

Social Media Food Ads Hype and Adolescent Obesity Upsurge in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The devastating effect of obesity on humanity transcends race, regional barriers and national developmental status. This has become a global dilemma; as nations figures-out better ways of ensuring safe consumption pattern amongst all age brackets. The situation has become very complex due to the expanding effect of non-regulated social media ads on availability of all forms of eatable items in all facets of human endeavour. The aim of this research is to evaluate the pernicious effect of social media ads hype on obesity increase amongst adolescents and adults in in three (3) selected districts in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The underlying issues to be unravelled by this study includes: the prevailing effect of un-regulated social network activities, the changing urban lifestyle of obese persons and the increased availability of low cost processed foods occasioned by global competitiveness and economic liberalization. The study covered a period of four years (2017-2021) by selecting medical centres from each of the three districts under study in which, relevant information was obtained to affirm obese person; We observed a steady annual percentage increase of (2018-2019 -20%, 2019 – 2020- 37% and 2020 -2021 – 32%), based om average Body Mass Index(BMI) of each individual that is above 30kg/m². The conceptual framework adopted for the study is a combination of how social interaction affect consumption behavior through the interchange between; Personal consumption decision, interpersonal consumption decision, institutional influence on consumption pattern, neighborhood influence, and health regulatory processes/procedures. The study adopted descriptive research technique whereby questionnaires were administered to identify respondents, and comprehensive interviews were also conducted to obtain detail facts from respondents on areas that was not fully covered by the questionnaire, based on Systematic review of literature. The outcome revealed a significance interrelationship between the variables of the construct. The outcome of the study revealed an interrelationship between social media ads on food items and obesity amongst adolescence and adults in study area. The implication of the study, creates a pathway for future research to expand the age bracket to include children, and encourage health regulatory authorities to step up the process of control on unwholesome food advertising. The study recommended a policy framework that will regulate social food item to mitigate the health effect of obesity amongst the categories of persons under study.

Keywords: Obesity, Adolescent, Social network, food Advertising, and Body Mass Index

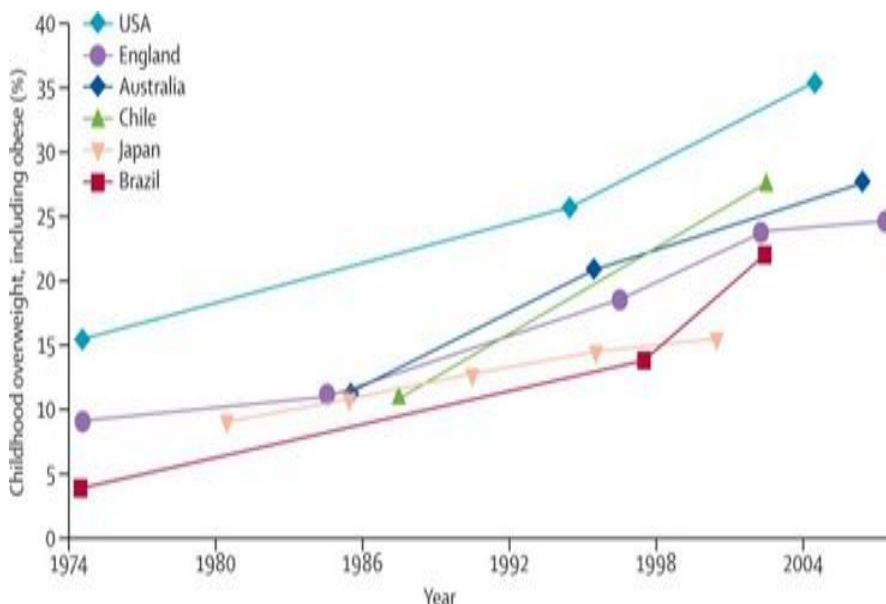
INTRODUCTION

The gloomy report portrayed by World Obesity Federation (WOF)in May 2022 shows that over 1billion people that is;1 in 5womeen and 1 in 7men will be living with obesity by 2030.The prevalence of obesity- a non-communicable disease is traceable to both environmental/medical condition (due to over-accumulation

of surplus body fat with diverse deterrent effect on the persons' health) (Powell-Wiley, et. al. 2021: & Albuquerque, et. al. 2017), and the genetically induced condition which proposes that; weight gain could be caused by a gene known as (Fat mass and obesity associated gene – FTO), this gene drives appetite and creates persistent urge to eat, thereby resulting in excess weight/increases in Body Mass Index (BMI) for such individual. (Yazd, et. al.2015, Loos et. al. 2008; & Bleich, et. al. 2008), increasing integration of digital contents amongst adolescent and young adults, specifically increased levels of customer loyalty amongst high school and tertiary educational population in the country (Eshiett; Eshiett; & Uwhubetine, 2022). Global statistics has shown a simultaneous upsurge in weight gain or Body Mass Index (BMI) amongst adolescence and adult across political, economic and industrial divide. In recent years, due to the aggressive digital penetration on all facets of human endeavour, the propensity to shop online specifically amongst adolescent and young adults have increased tremendously, (Eshiett, 2021), specifically through online advertising of unwholesome consumer goods (Eshiett, 2021).

Based on the dramatic change in global food consumption system, occasioned by improved technological breakthroughs in; food technology—specifically low-cost and affordable processed foods (Ness-Abramof, et. al. 2006) well defined logistic/transportation system (King, et. al. 2017; & Mc Cormack, et. al. 2014), and the flux at which marketing communication on food item is networked through social media (Hamm, et. al. 2015; Strasburger, et. al. 2014; & Ata, et. al. 2007), audio/visual media (Vioque et. al 2000; Gortmaker, et. al. 1996 & Tucker, et. al. 1991) platforms across the globe. This global food system has affected greatly the consumption pattern in both industrialized, low and mid income countries; without strict adherence to choices on basic nutritional facts on food energy consumption (Crockett, et. al. 2018; FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2017; Nestle, 2016; Nijland, et. al. 2010, Theodore; & Giamila, 2006; Wing; & Phelan, 2005), low calorie intake and the need for physical activities (Lau, et. al 2007, Salmon; & Timperio, 2007 & Tate. 2007), as panacea to the pervading effect of obesity as shown below in Figures I Global Obesity Prevalence,

Figure 1: Global Obesity Pandemic shaped by global drivers and local environment 1974-2004

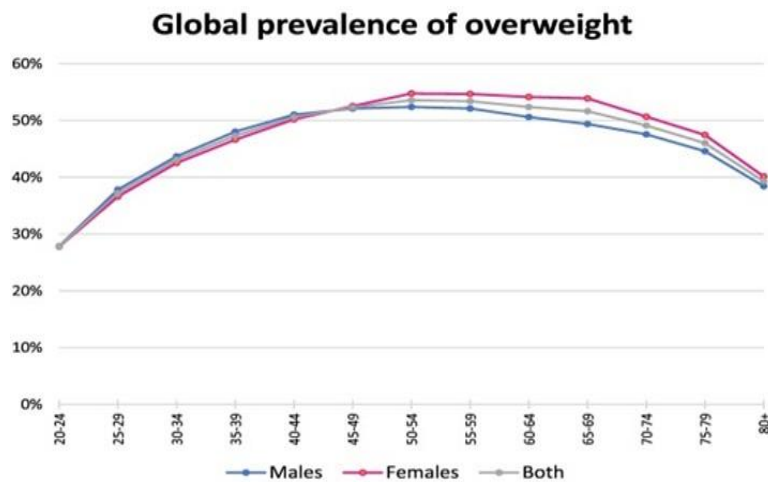


Source: Swinburnet. al, (2011). The global obesity pandemic: shaped by global drivers and local environments. Lancet. 2011 Aug 27;378(9793):804-14. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(11\)60813-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(11)60813-1). PMID: 21872749.

Figure 1 shows the prevalence of obesity in six selected countries of USA, England, Australia, Chile, Japan and Brazil. The selection did not include any of the countries in Africa, though its quite prevalent in the

region. It must be mentioned that the dearth in available published data on overweight persons in sub-Saharan Africa and specifically Nigeria is quite disturbing, hence, scholars should prevail on governments to make such data available as a measure for proper public health planning and wellness. USA shows the highest and continuous increasing growth of persons with obesity, while Brazil has the least growth rate amongst the countries shown on the gap between 1974-2004

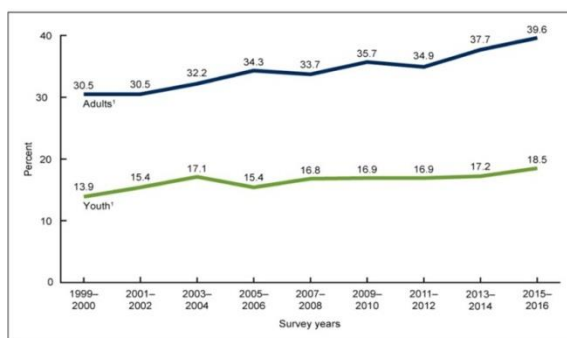
Figure 2: Global Obesity (Overweight) Prevalence



Source: Boutari C, & Mantzoros CS. A (2022), update on the epidemiology of obesity and a call to action: as its twin COVID-19 pandemic appears to be receding, the obesity and dys-metabolism pandemic continues to rage on. Metabolism. 2022 Aug;133:155217. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.metabol.2022.155217>. Epub 2022 May 15. PMID: 35584732; PMCID: PMC9107388

Figure 2 shows the prevailing effect of global obesity on male, female and both, the graph reveals a steady increase in obesity with the age ranging between 20 – 80years+. This is an indication that disease related to obesity such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart attack and others could be on the rise based on increasing rise in obese persons in global population.

Figure 3: Obesity Trend 1999 – 2016



*Significant increasing linear trend from 1999-2000 through 2015-2016.
 NOTES: All estimates for adults are age adjusted by the direct method to the 2000 U.S. census population using the age groups 20-39, 40-59, and 60 and over.
 Access data table for Figure 5 at: https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/statistics/2016_table.pdf#.
 SOURCE: NCHS, National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 1999-2016.

Source: Singh, et. al, (2019). US Physical Activity Guidelines: Current State, Impact and Future Directions. Trends in Cardiovascular Medicine. 30. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tcm.2019.10.002>.

Figure31 shows obesity trend 1999 – 2016. The graph is plotted between survey years and percentage increases. For adults, the percentage increased from 30% in 1999 with a steady rise of 39.6 in 2016. This is a very gloomy picture based on the health implications of weight increases on adults. Youth or adolescent

showed a steady rise in weight gain of 13.9 in 1999 to 18.5 in 2016, this shows a gloomy picture as well, based on the various health issues that is accompanied by obesity

Global data has shown that increasing weight gain amongst adolescent and adult population is not limited to industrialized countries, low-income countries are also susceptible to the increasing scourge of global trends in obesity amongst its population based on; i) Changing societal ethics, attitude and behaviour amongst adolescent has become a recurring phenomenon within the area of study, ii) The prevailing effect of unregulated social network activities, iii) Growing urban lifestyle of obese persons-, and iv) Increased availability of low cost processed foods occasioned by global competitiveness and economic liberalization

In conceptualizing social media effect in the upsurge of adolescent and adult obesity, there've been are several studies conducted by other researchers as listed Table 1 below: In a study by Hamm, et. al. (2015) on prevalence of social media accessibility and young adults, In a similar study Strasburger et. al. (2014), on Children, Adolescents, and the Media, another study by Ata, et. al. (2007), on the influence of gender, family, peers and friends on the eating pattern of adolescent and young adult, a similar study by Kuntsche, et. al. (2006), on the socio-demographic effect of drinking amongst adolescent and young adult and its addictive consequences, also; a study by Duan, et. al. (2009), on the trajectories of long term effect of drugs through adolescent to adult based on social influences, and the study of Greenblatt, (2000). Behavioral and emotional problems emanating from associated with addition to alcohol

Other studies also conducted by researchers in this field of study include: Salmon, & Timperio (2007), on the environmental trends and effect on adolescent and adult non-adaptation to physical activities, in a similar study by Tale, et. al. (2007), the authors examined the strategic effect of reduction in weight due to physical activities, in a similar study by Pearce, et. al. (2002), on obesity and peer romantic relationship and victimization, also, in a study by Wellman, et. al. (2018), examined the bariatric procedure effect on obese person, also, Nestle, & Jacobson, (2000), On effective public health policy approaches to mitigating the surge of obesity amongst adolescent and adult, Mozaffarian, et. al. (2011), increasing loyalty based on customer loyalty to digital contents at tertiary educational levels ((Eshiett; Eshiett; & Uwhubetine, 2022), also examined the gender effect of changes in lifestyle and diets on men and women, and James, (2008) on the fundamental drivers of weight gain amongst adults and adolescent.

Table 1. Previous Conceptualization on social media effect in the upsurge of adolescent and adult obesity

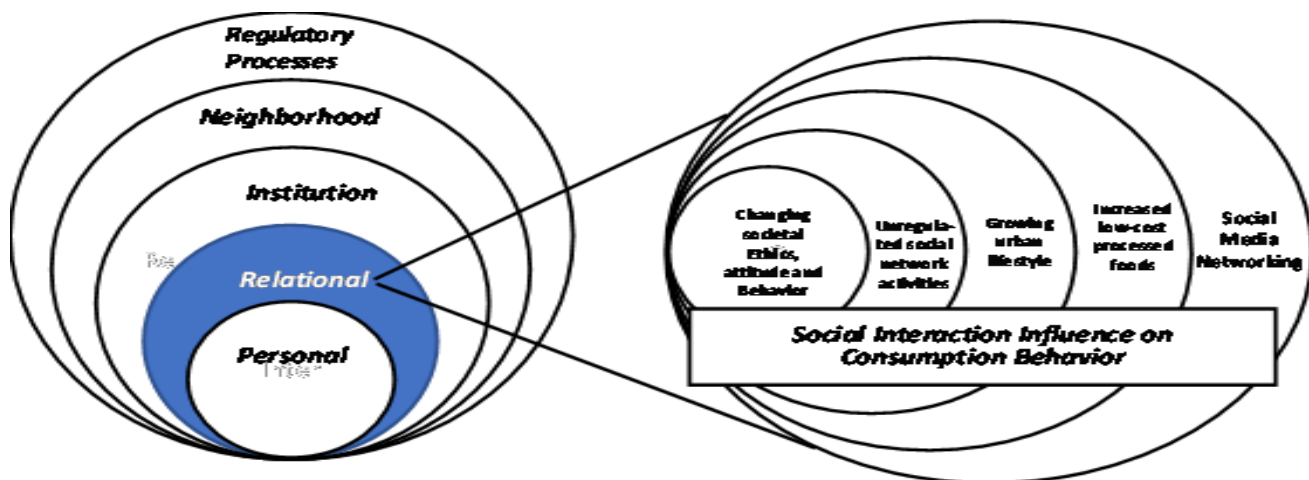
Study	Conceptualization	Item of Obesity & Social Media	Parameter of Measurement
(Hamm, et. al. (2015)	Prevalence amongst adolescent and young adults	Social Media communication	Empirical Study; Accessibility
Strasburger et. al. (2014),	Obsession amongst group	Social Media communication	Empirical Study; Issues on Adaptability
Ata, et. al. (2007),	Eating pattern amongst peers based on influence	Social Media communication	Empirical Study; on peer influence
Kuntsche, et. al. (2006)	Socio-democratic effect of the group	Social Media communication	Empirical Study; Interactivity and addictive consequences
Duan, et. al. (2009),	Trajectories of long term effect of drugs	Social Media communication	Empirical Study; On Perception of drug abuse amongst group

Greenblatt, (2000).	Addition to alcohol amongst group	Social Media communication	Empirical Study; On Behavioral and emotional issues
Salmon, & Timperio, (2007),	Effect of non-adaptability to physical activities	Social Media communication	Empirical Study on environmental trends
Tate, et. al. (2007),	Weight reduction effectiveness	Social Media communication	Empirical Study; strategic effect of weight reduction
Pearce, et. al, (2002),	Effect of peer romantic relationship	Social Media communication	Empirical Study; Victimization
Wellman, et. al. (2018),	Reaction amongst group members	Social Media communication	Empirical Study; on bariatric procedure
Nestle, & Jacobson, (2000)	Mitigating the surge in weight gain amongst group	Social Media communication	Empirical Study; on effective public health policy approaches
Mozaffarian, et. al. (2011),	Adaptation of gender roles as weight control mechanism	Social Media communication	Empirical Study; on gender effects amongst men and women
James, (2008)	Weight gain amongst group	Social Media communication	Empirical Study; on fundamental drivers

Source: Field Survey 2023

The studies listed so far are similar to the study on hand; but with slight deviation, the core basis of this study is to fill in existing literature gap on the prevalence of obesity amongst adolescent and adults based on change in economic fortune and status occasioned by rural – urban migration to the selected urban centres under study, in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The study also showed consistency in each of the selected districts, some kind of ‘trickle-down effect’ of likelihood of the effect of overfeeding, though this did not form part of the study; it was observed that most children of obese adults were also prone to obesity due to weight gain at such tender ages.

Figure 4: Theoretical Framework –Social Interaction Effect on Eating Behavior



Source: Field Survey 2023

The theoretical framework for the study shows how a change in social interaction could affect consumption behavior through the interchange between i) Personal consumption decision, ii) interpersonal consumption

decision which is based on interaction with other individual or group iii) iii) institutional influence which involves well organized setting such as; school, club, and its influence on the consumption behavior of the individual, iv) Neighborhood influence which involves the specific locality in which a person resides, such could affect consumption behavior, since the person may want to do what peers do within the community, and v) regulatory processes which connotes the established 'do's and don'ts by the government, in controlling the pattern of consumption amongst different age brackets within the society. These influence of these element interchangeably affects the outcome of individual and group as explained in the hypothetical propositions;

The prevailing effect of un-regulated social network activities

The proliferation and accessibility to social network resources in urban centres in low-income countries, with ease of accessibility to the internet has exposed adolescence adults to all shades of information including advertorials of unwholesome processed foods which could be ordered across the globe with the click of a button. Existing studies has shown that in 2012, about 73% adolescence have a social network profile and could hang out with friend online and offline(Hamm, et. al. 2015; &Eshiett, 2021); other processes include the development of new products along various socio-cultural and traditional spices product lines (Eshiett; &Eshiett; 2022), and receive messages severally per day, resulting in prevailing effect in their attitude and preferences (Reich, et. al. 2012).

Growing urban lifestyle of obese persons-

There have been dramatic change in lifestyle at the advent of social network in the selected urban areas of this study, there has been drastic reduction in physical activities engagements, this is based on gradual reduction in jobs that are physically inclined in the workplace and even at home due to labour-savings automated solutions (Ness-Abramof, et. al. 2006), increasing reduction in walkouts, cycling and other recreational activities to the use of cars and other leisure means of movement. (James, 2008; & Nestle & Jacobson, 2000), and the loyalty to unwholesome products; driven by induced customer loyalty to such products (Eshiett; &Eshiett; 2021)

Changing societal ethics:

The natural societal norms, attitude and behaviour amongst adolescent has become a recurring phenomenon within the area of study. The expending penetration of infotech and social networks has impacted negatively on the attitude and behavioural pattern of young adults(Alvarado, et.al, 2015), on prevalence of social media accessibility and young adults, adolescence preferring to pattern their lifestyle based on what is obtainable on social media(Hamm, et. al. 2015), Strasburger et. al. (2014),influence of gender, family, peers and friends on the eating pattern of adolescent and young adult(Ata, et. al. 2007),the socio-demographic effect of drinking amongst adolescent and young adult and its addictive consequences (Kuntsche, et. al. 2006), the trajectories of long-term effect of drugs through adolescent to adult based on social influences (Duan, et. al. 2009), and Behavioral and emotional problems emanating from associated with addition to alcohol (Greenblatt, 2000). Hence, the free interaction between male and female in recent years, occasioned by social media does not reflect acceptable norms and existing socio-cultural practice, based on influenced exerted on these young adults from social network groups. Also, young adults are culturally expected to use their adolescence age to learn basic processes of cooking, trading, and home keeping(Sriram, et. al, 2019). But the whole gamut of socio-cultural upbringing has been influenced by the intruding western culture occasioned by social media.

Increased availability of low cost processed foods:

The increasing effect globalization and economic liberalization has encourages unmeted competitiveness

amongst nations, resulting in the proliferation of low-cost processed foods and resources from Europe, USA and lately Asia has complicated the obesity dilemma, most of these processed foods are nutritionally unfit for consumption with high calories and no adequate dietary instructions consumers (Arnett, et. al. 2019). This development has resulted in consistent surge in cardio-vascular infections and other related illnesses (Knutson, et.al. 2017; &Naude, et. al. 2014)

One important issue that must be mentioned at this point, is the need for policy makers to create a platform for the regulation of social media advertorials; because social media ads, promotion, interactive marketing and S-WOM does not critically place side-by-side the extant effect of food item; specifically low-cost processed high energy food intake on; safety standards, calorie counts/nutritional values and the implication of unwholesome food advertorials on public health.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data Collection Procedure

The descriptive survey research approach was used in collecting data for the study, and comprehensive personal interviews was conducted to fill the gap in areas where the questionnaire could not cover effectively. The reports on BMI showing overweight of respondents were obtained from three medical centers in the three selected districts of Eket, Uyo and Ikot Ekpene in AkwaIbom State, Nigeria. 308 questionnaires were administered to respondents, with a follow up confirmation on their Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp accounts Social media platform has become a beehive of social networking activities in Nigeria, the increasing capacity in (Information Technology – info-tech –(IT) resources in the country has made it a vital source of information to users. (Adetunji, et. al. 2017 & 2018). Moreover, Bornet, et. al. (2020), has justified that the 4th industrial revolution requires successful service providers to leverage on the need to augment their service delivery; by adapting social media-inclined service offering, and sentiment mining to obtain super results. This has been the core point in previous research such as; social media replacing traditional media in cresting equity for product brand (Bruhn et al., 2012). In ascertaining randomness in selecting the sample of the study, appropriate sampling procedure was adopted. Each of the districts were haphazardly selected to ensure that each district (Uyo, Eket & Ikot Ekpene) had equal chance of being selected selection for the study (Cohen, et. al.2000).

Measurement Procedure

The study adopted the Sunders, et al. (2007) multi-stage technique of developing scale and ascertaining the validity and reliability of the measurement scales adapted for research. The reliability of the research instrument was tested using field study which was drawn from the three districts under study. Experts in research methodology and marketing communication attested to the validity and reliability of the instrument (Polit; & Beck, 2006). The test re-test method was used in the field survey and was used in testing the reliability of the instrument. In adapting this approach in relation to marketing communication, the scale adopted for the study was a 5-point Likert scale graduated in values 1-5 with 5 being the highest and 1 being the lowest; the values were denoted as follows; 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-neutral, 4-agree and 5-strongly agree.

The multi-stage approach involves series of assessments which was initiated by adopting items from previous studies of marketing communication. Series of studies on social media advertising social media promotion effect on adult and adolescent obesity was adapted from; (Bronner; & Neijens 2006; Keller 2009; & Buil, de Chernatony, et al. 2013), social media interactive marketing (Keller, 2009; & Kim & Ko, 2012). Also the measurement of social Media Word-of-Mouth (S-WOM) (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012; & Eisingerich, et. al. 2014). Moreover, social media promotion effect on adult and adolescent obesity were also adapted thus; (Powell-Wiley, et. al. 2021; Wellman, et. al. 2018; Albuquerque, et. al. 2017, King; &

Jacobson, 2017; Yazdi, et. al. 2015; McCormack.; & Virk, 2014; Pearce, et. al. 2010; Loos; & Bouchard, 2008; James, 2008, Lau, et. al. 2007: Ness-Abramof; & Apovian, 2006; Caballerfo B (March 2001; Nestle; & Jacobson, 2000; Vioque, et. al2000; Gortmaker et. al 1996; & Tucker; & Bagwell, 1991.

Data Presentation

The first phase was the allocation of questionnaires to each of the district in the following proportion, the total number of administered questionnaire was 308, this was allocated to the three districts in the ratio of (4:3:3) and represented thus; (Uyo – 123questionnaires; Eket– 92questionnaires and Ikot Ekpene – 92questionnaires. The increase in the number of questionnaires allocated to uyo is because of the status of the district as the state capita, hence, the city has a cross-section of other tribes living in the district.

Table 1: Questionnaire Administered

Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative
Not returned	21	7	7
Not Usable	7	2	2
Usable	280	91	100
Total	308	100	

Source: Field survey, 2023.

Table 4.1 showed that 308 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents. The analysis revealed that 21 respondents represented by 7% did not return the questionnaire at all, the analysis further shows that 7 respondent represented by 2% returned the questionnaires, but questionnaire was not usable due to cancellation and mutilation on the face of the questionnaire, while 280copies retrieved from the remaining respondents represented by 91% was usable and valid for the study, hence, this represented the sample used for the study.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One;

There is no significant relationship between prevailing effect of unregulated social media ads and obesity upsurge amongst adolescent and youths in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Table 4.9 Correlation

		Adult, adolescent obesity	Un-regulated social media ads
Adult, adolescent obesity	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.772
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	280	280
Un-regulated social media ads	Pearson Correlation	.772	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	280	280

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlations coefficient analysis obtained was .772 which indicates that social media ads has significant

effect on obesity upsurge amongst adults and adolescent in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The sample represented by N used for the analysis was 280, the level of significance of the study or otherwise known as the p value of the study is 0.000 which is less than the 0.05 alpha level of significance. Hence, the outcome of the analysis affirms that there is a positive correlation between the dependent and independent variables. The analysis result summary could be expressed as follows; [$r=.772, n=280, p<.0005$].

Hypothesis Two;

There is no significant relationship between changes in urban lifestyle and obesity upsurge amongst adolescent and youths in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

Table 4.10 .Correlation

		Adult, adolescent obesity	Changing urban lifestyle of urban migrants
Adult, adolescent obesity	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.841
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	280	280
Changing urban lifestyle of urban migrants	Pearson Correlation	.841	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	280	280

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The outcome of the correlation coefficient analysis obtained which is represented by r was .841 which reveals that changing lifestyle staff of urban migrants has significant effect on obesity upsurge amongst adults and adolescent in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The sample represented by N used for the analysis was 280, the level of significance of the study the p value was 0.000 which is less than the 0.05 alpha level of significance. Considerably, the result of the study analysis confirms that there is a significant relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The outcome of the correlation analysis could be summarized thus; [$r=.841, n=280, p<.0005$].

Hypothesis Three;

There is no significant relationship between availability of Low-cost processed foods and obesity upsurge amongst adolescent and youths in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

Table 4.11 Correlations

		Adult, adolescent obesity	Availability of Low-cost processed foods
Adult, adolescent obesity	Pearson Correlation	1.000	.698
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	280	280
Availability of Low-cost processed foods	Pearson Correlation	.698	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	280	280

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The outcome of the correlation coefficient analysis obtained which is represented by r was .698 which

reveals that there is a significant effect of availability of low-cost processed foods on obesity upsurge amongst adults and youths in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The sample represented by N used for the analysis was 280, the level of significance of the study the p value was 0.000 which is less than the 0.05 alpha level of significance. Consequently, the result of the study analysis affirms that there is a significant relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The outcome of the correlation analysis could be summarized thus; [$r=.698$ $n=280$, $p<.0005$].

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATION

The findings of this study shows that, marketing communication driven by social media based on social interaction interchange on consumption behavior of adolescent, and how they affects the outcome of individual and group as explained in the hypothetical propositions; communication based on social media ads. Specifically, the research was able to affirm the viability of S-WOM as a significant communication tool that enhances peer-to-peer information interchange. This has become a viable tool for advertising unwholesome weight driven processed foods; (Powell-Wiley, et. al. 2021; Wellman, et. al. 2018; Albuquerque, et. al. 2017, King; & Jacobson, 2017; Ness-Abramof; & Apovian, 2006; Caballerfo B (March 2001; Nestle; & Jacobson, 2000; Vioque, et. al 2000. Secondly, the firm driven social media marketing communication uses customer database as a tool for unfettered communications with customers. Previous researches has affirmed the significant importance of firm effort in communicating with customers through social networks platforms. Hence, without adherence to privacy policy agreement, firms have been able to inform customers of the availability of unwholesome low-cost weight driven processed foods. (Yazdi, et. al. 2015; McCormack.; & Virk, 2014; Pearce, et. al. 2010; Loos; & Bouchard, 2008; James, 2008, Lau, et. al. 2007; Gortmaker et. al 1996; & Tucker; & Bagwell, 1991).

The study findings provide a critical insight to government and policy makers on the need to create effective regulatory bodies that could force firms to comply with set guidelines on unwholesome food consumption that is inimical to public health. Stakeholders in telecommunication sector should also be able to set the rule for the proliferation of food communications advertising. The introduction of compulsory labels to firms clearly describes the content of products as a guide to mitigating uninformed consumption of unwholesome processed foods (Caballerfo, 2001; Nestle; & Jacobson, 2000; Vioque, et. al 2000), amidst the development of new products amongst various socio-cultural and traditional spices product lines (Eshiett; & Eshiett; 2022)

The role of social media in communicating product brand to users, explains how brand communication by users and firms could enhance brand equity. Keller (2009) affirms that brand-related marketing communications could be more effective when adapted on social networks media platforms, this will boost brand equity for product on offering by firms. (Adetunji, et. al. 2017). Also, the increasing effect of growing urbanization on the lifestyle of most adolescence and young adults; have been complicated by the drive to copy whatsoever is admonished as western lifestyle, be it dressing, eating behavior and other forms of human conducts (Eshiett; & Eshiett; 2021). Hence, since social media communication aids the ease information dissemination of unwholesome, obese-driven imported food, regulatory authorities should mitigate it by crafting and implementing workable policy framework.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusion of this study is based on the objectives of the research, the outcome of the analysis of data and the outstanding effect of social interaction effect on consumption behavior through the interchange on obesity surge amongst adolescent and adults in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The study evaluated the theoretical model as a twin solution driver for both firms (social media advertising, social media promotions, social media interactive marketing), and users (social media word-of-mouth). The study recommends that regulatory authorities should step up the implementation of some of its key control

measures, as a key driver in engaging adolescent on healthy eating habits, implementation of existing laws on social media operational controls, and the augmentation of obsolete laws to create room for effective legislation that could control unwholesome importation of obesity driven low cost processed foods.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study is specifically limited to the geographical location which is; the three selected districts of Eket, Uyo and Ikot Ekpene in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, This study was necessitated by the increasing number of obese persons within the specific area of this study. The study is also limited by the financial resources used in conducting the study; based on the fact that the authors provided the necessary funding needed for the study without any external financial assistance.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTION

This study was conducted within the geographical scope of the selected regions of Eket, Uyo and Ikot Ekpene – districts in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, future research direction should be conducted to cover the entire country, Sub Saharan Africa, and other regions of the world. Secondly, this study is limited to adolescence and young adults, but research have shown that, children below adolescent age bracket in the western world, are prone to obesity at an early age such as; increased obesity in the United State due to increased exposure of children to television programs (Gortmaker, et, at, 1996), the pervading effects of social media driven obesity amongst children (Strasburger, et. al, 2014, and the strict clinical guidelines by Canadian medical authorities on the effective management of children obesity(Lau, et. al, 2007).

To this end, future research should focus on examining the devastating effect of obesity on lower age brackets below the adolescent ages. Finally, the devastating effect of obesity on adolescent age bracket is traceable to; un-controllable alcoholic consumption pattern amongst adolescent (Greenblatt, 2000). Undue peer group influence and romantic relationship (2002), the influence of ‘hanging out’ online and offline within their social networks (Reich, 2012), the pervasive effect of online and offline advertising on unhealthy food consumption (Eshiet, 2021; & Buil, et. al, 2013), and as a public health policy approach (Nestle; & Jacobson, 2000). The foregoing calls for global synergy by stakeholders on how to mitigate obesity amongst adolescent by focusing future studies on the highlighted areas in this study.

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