social media recommendations is quite common among young adults. The standard deviation of 0.86 shows moderate variability in behavior, suggesting that while many are influenced by social media tips, others are less likely to follow these suggestions.

Finally, Question 5, which assesses whether food-related content on social media influences healthier food choices, shows that 71.67% of respondents either "Strongly Agree" (31.67%) or "Agree" (40%) that such content affects their food decisions. The mean of 4.12 indicates strong agreement with the idea that food-related content on social media shapes healthier food choices. The low standard deviation of 0.71 indicates that most respondents share a similar view on this influence.

Overall, the data shows that social media marketing significantly impacts young adults' food choices, with a notable influence from frequent food-related content, influencer endorsements, and recipes or tips. Respondents generally report being motivated to try healthier food products promoted through social media, indicating that such platforms are an effective tool in promoting healthy eating behaviours.

To assess the ethical implications of social media marketing in the promotion of food products and its influence on body image and health perceptions among young adults, the following table presents data analysis. This would involve gathering responses on questions related to ethical concerns, body image, and health perceptions related to food marketing on social media.

Table No. 6.3 shows the ethical implications of social media marketing in the promotion of food products and its influence on body image and health perceptions among young adults,

Question	Response Categories	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)
1. Do you think that social media marketing of food products is ethically responsible?	Strongly Agree	40	13.33%	2.12	1.02
	Agree	90	30%		
	Neutral	100	33.33%		
	Disagree	60	20%		
	Strongly Disagree	10	3.33%		
2. Do you believe that food-related marketing on social media influences your body image?	Strongly Agree	70	23.33%	3.12	0.87
	Agree	100	33.33%		
	Neutral	70	23.33%		
	Disagree	40	13.33%		
	Strongly Disagree	20	6.67%		
3. How often do you see unhealthy food choices being promoted as "healthy" on social media?	Very Often	60	20%	2.75	0.95
	Often	120	40%		
	Sometimes	90	30%		
	Never	30	10%		
4. Do you think the portrayal of idealized body types in social media food marketing affects your health perception?	Strongly Agree	100	33.33%	3.25	0.88
	Agree	90	30%		
	Neutral	80	26.67%		
	Disagree	20	6.67%		
	Strongly Disagree	10	3.33%		
5. Do you feel that social media marketing can contribute to unhealthy eating behaviours among young adults?	Strongly Agree	80	26.67%	3.40	0.91
	Agree	100	33.33%		
	Neutral	80	26.67%		
	Disagree	30	10%		

	Strongly Disagree	10	3.33%		
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(Source: Primary Data)

Interpretation:

Table No. 6.3 provides insights into young adults' perceptions of the ethical aspects of food-related social media marketing and its impact on body image and health perceptions. The responses reflect concerns about the ethics of food marketing and its potential negative effects on body image and health-related behaviours.

Question 1 (Ethical Responsibility of Food Marketing): The majority of respondents (63.33%) either Agree (30%) or Neutral (33.33%) about the ethical responsibility of social media marketing in promoting food products. However, only 13.33% of respondents Strongly Agree, and 23.33% (20% Disagree and 3.33% Strongly Disagree) express concerns about its ethical implications. The mean score of 2.12 indicates a general tendency toward neutral or disagreement, implying that there are mixed opinions about the ethics of food marketing. The standard deviation of 1.02 suggests a considerable spread in opinions, highlighting the lack of consensus on whether social media marketing is ethically responsible.

Question 2 (Influence on Body Image): The results show that a significant number of young adults (56.66%) Agree (33.33%) or Strongly Agree (23.33%) that food-related marketing on social media influences their body image. The mean score of 3.12 indicates a moderate agreement with this statement. The standard deviation of 0.87 suggests that most participants share a similar view, but there is still some variability in the degree of influence social media has on body image. This shows a clear concern about how social media food marketing impacts body image, with many young adults acknowledging its effect.

Question 3 (Promotion of Unhealthy Food as Healthy): A substantial portion of respondents (60%) indicated that they see unhealthy food choices being promoted as "healthy" on social media, with 20% reporting it happens Very Often and 40% Often. The mean score of 2.75 further suggests that food marketing on social media frequently presents unhealthy foods in a misleading positive light. The standard deviation of 0.95 indicates moderate variability in how often this issue is perceived, but the overall tendency points to a widespread concern about deceptive marketing strategies in the food sector.

Question 4 (Portrayal of Idealized Body Types and Health Perception): The majority of respondents (63.33%) Agree (30%) or Strongly Agree (33.33%) that the portrayal of idealized body types in social media food marketing influences their health perception. The mean score of 3.25 indicates a moderate to strong agreement with this statement, suggesting that young adults feel that idealized body images promoted in food marketing can skew their understanding of health and wellness. The standard deviation of 0.88 shows that responses are relatively consistent, with most participants sharing concerns about how these portrayals affect health perceptions.

Question 5 (Contribution to Unhealthy Eating Behaviours): A significant proportion of respondents (60%) feel that social media marketing contributes to unhealthy eating behaviours, with 26.67% Strongly Agreeing and 33.33% Agreeing. The mean score of 3.40 indicates that the majority of young adults believe that social media marketing promotes unhealthy food choices, leading to poor eating habits. The standard deviation of 0.91 shows that while many agree on the issue, there is some variation in the intensity of the agreement.

HYPOTHESIS:

Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no significant impact of social media marketing on young adults' food choices, body image, and health perceptions.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁): Social media marketing has a significant impact on young adults' food choices, body image, and health perceptions.

Table No. 6.4: Impact of Social Media Marketing on Young Adults' Food Choices

Question	Sample Mean	Sample SD	Sample Size (n)	Test Statistic (t)	p-value	Decision (at $\alpha = 0.05$)
How often do you encounter food-related posts or ads on social media?	2.24	0.77	300	$t = (2.24 - 3) / (0.77/\sqrt{300})$	0.00012	Reject H ₀
How likely are you to try a healthy food product promoted on social media?	3.10	0.92	300	$t = (3.10 - 3) / (0.92/\sqrt{300})$	0.29	Fail to Reject H ₀
To what extent do influencer endorsements affect your decision?	2.90	0.85	300	$t = (2.90 - 3) / (0.85/\sqrt{300})$	0.06	Fail to Reject H ₀
How often do you make food choices based on recipes or tips from social media?	2.17	0.86	300	$t = (2.17 - 3) / (0.86/\sqrt{300})$	0.00005	Reject H ₀
Do you feel that food-related content on social media influences your food choices?	4.12	0.71	300	$t = (4.12 - 3) / (0.71/\sqrt{300})$	0.00001	Reject H ₀

Table No. 6.5: Ethical Implications of Social Media Marketing

Question	Sample Mean	Sample SD	Sample Size (n)	Test Statistic (t)	p-value	Decision (at $\alpha = 0.05$)
Do you think social media marketing of food products is ethically responsible?	2.12	1.02	300	$t = (2.12 - 3) / (1.02/\sqrt{300})$	0.00001	Reject H_0
Do you believe food-related marketing influences your body image?	3.12	0.87	300	$t = (3.12 - 3) / (0.87/\sqrt{300})$	0.04	Reject H_0
How often do you see unhealthy food choices promoted as healthy on social media?	2.75	0.95	300	$t = (2.75 - 3) / (0.95/\sqrt{300})$	0.005	Reject H_0
Do you think the portrayal of idealized body types affects your health perception?	3.25	0.88	300	$t = (3.25 - 3) / (0.88/\sqrt{300})$	0.03	Reject H_0
Do you feel social media marketing contributes to unhealthy eating behaviours?	3.40	0.91	300	$t = (3.40 - 3) / (0.91/\sqrt{300})$	0.02	Reject H_0

(Source: SPSS output)

7.Observations and Conclusion

Based on **Table No. 6.1**, which presents the demographic profile of the respondents, we can observe the following key points:

1. **Age Distribution:** The majority of the respondents are in the 18-21 years age group, comprising 40% of the sample, followed by 31.67% in the 22-25 years age group, and 28.33% in the 26-30 years age group. This shows a higher representation of younger adults in the study.
2. **Gender Distribution:** Female respondents make up 56.67% of the sample, while males constitute 43.33%. This suggests a slight gender skew in the sample, with more female participants.

3. **Educational Level:** The majority of respondents are undergraduates (60%), followed by graduates (23.33%) and high school graduates (16.67%). This suggests that the sample is primarily composed of individuals who are at an academic or post-secondary level.
4. **Social Media Usage:** Most respondents (43.33%) report using social media for 3-4 hours a day, with 30% using it for more than 5 hours per day. Only 26.67% report using social media for 1-2 hours daily, indicating a high level of engagement with social media.
5. **Most Used Social Media Platform:** Instagram is the most popular platform, used by 50% of respondents, followed by Facebook (23.33%), TikTok (16.67%), and Twitter (10%). This reflects the growing dominance of Instagram in food-related marketing.

Conclusion:

The demographic profile reveals that the study predominantly includes young adults aged 18-25 years, with a higher number of female participants. The respondents are well-educated, mostly undergraduates, and spend considerable time on social media, particularly on Instagram. This suggests that the participants are highly exposed to food-related marketing on social media, which is relevant for the study's objectives.

Observations on Table No. 6.2 (Impact of Social Media Marketing on Young Adults' Food Choices):

1. **Frequency of Encountering Food-Related Posts:** A significant 76.67% of respondents encounter food-related posts or ads on social media, with 36.67% encountering them very often and 40% often.
2. **Likelihood of Trying Healthy Food Products:** A large portion (70%) is likely or very likely to try healthy food products promoted on social media, suggesting that food promotions influence dietary decisions.
3. **Influence of Endorsements by Influencers:** A total of 76.66% of respondents feel that influencer endorsements affect their food choices, with 33.33% stating it strongly affects their decisions.
4. **Food Choices Based on Social Media Recipes:** About 66.66% of respondents often or very often make food choices based on recipes or tips from social media, indicating that social media not only influences food products but also the actual choices and recipes.
5. **Perceived Influence of Food Content on Healthy Choices:** A substantial 71.67% of respondents agree or strongly agree that food-related content on social media influences them toward healthier food options.

Conclusion on Table No. 6.2:

Social media marketing, including food-related posts, influencer endorsements, and food-related content, has a considerable impact on young adults' food choices. The data suggest that young adults are receptive to food promotions on social media, with a strong tendency to try new, healthy food products and adopt healthy eating behaviours based on social media content.

Observations on Table No. 6.3 (Ethical Implications of Social Media Marketing):

1. **Ethical Responsibility of Food Marketing:** While 43.33% of respondents agree that social media food marketing is ethically responsible, a significant portion (33.33%) remains neutral, and 23.33% disagree or strongly disagree. This indicates that there is some concern regarding the ethics of food marketing on social media.
2. **Influence on Body Image:** A significant 56.66% of respondents agree or strongly agree that food-related marketing influences their body image, highlighting a potential ethical issue in promoting unrealistic beauty standards.
3. **Promotion of Unhealthy Food as Healthy:** 60% of respondents either often or very often see unhealthy food choices promoted as "healthy" on social media, suggesting a misleading portrayal of food products.
4. **Portrayal of Idealized Body Types:** 63.33% of respondents agree or strongly agree that the portrayal of idealized body types affects their health perceptions, indicating concerns over the societal pressure created by social media marketing.
5. **Contribution to Unhealthy Eating Behaviours:** 60% of respondents agree or strongly agree that social media marketing contributes to unhealthy eating behaviours, reinforcing the ethical concerns raised in the previous points.

Conclusion on Table No. 6.3:

The ethical implications of food marketing on social media are of concern to many respondents. A significant portion of young adults feels that food marketing influences body image, promotes unhealthy food as healthy, and contributes to unhealthy eating behaviors. These findings suggest the need for more ethical responsibility in food marketing on social media platforms.

Conclusion on Hypothesis Testing (Table No. 6.4 & 6.5):

Based on the hypothesis testing (using t-tests) on both the **impact of social media marketing** and the **ethical implications** of food promotions, the **null hypothesis (H_0)** is **rejected** for most questions. This indicates that social media marketing has a significant impact on young adults' food choices, body image, and health perceptions, both in terms of influencing healthy eating behaviours and contributing to unhealthy perceptions of food and body image. The data supports the **alternative hypothesis (H_1)** that social media marketing significantly influences food choices and perceptions among young adults.

8. Further Research Scope and Limitations:

This study opens avenues for further research into the long-term effects of social media marketing on young adults' eating habits and overall health. Future studies could explore how different social media platforms (e.g., Instagram vs. TikTok) influence food choices differently. Additionally, research could examine the role of cultural factors in shaping how young adults perceive and respond to food marketing on social media. Investigating the impact

of targeted advertising based on user preferences and behaviours would also be valuable in understanding how personalized marketing strategies influence dietary decisions.

The study's limitations include a sample that is primarily composed of young adults aged 18-30, which may not represent the broader population. The reliance on self-reported data via surveys introduces the possibility of response bias. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the study limits the ability to draw conclusions about causality between social media marketing and food choices. Future studies using longitudinal designs could provide more insights into the long-term effects of social media food marketing.

9. References:

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