

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

**Unhealthy food advertising to South African children through  
television: A content analysis**

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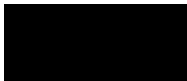
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## **DECLARATION**

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To my parents, Neeraj and Shamlal Bissoon, you are my greatest blessings and above everything, I wish to make you proud. I cannot thank you enough for the sacrifices you have made for me throughout my life. You have pushed me to achieve my goals whilst being pillars of strength. Thank you for providing me with the ability to educate myself and for being exceptional role models. This study would not have been achieved without your unconditional love and continuous support.

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## **DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to my late grandmother, Giyan Seolall, who passed away halfway through this study. You always emphasised the importance of attaining a good education and would constantly ensure that I was on the right track. Although you are not here physically, I have felt your presence through the morals and values that you have instilled in me. You have been my guiding light and will forever be missed.

I would also like to dedicate this study to current and prospective marketing professionals. Childhood obesity is growing rapidly in underdeveloped nations such as South Africa and marketers play a crucial role in determining the types of advertisements that children are exposed to. Therefore, marketing professionals can contribute to a positive change by limiting the number of unhealthy food advertisements that children are exposed to as it influences their attitudes, food preferences and diets.

## **ABSTRACT**

The extensive advertising of unhealthy foods and beverages has been identified by the World Health Organization as a factor that contributes significantly to childhood obesity. In 2020, one in eight African children were either overweight or obese. The South African government has yet to establish a law that tackles the issue of food advertising to children. This study aimed to determine the extent to which children in South Africa are exposed to unhealthy food advertisements on television, as well as the advertising appeals and promotional strategies used by advertisers of such foods in an effort to appeal to children.

Previous South African content analyses have only sampled free-to-air channels whereas this study incorporated one free-to-air channel (SABC 1) and one subscription-based channel (M-Net), thereby including children from different socio-economic backgrounds.

This study used a descriptive research design and a mixed methods research approach that was largely qualitative in nature. A total of 41 hours (spread over 14 consecutive days) of television was recorded on M-Net and SABC 1, during popular viewing hours for children. Data was extracted from the recorded television advertisements and analysed using deductive content analysis, to address the research questions about the extent and nature of such advertising.

The findings show that 67% of food-related advertisements involved unhealthy foods. Furthermore, fast foods were the most frequently advertised unhealthy food category. Therefore, this study serves as a rationale for the implementation of stronger regulations for food advertising to children in South Africa. This study also revealed that South African children are exposed to more unhealthy foods on free-to-air television than on subscription-based television. This indicates that middle-to-low-income households view advertisements for unhealthy foods more regularly than middle-to-high-income households. The findings further indicate that, within unhealthy food advertisements, emotional appeals and jingles or slogans were the most-utilised advertising appeals and promotional strategies.

**Key words:** advertising, children, content analysis, South Africa, television, unhealthy foods

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>DECLARATION.....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>DEDICATION.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>	<b>x</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES .....</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background.....	2
1.3 Research problem.....	3
1.4 Research questions.....	4
1.5 Research objectives.....	4
1.6 Overview of the literature review .....	5
1.7 Overview of the research methodology .....	6
1.8 Significance of the study.....	6
1.9 Delimitations of the study .....	7
1.10 Outline of the dissertation.....	7
1.11 Conclusion .....	7
<b>CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	9
2.2 Unhealthy food advertising to children.....	9
2.2.1 Unhealthy food addiction.....	10
2.2.2 Childhood obesity .....	11
2.3 A brief background on advertising to children .....	14
2.3.1 Advertising in the 20 <sup>th</sup> century .....	14
2.3.2 Advertising in the 21 <sup>st</sup> century .....	15

2.4	Consumer socialisation of children.....	17
2.4.1	Children's understanding of advertising .....	17
2.4.2	Children as consumers .....	20
2.5	The influence of socio-economic status on children's exposure to advertising.....	21
2.6	Neuromarketing .....	23
2.7	Unethical marketing to children.....	25
2.8	Regulations on food marketing to children.....	26
2.8.1	Regulations in South Africa .....	28
2.9	Persuasive television advertising to children .....	29
2.9.1	Advertising appeals.....	30
2.9.1.1	Emotional appeal.....	32
2.9.1.2	Rational appeal.....	34
2.9.1.3	Moral appeal.....	35
2.9.2	Promotional strategies .....	36
2.9.3	Conceptual framework .....	40
2.10	Conclusion .....	41
<b>CHAPTER THREE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>		<b>43</b>
3.1	Introduction.....	43
3.2	Research philosophy .....	43
3.2.1	Positivism.....	44
3.2.2	Interpretivism .....	44
3.3	Research design .....	45
3.3.1	Causal research.....	45
3.3.2	Exploratory research .....	45
3.3.3	Descriptive research .....	45
3.4	Research approach .....	46
3.4.1	Quantitative methods.....	46
3.4.2	Qualitative methods.....	46
3.4.3	Mixed methods.....	47

3.5	Sample design .....	48
3.5.1	Target population .....	48
3.5.2	Sample.....	49
3.5.3	Sampling techniques .....	50
3.5.3.1	Convenience sampling.....	50
3.5.3.2	Quota sampling.....	50
3.5.3.3	Purposive sampling.....	50
3.5.4	Sample size.....	51
3.6	Data Analysis .....	51
3.6.1	Narrative analysis .....	51
3.6.2	Discourse analysis .....	52
3.6.3	Grounded theory.....	52
3.6.4	Content analysis .....	52
3.6.4.1	Quantitative and qualitative content analysis.....	55
3.6.5	Development of the data capturing sheet .....	56
3.7	Data quality control.....	58
3.7.1	Reliability and validity .....	59
3.7.2	Trustworthiness .....	59
3.7.2.1	Credibility .....	60
3.7.2.2	Dependability .....	60
3.7.2.3	Conformability .....	61
3.7.2.4	Transferability.....	61
3.8	Ethical considerations .....	61
3.9	Conclusion .....	61
	<b>CHAPTER FOUR FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>63</b>
4.1	Introduction.....	63
4.2	Overview of the data set.....	63
4.3	Findings.....	64
4.3.1	Scope of unhealthy food advertising during children’s television viewing hours .....	64



4.3.2	Comparison of unhealthy food advertising on subscription versus free-to-air television..	67
4.3.3	Analysis of the advertising appeals and promotional strategies used in unhealthy food advertisements.....	69
4.3.3.1	Summary of findings from the analysed advertisements .....	81
4.4	Discussion of the findings.....	82
4.4.1	Research objective one: To determine the scope of unhealthy food advertisements during children’s viewing hours on television in South Africa .....	82
4.4.2	Research objective two: To compare the extent and nature of such advertising on subscription versus free-to-air television in South Africa.....	84
4.4.3	Research objective three: To identify the types of advertising appeals utilised in such advertising .....	85
4.4.3.1	The emotional advertising appeal .....	85
4.4.3.2	The rational advertising appeal.....	87
4.4.3.3	The moral advertising appeal.....	88
4.4.4	Research objective 4: To establish the promotional strategies that are implemented within such advertising.....	88
4.4.4.1	Jingle or slogan .....	88
4.4.4.2	Children shown with food.....	89
4.4.4.3	Product identification characters.....	89
4.5	Conclusion .....	89
<b>CHAPTER FIVE LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION.....</b>		<b>91</b>
5.1	Introduction.....	91
5.2	Summary of findings in relation to the research objectives.....	91
5.3	Limitations .....	92
5.3.1	Outdated literature.....	92
5.3.2	Children’s television channels were not included .....	92
5.3.3	Number of television hours recorded .....	92
5.4	Recommendations.....	93
5.4.1	Recommendations for future research.....	93
5.4.1.1	Investigate why advertising appeals and promotional strategies are effective.....	93

5.4.1.2	Exploration of various advertising media .....	93
5.4.1.3	Analysis from the parent’s perspective .....	93
5.4.1.4	Analysis from the child’s perspective .....	94
5.4.1.5	Investigation of fast-food advertising to children .....	94
5.4.2	Recommendations for policy and practice .....	94
5.5	Contributions and practical value .....	95
5.6	Conclusion .....	95
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>		<b>97</b>
<b>APPENDICES.....</b>		<b>115</b>
	Appendix A: Data capturing sheet .....	115
	Appendix C: Ethical clearance.....	116

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 2.1: The three types of persuasive knowledge among tweens .....	19
Figure 2.2: Conceptual framework .....	41
Figure 3.1: Components of content analysis .....	53
Figure 4.1: Number of advertisements aired on specific days of recording .....	64
Figure 4.2: Number of advertisements (per category) screened during children's viewing hours .....	65
Figure 4.3: Healthy versus unhealthy food advertisements (SABC 1 and M-Net).....	66
Figure 4.4: Types of unhealthy foods advertised (SABC 1 and M-Net).....	67
Figure 4.5: Unhealthy versus healthy food advertisements aired on SABC 1 .....	67
Figure 4.6: Unhealthy versus healthy food advertisements aired on M-Net.....	68
Figure 4.7: Percentage of unhealthy food advertisements aired on SABC 1 versus M-Net .....	68
Figure 4.8: Prevalence of the various promotional strategies .....	82

## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 2.1: Diet-related factors affecting childhood obesity .....	13
Table 2.2: Types of advertising appeals found in previous research .....	31
Table 2.3: Types of advertising appeals.....	32
Table 3.1: The key differences between the three research methods.....	47
Table 3.2: Definition of categories used in this study.....	57
Table 4.1: Prevalence of the various appeals and sub-appeals .....	81

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, children are highly exposed to unhealthy food marketing campaigns and advertisements which lack regulatory intervention from South African policymakers (Thomans & Deshmukh, 2019; Del Monte, 2021). Moreover, children are active consumers and are identified as a susceptible consumer segment that substantially influences family purchase decisions (Lavuri & Aileni, 2021). Unhealthy food marketing efforts are present in several settings including sports events, schools and public spaces such as shopping malls (World Health Organization, 2017). Popular vehicles for unhealthy food advertisements include traditional and contemporary media, such as television and social media (Thomans & Deshmukh, 2019). Television, as an advertising medium, has stood the test of time as it remains a popular vehicle for food advertising in South Africa (SA), since its inception in 1978 (Smit, 2016).

Previous research (Mchiza, Temple, Steyn, Abrahams & Clayford, 2013; Maikoo, 2016; Yamoah, De Man, Onagbiye & Mchiza, 2021) indicates that unhealthy food advertisements are aired frequently during popular viewing hours for children on South African television. Jensen, Carpentier, Adair, Corvalán, Popkin and Taillie (2021) add that overexposure to unhealthy food advertisements influences children's attitudes, food preferences and diets. Although restrictive measures have been implemented in several countries, South Africa has yet to implement statutory regulations restricting unhealthy food advertising to children (Business Tech, 2020). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which children in South Africa are exposed to unhealthy food advertisements, and to identify the various advertising appeals and promotional strategies used by advertisers in an effort to appeal to children. Scholars (Page & Brewster, 2007; Bakir, Palan & Kolbe, 2013) identify the advertising appeals and promotional strategies found within unhealthy food advertisements directed to children.

This chapter begins by providing a background to the research, which leads into a description of the research problem, questions and objectives of this content analysis study. The significance of the study is highlighted and is followed by an overview of the research methodology. A brief discussion of the study's delimitations is provided, and an outline of the dissertation structure follows.

## 1.2 Background

A child is a human being between the stages of infancy and adolescence (Kelly *et al.*, 2019). In South Africa, a child is defined as someone under the age of 18 by the Children's Act 38 of 2005. This Act provides for the protection and care of children in South Africa (Children's Act 38, 2005).

The Advertising Regulatory Board (ARB) (2021, p.94) of South Africa states that “Food and beverage product advertising should not directly appeal to children aged 12 and under to persuade their parents or others to buy advertised products for them.” The South African public can lodge complaints about advertising that contravenes the regulations, which are based on the International Code of Advertising Practice, prepared by the International Chamber of Commerce (ARB, 2021). Such self-regulation is the most common type of guideline utilised in South Africa to limit unhealthy food advertising to children; however, advertisers are not bound by the ARB’s rulings (Landwehr & Hartmann, 2020). According to Kelly *et al.* (2019), the rate at which unhealthy foods are broadcast on South African television stations is high and similar to the rates of countries with zero regulations regarding the broadcasting of unhealthy food advertisements.

Children are connected to the world around them through traditional and non-traditional forms of media such as social media or television. As a result, children develop knowledge of promoted products through advertisements (Arnas, Taş & Oğul, 2016). Social media platforms are increasing in popularity among younger audiences (Love, 2015); however, television viewership rates in SA are high and remain a popular source of entertainment for children (Stoll, 2021). In addition, companies continue to invest heavily in television advertisements as it promotes prestige and legitimacy (Grell, 2018). According to Otitoola, Oldewage-Theron and Egal (2020), unhealthy foods dominate the television advertising circuit during popular viewing hours for children in SA. Kelly, King, Chapman, Boyland, Bauman and Baur (2015) suggest that food advertisements influence children’s preferences and help establish positive feelings and relationships with advertised brands.

The end of the apartheid regime in 1994 created a surge in working-parent households in SA (Haynes, 2015). As a result, children were regularly exposed to television under the supervision of caregivers. Furthermore, 81% of South African households possess one or more television sets (Statistics South Africa, 2020) and, since the 1990s, unhealthy foods have dominated food advertising on South African television (Mills, 2016). Chief Executive Officer of the Heart and Stroke Foundation SA, Pamela Naidoo, stated that “As a country, South Africa has one of the highest rates of overweight and obesity in the world, a major contributor to cardiovascular disease, which is now known as a serious comorbidity when it comes to Covid-19” (Govender, 2021: para.12). Klingberg, Draper, Micklesfield, Benjamin-Neelon, and van Sluijs (2019) report that approximately 20% of South African children are classified as obese. In addition, Yamoah *et al.* (2021) express concern over the rapid growth of

childhood obesity, as SA ranks among the top three countries with the highest number of obese children on the African continent. SA experiences childhood obesity rates that are, in some instances, higher than those of developed nations such as America and Russia (Mbalati, 2019).

SA is identified as a developing nation, and the average income of the population is significantly lower than that of developed nations (Yamoah *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, a nutritious diet is unattainable for most South Africans as healthier food choices cost approximately 69% more than unhealthy foods (Yamoah *et al.*, 2021). First- and second-world nations have already conducted extensive studies on the subject of childhood obesity, with many studies focusing on unhealthy food advertising (Lembke, 2018). On the other hand, developing countries are only recently exploring the sphere of unhealthy food advertising to children as a research topic (Aldolaim, 2019). In 2010, it was estimated that 81% of overweight children come from developing nations and, in 2020, one in eight African children were obese (Otitoola, Oldewage-Theron & Egal, 2020).

Traditionally, children's food advertisements have relied on emotional appeals such as fun and happiness, coupled with promotional strategies that included cartoon characters or celebrities (Page & Brewster, 2007). However, increased promotional expenditure has allowed marketers to utilise an array of contemporary advertising appeals and promotional strategies that interest children (Guttmann, 2020). One of the foci of this study was to determine the prevalence of various advertising appeals and promotional strategies in unhealthy food advertising directed to children in South Africa.

### **1.3 Research problem**

A report by the World Health Organization (WHO) indicated that the substantial advertising of unhealthy food and beverages could contribute significantly to childhood obesity and had been identified as an area requiring regulatory intervention, particularly among developing countries (Sadeghirad, Duhaney, Campbell & Johnston, 2016). In 2010, SA proposed modifications of the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act of 1972 to the WHO (Government Gazette, 2018). Unhealthy food advertising to children below the age of sixteen would have been prohibited had the revisions been passed (Igumbor, Sanders & Puoane, 2012). However, the South African National Department of Health postponed the implementation of the proposed regulations pending the release of the 2010 WHO *Set of Recommendations on Marketing Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages to Children* (Lewis, Bhoola & Mafofo, 2020).

The South African government is still debating its course of action as it has yet to establish and implement any legislation of its own regarding unhealthy food advertising to children (Business Tech, 2020). Furthermore, the South African government has yet to establish rules, regulations or policies that tackle the issue of unhealthy food advertising to children (Lewis, Bhoola & Mafofo, 2020). South African studies such as those by Cassim, (2010), Maikoo (2016) and Yamoah *et al.* (2021) have

conducted research on television advertising to children and highlighted the need for stronger regulatory measures against unhealthy food advertisements. Maikoo (2016) and Yamoah *et al.* (2021) found that approximately 55% of advertisements displayed on South African television during primetime viewing hours for children are deemed unhealthy. Therefore, identifying the volume of unhealthy food advertisements currently could aid in the enforcement of stricter regulations. This study also identifies the types of appeals and promotional strategies that are implemented within unhealthy food advertisements. In addition, no South African study, to the best of the author's knowledge, has conducted research on the advertising of unhealthy foods via subscription-based channels. Therefore, this study incorporated a free-to-air channel and a subscription-based channel as this allowed for exploration of whether the extent and nature of food advertisements differ across socio-economic groups. The incorporation of such channels could also point to the types of television and audiences that the proposed legislation would need to focus on.

#### **1.4 Research questions**

The questions that the study sought to address were:

- What is the scope of unhealthy food advertising during children's viewing hours on television in South Africa?
- What is the extent and nature of such advertising to children on subscription versus free-to-air television in South Africa?
- What types of advertising appeals are utilised in such advertising?
- What promotional strategies are implemented within such advertising?

#### **1.5 Research objectives**

Aligned to the above research questions, the objectives of the study were:

- To determine the scope of unhealthy food advertisements during children's viewing hours on television in South Africa.
- To compare the extent and nature of such advertising on subscription versus free-to-air television in South Africa.
- To identify the types of advertising appeals that are utilised in such advertising.
- To establish the promotional strategies that are implemented within such advertising.



## 1.6 Overview of the literature review

Obesity is a non-communicable disease that is developing at a far quicker rate among children than adults (Mukwevho, 2021). The literature reviewed in Chapter Two examines the link between childhood obesity and the advertising of unhealthy food. Findings from both international and national literature on the marketing of unhealthy food to children are presented and discussed. Previous research (Cassim, 2010; Mchiza *et al.*, 2013; Maikoo; 2016; Lewis, Bhoola & Mafofo; 2020; Otitoola, Oldewage-Theron & Egal, 2020; Yamoah *et al.*, 2021) illustrates that South African children are regularly exposed to unhealthy food advertising and calls for the implementation of statutory regulations against unhealthy food advertising to children. However, there are currently no legislative measures that limit unhealthy food advertising to children in SA.

Television advertising remains a prevalent source of entertainment for children in SA (Wallace, 2021). Therefore, the evolution of television advertising and its influence over the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries are also discussed in the next chapter. Marketers segment television audiences based on channels, as free-to-air and subscription-based channels attract viewers from different socio-economic backgrounds (Backholer *et al.*, 2020). Kunkel and Gantz (1992) and Backholer *et al.* (2020) found evidence suggesting that there were differences in the number of advertisements displayed to children on these two types of channels. This study therefore examined both free-to-air and subscription-based television channels, thereby adding a new dimension to extant South African literature (which has thus far focused only on free-to-air television). This approach allowed for comparison of the extent and nature of unhealthy food advertising across both types of channels. As such, the insights gained could possibly inform decisions about the types of television and audiences that potential legislation would need to focus on in regulating the advertising of unhealthy foods to children.

Children are often exposed to the marketplace from the early stages of infancy, when television advertisements are viewed purely as a form of entertainment; however, a child's knowledge structure only becomes more sophisticated as they grow older (Allen & Kelly, 2015). Therefore, Chapter Two discusses literature and theories relating to a range of tactics (such as advertising appeals and promotional strategies) that are used by marketers with the intention of attracting younger audiences (Belch, 2003). In terms of its theoretical grounding, the study was underpinned primarily by Bakir, Palan and Kolbe's (2013) framework of advertising appeals and Page and Brewster's (2007) framework of promotional strategies. Both frameworks form an integral part of this study's conceptual framework and are elaborated upon in Chapter Two.

## **1.7 Overview of the research methodology**

A descriptive research design was implemented within this study as the primary goal of descriptive research is to describe a phenomenon and its characteristics by identifying trends or categories (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). A mixed methods approach was employed as both qualitative and quantitative modes of data analysis were utilised. This study described the extent to which unhealthy food advertisements are displayed to children via television, as well as the various advertising appeals and promotional strategies used in such advertisements.

The method used was content analysis, which involved identifying the prevalence of trends, categories or concepts in verbal, print or electronic media such as television (Bengtsson, 2016). Ultimately, content analyses are used to discover patterns in recorded communication (Bengtsson, 2016).

A data capturing sheet was utilised to record, organise and sort the data gathered from television advertisements, enabling the researcher to identify whether food advertisements were healthy or unhealthy. Advertisements that were deemed unhealthy were then subject to further analysis and categorised according to the types of advertising appeals and promotional strategies used.

The methodology is described and justified in detail in Chapter Three.

## **1.8 Significance of the study**

Delpont (2015) indicates that obesity among South African children continues to rise. Mukwevho (2021) adds that one in every five children will be obese by the year 2030. Therefore, determining the scope of unhealthy food advertising provides insight into children's exposure to unhealthy food advertisements. Based on the findings, this may serve as a rationale for the implementation of statutory regulations in South Africa. Limiting unhealthy food advertisements can promote better health for the children of SA. Additionally, marketers are targeting underdeveloped nations because the market has become oversaturated and regulations have been strengthened in developed countries (Shoba, 2021). This highlights the need for more research within a South African context.

Studies by Cassim (2010), Maikoo (2016) and Yamoah *et al.* (2021) provide evidence indicating that unhealthy food advertisements dominate children's viewing hours on South African television, despite efforts from organisations such as the Advertising Regulatory Board (ARB). Therefore, studies providing updated literature and findings add to the body of knowledge on the extent of unhealthy food advertising to children in SA and strengthen the case for statutory regulation. Schiestl, Parnarouskis, Cummings and Gearhardt (2021) suggest that as children's ability to understand television advertisements evolves, so do the advertisements themselves through the use of specific advertising appeals and promotional strategies. Identifying the advertising appeals and promotional strategies that

marketers currently use within unhealthy food advertisements can therefore aid in strengthening advertising literacy amongst the youth and their guardians.

Previous South African content analyses have only sampled free-to-air channels. As such, studies incorporating both free-to-air and subscription-based channels enable a greater diversity of children from different socio-economic backgrounds to be included and add a new dimension to existing research. The specific contributions made by this study are highlighted in the final chapter.

## **1.9 Delimitations of the study**

This study was conducted from a South African perspective. SABC 1 and M-Net (channel 101) were the two television channels selected for this study. Moreover, the study was limited to 41 hours of recorded television content over a 14-day period.

## **1.10 Outline of the dissertation**

The remainder of the dissertation is structured as set out below.

In Chapter Two, the existing literature on the phenomenon is identified, discussed and reviewed to highlight crucial factors that relate to unhealthy food advertising to children, such as the manner in which marketers target children (via various advertising appeals or promotional strategies) and the overall influence of unhealthy food advertising on children in South Africa.

Chapter Three describes and justifies the methodology used in the study to address the research objectives.

Chapter Four presents and discusses the findings arising out of the data analysis.

Chapter Five identifies the limitations of the study and provides recommendations to marketers, policymakers and researchers. The key findings are synthesised and a final conclusion to the study is provided.

## **1.11 Conclusion**

The context of the study was introduced in this chapter, with the goal of providing the reader with a general idea of what is included within the study. The research problem, questions and objectives were identified and the significance of such research was argued. In addition, an overview of the methodology was provided, followed by the study's delimitations.

This chapter highlights that the study's findings could strengthen the current pool of research on unhealthy food advertising to children in SA and aid in the implementation of policies or regulations

that limit unhealthy food advertising to children on television. It also provides insight into the key ideas and concepts thoroughly covered in the following chapters.

The next chapter provides a review of the literature on unhealthy food advertising to children in SA and beyond.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on reviewing international and national literature on the marketing of food to children. Childhood obesity is a growing concern within developing nations such as SA (WHO, 2021). Therefore, this chapter begins by highlighting the relationship between unhealthy food advertising and childhood obesity. Television advertising is a popular source of entertainment for young audiences from different socio-economic backgrounds and has evolved into a successful advertising space for food marketers (Thomans & Deshmukh, 2019). Therefore, the evolution of television advertising and its influence over the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries will be discussed. In addition, children's ability to understand advertisements and their role as consumers has evolved, which plays a fundamental role in determining the types of advertising appeals and promotional strategies used by marketers (Allen & Kelly, 2015). Various regulatory measures are implemented by organisations and governments with the aim of restricting unhealthy food advertising to children. These regulatory measures will also be discussed within this chapter.

#### **2.2 Unhealthy food advertising to children**

Food advertising can be described as a type of communication aimed at increasing the identification, appeal or consumption of certain food items and brands (WHO, 2020). Although television continues to be the most significant medium for food advertising, it is steadily being supplemented by a diverse mix of marketing communications, such as social media and advergames (Perakakis & Ghinea, 2017). Based on both observational and experimental research, unhealthy food and beverage advertisements influence children's attitudes, food preferences and diets (Jensen *et al.*, 2021).

According to the United Kingdom's (UK's) nutrient profile model, unhealthy foods and beverages are high in saturated fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) (Grant, 2021). The bulk of food products marketed to children fall into a category known as the "Big Five". This category consists of soft drinks, snacks, breakfast cereals, fast food and confectionery items such as candies and chocolates (Wicks, Wright & Wentzel-Viljoen, 2016). Kelly *et al.* (2019) found that the most-advertised foods to South African children are breakfast cereals, sugared beverages, chocolates, confectionery items and fast foods.

According to Lewis, Bhoola and Mafofo (2020), South African children view an average of 10 food-related advertisements a day (which equates to approximately 4,000 food advertisements a year) and a single nutritious advertisement a week. Roughly 90% of food advertisements are for HFSS products

and approximately 79% of advertised foods contain minimal nutritional value (Lewis, Bhoola & Mafofo, 2020). Compared to Lewis, Bhoola and Mafofo's (2020) study, which focused only on free-to-air TV, this study revealed the number of unhealthy food advertisements shown to children on one subscription-based channel and one free-to-air channel in SA. This allows for exploration of whether the extent and nature of food advertisements differ across socio-economic groups. In addition, SA's total advertising spend amounted to 30.4 billion Rand in 2019, with 11 billion Rand dedicated to food advertising (Goldstein, 2020). Smith, Kelly, Yeatman and Boyland (2019) discovered a substantial body of data indicating that food advertising negatively influences children's attitudes and food choices, contributing to the increased rate of childhood obesity and unhealthy food addiction.

### **2.2.1 Unhealthy food addiction**

Addiction can be defined as repetitive behaviour that is difficult to stop (Schulte, Avena & Gearhardt, 2015). The consumption of soft drinks or a few pieces of candy may seem insignificant; however, unhealthy foods are produced in a manner that has been chemically engineered to create a desire for more, with a focus on maximum profitability over health (Schulte, Avena & Gearhardt, 2015). Schulte, Grilo and Gearhardt (2016) believe that genetic and environmental factors increase the likelihood of developing an addiction. For instance, the increased availability and widespread marketing of unhealthy foods have significantly influenced children's dietary choices (Jensen *et al.*, 2021).

Most addictive drugs are safe in their natural form; for example, heroin is extracted from poppy seeds, cocaine from the coca leaf and alcohol from fruits and grains (Avena, Rada & Hoebel, 2008). Farmers from the Andes mountains would consume coca leaves on a daily basis as it served as a mild stimulant (similar to coffee) that would boost energy levels and serve as a coping mechanism in extreme climates (Biondich & Joslin, 2015). However, when natural products like the coca leaf, poppyseed or fruits and grains were industrialised and refined to their most concentrated form, those humble products became highly addictive substances (Bauer, 2019).

Until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, cocaine was seen as an innocent domesticated white powder (like sugar is today), as trace amounts could be found in toothpaste, beverages and other products (Boucher, 1991). Coca-Cola is one of the most successful products in modern history and was formulated in the 1880s (Moran, 2021). The company's founders were proud of the successful formula and vowed never to share or modify it (Redman, 2011). However, Coca-Cola were forced into changing its recipe in 1903 as cocaine had been passed as an illegal substance (Redman, 2011). Although Coca-Cola were forced into removing cocaine from the recipe, this did not have an impact on the addictive nature of the product as cocaine was substituted with a concentrated dose of sugar and caffeine, which heightened addiction levels among adults and children (Redman, 2011). In addition, a Canadian study found that 66% of food

and beverage products found in grocery stores contain added sugars (Acton, Vanderlee, Hobin & Hammond, 2017).

Bestle *et al.* (2020) indicate that children should prioritise the consumption of protein and fibre as it stabilises blood sugar levels which have proven to reduce hunger and unhealthy snacking. However, foods that are high in sugar, salt and starch cause a rapid spike and crash in blood sugar levels which causes hunger and unhealthy food cravings (Bestle *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, a large proportion of food and beverage products that are produced and sold by large firms such as Nestle, Kellogg's and Cadbury are low in protein and fibre but are high in fat, sugar, salt or starch, which can create addiction-like consumption patterns due to the sudden spike and crash in blood sugar levels (Kiefner-Burmeister & Burmeister, 2020).

According to Johnson and Kenny (2010), unhealthy food consumption changes brain activity in the same way as addictive substances such as cocaine and heroin do. Their study used rats as test subjects and found that the pleasure regions of rats' brains became desensitised after weeks of unrestricted access to junk food. The findings show that continuous consumption of unhealthy foods causes addiction-like neuroadaptive responses in the brain and releases feel-good chemicals such as dopamine, which leads to a cycle known as the dopamine loop, creating a pattern of compulsive eating (Johnson & Kenny, 2010). Similarly, Schiestl *et al.* (2021) found that young children have a limited understanding of the effect of unhealthy foods and as a result, unhealthy foods become increasingly addictive the more they are consumed.

Leigh and Morris (2018) discovered that children described their relationship with food by using conventional addiction terminology that stems from the refusal to reduce the consumption of junk food despite its negative impact. Zawertailo, Attwells, de Ruiter, Le, Dawson and Selby (2020) indicate that unhealthy foods hijack the reward centres of the human brain, which cause overeating, a tactic that originates from the tobacco industry. Zawertailo *et al.* (2020) suggest that unhealthy foods such as sugared beverages and processed foods are not only addictive but can be more addictive than drugs, tobacco and alcohol. Furthermore, Fernandes *et al.* (2020) conclude that unhealthy food addiction is directly associated with obesity among adults and children.

### **2.2.2 Childhood obesity**

Childhood obesity is a severe epidemic that increases morbidity and, according to the WHO (2016), obesity is a prevalent disease that has been considered a public health concern since 1998 as the rise of unhealthy food advertisements sharply increased. The international body mass index (BMI) for identifying underweight, average weight and overweight adults is prevalent; however, the distinct impacts of age, gender, pubertal state and ethnicity make it difficult to identify overweight children

(Lee & Yoon, 2018). However, if a child's BMI-for-age percentile is more than 95%, they are considered obese or overweight (Lee & Yoon, 2018).

Poor dietary intake has surpassed smoking as the number one risk factor for disease and death in America (The US Burden of Disease Collaborators, 2018). Due to obesity, the annual global death rate is 2.8 million, indicating that the obesity epidemic is a major health concern (The US Burden of Disease Collaborators, 2018). According to Otitoola, Oldewage-Theron and Egal (2020) one in eight South African children are obese, and a total of eleven million South African children are affected by obesity, which is 10% higher than the global average.

The COVID-19 pandemic increased SA's rate of poverty and unemployment (Saleh, 2021). Mukwevho (2021) believes there is a misconception that poverty is associated with malnutrition. However, the increased rate of poverty and unemployment significantly influences childhood obesity as healthy foods are generally higher-priced compared to unhealthy foods (Mukwevho, 2021). Due to the impact of COVID-19, rates of obesity and malnutrition among South African children have become excessive (Mukwevho, 2021).

During a time of global crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic presented a chance for food and beverage organisations to portray themselves as caring and contributing members of society, which attracted consumers to specific brands and products (Dunton, Do & Wang, 2020). Measures taken to contain the spread of COVID-19, such as the social lockdown, online learning, teleworking, travel restrictions and the closure of stores, entertainment facilities and sports venues (such as gymnasiums) generated significant challenges to weight management, while calorie intake among families remained high (Ertz & Le Bouhart, 2021). As a result of the lockdown, children spent more time indoors whilst being exposed to high volumes of unhealthy food advertisements via television and digital media (Ertz & Le Bouhart, 2021).

Kim and Lim (2019) conducted a worldwide analysis indicating that fast foods and sweetened beverages have been the most-advertised food categories on television. In addition, Kelly *et al.* (2019) found that the top three food categories advertised on South African television are breakfast cereals, sugared beverages and ready-made foods or fast foods. According to Braithwaite *et al.* (2014), South African children consume more fast foods than those in countries such as Japan and Belgium. Moreover, 60% of the South African population reside in urban cities and, due to the adoption of busy lifestyles, more than half of the urban population rely on fast foods (Crouth, 2021). In addition, fast foods are low-cost, convenient and appeal to younger audiences through taste and various advertising appeals (Thomans & Deshmukh, 2019).



Food, nutrients, eating behaviours and dietary patterns are labelled as modifiable, diet-related risk factors that can be utilised to reduce the rate of childhood obesity (Kim & Lim, 2019). Table 2.1 serves as a guide within clinical institutes as it outlines the harmful and beneficial effects linked to the four modifiable risk factors associated with childhood obesity (Kim & Lim, 2019). The Western dietary pattern comprises of foods that are energy-dense, high in saturated fats and low in fibre, which pose a significant dietary risk (Kim & Lim, 2019). Diets rich in whole grains, fruit and vegetables lower the rate of obesity; however, diets that are primarily made up of sugared drinks, fast food and sugary snacks have raised childhood obesity rates by 30% (Parasuraman & Krishnamoorthy, 2021).

**Table 2.1: Diet-related factors affecting childhood obesity**

Factor	Harmful	Beneficial
Nutrient	- Excessive intake of total energy, proteins (from animal products), fat, saturated fat, sodium.	- Adequate intake of vitamins C and D, non-starch polysaccharides (fibre), calcium, folate, iron.
Food	- Excessive intake of energy-dense foods: pizza, fast food, discretionary food, soda, sugar-sweetened beverages, and ice cream.	- Adequate intake of whole grains. - Low daily consumption of milk, fruits, vegetables, fish.
Dietary pattern	- Westernized dietary patterns high in saturated fatty acids, dense in energy, and poor in micronutrients - Processed food dietary patterns, including meat, soda, fried food, instant noodles, burgers, and pizza.	- Balanced diet based on five food groups. - Stop-light/traffic-light diet, with food divided into three categories: green (low-energy, high-nutrient foods), yellow (moderate-energy foods), and red (high-energy, low-nutrient foods).
Dietary behaviours and eating habits	- Eating while watching TV. - Skipping breakfast. - Frequent snacking and eating.	- Family mealtimes, eating together. - Portion control. - Regular mealtimes.

**Source: Kim & Lim, 2019:226**

Children learn through observation and tend to mirror their parents' behaviour (Bertol, Broilo, Espartel & Basso, 2017). As a result, children tend to be heavily influenced by the consumption patterns of family members. A study conducted by Puder and Munsch (2010) found that children consume less unhealthy foods when parents manage their own diets and overall food consumption. The results indicate that healthy consumption habits formed by parents are filtered down into children's diets, which can restrict childhood obesity (Puder & Munsch, 2010).

Obesity among adolescents is a deepening financial and economic issue, costing Americans 150 to 210 billion dollars a year in direct healthcare expenses (Ertz & Le Bouhart, 2021). Obesity lowers the quality of life, limits functional ability and raises morbidity and fatality rates (Ertz & Le Bouhart, 2021). A primary concern regarding the effect of obesity over the past two decades has been the appearance of adult-like diseases in children (Bhadoria, Sahoo, Sahoo, Choudhury, Sufi & Kumar, 2015). For

example, Type 2 diabetes was often referred to as adult-onset diabetes and was rarely found within children before the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Bhadoria *et al.*, 2015). In addition, childhood obesity has led to the development of diseases such as hyperlipidemia, hypertension, stroke, breast and colon cancer, degenerative arthritis and cardiovascular disease in children (Bhadoria *et al.*, 2015).

Obesity has both a physical and emotional impact on children and can cause serious psychological damage in the form of depression, anxiety, somatic symptom disorder and isolation (Puder & Munsch, 2010). One out of three overweight boys and two out of three overweight girls have low levels of self-esteem, which are associated with feelings such as nervousness, loneliness and sadness (Pienaar, 2015). According to Wu, Chen, Yang and Li (2017), obesity can affect a child's memory recall and overall academic performance.

There is no single cure or solution to childhood obesity; however, with the involvement of many sectors, there is a possibility of working towards the goal of prioritising children's health (WHO, 2021). The WHO (2021) suggests that food companies should initiate long-term strategies to combat obesity by promoting healthier food choices and manufacturing products of high nutritional value. Thomas (2018) suggests that food companies and grocery stores should lower the price of healthy foods, make them easily accessible and promote them in a manner that appeals to a younger audience.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of South Africa has pledged to promote campaigns that endorse healthier environments and help create awareness around childhood obesity (The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa, 2020). The Heart Mark Programme is a tool that assists South African parents in making better choices at the grocery store when presented with a range of options; it allows customers to identify items with less saturated fats and added sugars (The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa, 2020). Although campaigns like these seek to create a healthy environment for children, advertising through traditional and contemporary forms of media are easily accessible and is often used to promote unhealthy foods to young audiences.

## **2.3 A brief background on advertising to children**

### **2.3.1 Advertising in the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

Kotler, Armstrong, Saunders and Wong (1999:762) define advertising as “any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods or services through mass media such as newspapers, magazines, television or radio by an identified sponsor.” Children's advertising media were traditionally the same as adult advertising; however, the balance shifted, with print advertising becoming less prominent (Davis, 2016). The change came after World War II, with the introduction of commercial television, which allowed advertisers to focus on different market segments (Kunkel &

Gantz, 1992). The prominence of television grew in the 1980s with the creation of specific children's channels, some of which ran twenty-four hours a day (Kunkel & Gantz, 1992).

In the 1980s, television accounted for over two-thirds of all children's advertising in America (Oates, Blades, Gunter & Don, 2003). A second shift occurred, with advertising's reach expanding outside households and into public settings such as schools (Oates *et al.*, 2003). Early advertisements were monotonous and relatively direct; however, by the late 1980s, celebrity endorsements, strategic product placement and the promotion of child-friendly characters had become common methods for targeting children via television (Wilcox, Kunkel, Cantor, Dowrick, Linn & Palmer, 2004). According to Haynes (2015), product placement and promotional characters remain popular methods to persuade children in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Television advertising in SA began in 1978 and by 1992 three television channels were accessible to the public; those channels were known as TV 1, 2 and 3, and were owned by the SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation) (Smit, 2016). However, by 1986 M-Net had entered the market as a subscription-based television network that was in direct competition with SABC (Fourie, 2008).

In 1994, SA experienced the end of the apartheid regime, which led to a spike in employment for married women as the majority of South African households were previously patriarchal in nature and consisted of male breadwinners (van Klaveren, Tijdens, Williams & Ramos 2009). Due to an increase in employment for women, children were often left under the supervision of extended family or caregivers (van Klaveren *et al.*, 2009). The change in family dynamics is said to have helped construct an environment for television advertising aimed at children. Businesses had established a largely untapped audience that allowed advertisers to exploit children's emotions because advertising served as a substitute for love and affection, which was usually provided by the mother (Haynes, 2015).

The advertising industry continues to evolve through the development of various modes of advertising such as print, radio and television. Although the modes of advertising continue to expand and grow into a digitally-inclined realm, many basic advertising strategies and appeals applied within the 20<sup>th</sup> century continue to play a fundamental role in advertising to children in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Stephens, 2020).

### **2.3.2 Advertising in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is labelled 'the age of information' due to the rapid advancement of technology which has become an integral part of daily life, particularly among teenagers and young children (Silverman, 2019). Commercial and non-commercial messages in the form of texts, photographs, videos and advertisements can be transmitted across continents via various digital mediums within seconds (Melgar & Elsner, 2016). Advertising on television is considered a traditional form of advertising, whereas

digital advertising via the Internet and social media platforms are viewed as contemporary forms of advertising which have increased in popularity among young audiences (Melgar & Elsner, 2016).

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram were founded at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and continue to grow, with an estimated 41 million South African users by 2026 (Statista, 2021). A primary reason for the growth of social media platforms is the success of smartphone companies such as Apple and Blackberry, who introduced innovative touchscreen designs and less bulky devices that proved to be convenient to the consumer (Love, 2015).

Social media platforms have evolved and have effectively integrated advertising, allowing marketers to target consumers swiftly and successfully (Fan & Gordon, 2014). This has proven to increase profitability for social media platforms and businesses that choose to advertise online (Fan & Gordon, 2014). Companies that operate on social media have access to large quantities of user data that can be purchased for commercial purposes such as advertising (Moe & Schweidel, 2017). According to research by Love (2015), social media marketing has left a significant, long-lasting impact on businesses that make use of it. Love's (2015) findings suggest that more than half of the companies saw a progressive rise in sales after using social media.

Although there is a wide array of traditional and contemporary modes of advertising, marketers are tasked with selecting the most appropriate medium (or media) to gain the attention of specific audiences such as children (Stoldt, Wellman, Ekdale & Tully, 2019). Television advertising is often overshadowed by social media advertising due to its high adoption rate among adults and children (Davis, 2016). In 2019, roughly 22 million Rand was spent on social media advertising; however, an estimated 714 million Rand was spent on television advertising in SA during the same year (Guttmann, 2021).

Television commercials for large organisations such as Coca-Cola or McDonald's form an integral part of the overall marketing and advertising strategy as television remains the largest source of food-related messaging for children (Forbes, 2019). Television advertising is an invaluable method for targeting mass audiences as the higher visibility and cost of television advertising emits prestige and legitimacy (Grell, 2018). Social media is usually used to uphold key themes and messages displayed via television advertisements and is generally executed on a smaller scale with reduced production expenses (Grell, 2018). Despite the rapid advancement of technology over the past decade, television sales have continued to increase in SA (Stoll, 2021).

According to Stoll (2021), 450 million households (globally) have access to television compared to 250 million in 2019. Television advertisements have a higher rate of converting viewers into consumers based on factors such as prestige and legitimacy (Grell, 2018). The advent of smart television has allowed children to access the Internet and various types of social media, such as YouTube, through a television screen (Perakakis & Ghinea, 2017). As a result, audiences spend more time watching

television as social media platforms and the Internet utilise algorithms designed to generate content for specific audiences (Perakakis & Ghinea, 2017). This indicates that children can be exposed to an abundance of advertisements via television broadcasters and the Internet. Therefore, television is an effective vehicle for advertising amidst the 21<sup>st</sup> century as children are a captive audience who form attachments to specific brands or products from an early age (Thomans & Deshmukh, 2019). Haq and Rahman (2015) found that television advertisements shape children's perceptions of advertised products which contribute to the socialisation of young audiences.

## **2.4 Consumer socialisation of children**

Consumer socialisation refers to “the process by which young people acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes relevant to their functioning as consumers in the marketplace” (Hota & Bartsch, 2019:11). Children's processing of cognitive and social inputs varies depending on their age and family structure as they grow older and become consumers (Zhang & Benyoucef, 2016). Socialisation agents such as parents, friends and the media provide the social context where children learn to be consumers (Zhang & Benyoucef, 2016). Marketers are increasingly targeting the younger demographic as children are active consumers that significantly influence the purchase decisions of family members and guardians (Lavuri & Aileni, 2021). At approximately two years of age, toddlers make their first product request, which occurs 75% of the time at a supermarket (Story & French, 2004).

According to Haq and Rahman (2015), television is the most influential socialisation agent based on the persuasive nature of advertisements, shows and movies displayed to younger audiences. Children eventually evolve into independent consumers who shape the marketplace based on interactions with prevalent socialisation agents such as television (John, 1999). The child market segment has quickly established itself as a distinct and fruitful niche (Hota & Bartsch, 2019). Therefore, it is crucial for marketers to understand how children of different developmental stages process various types of advertising content, as this will allow for tailored marketing strategies that suit younger audiences.

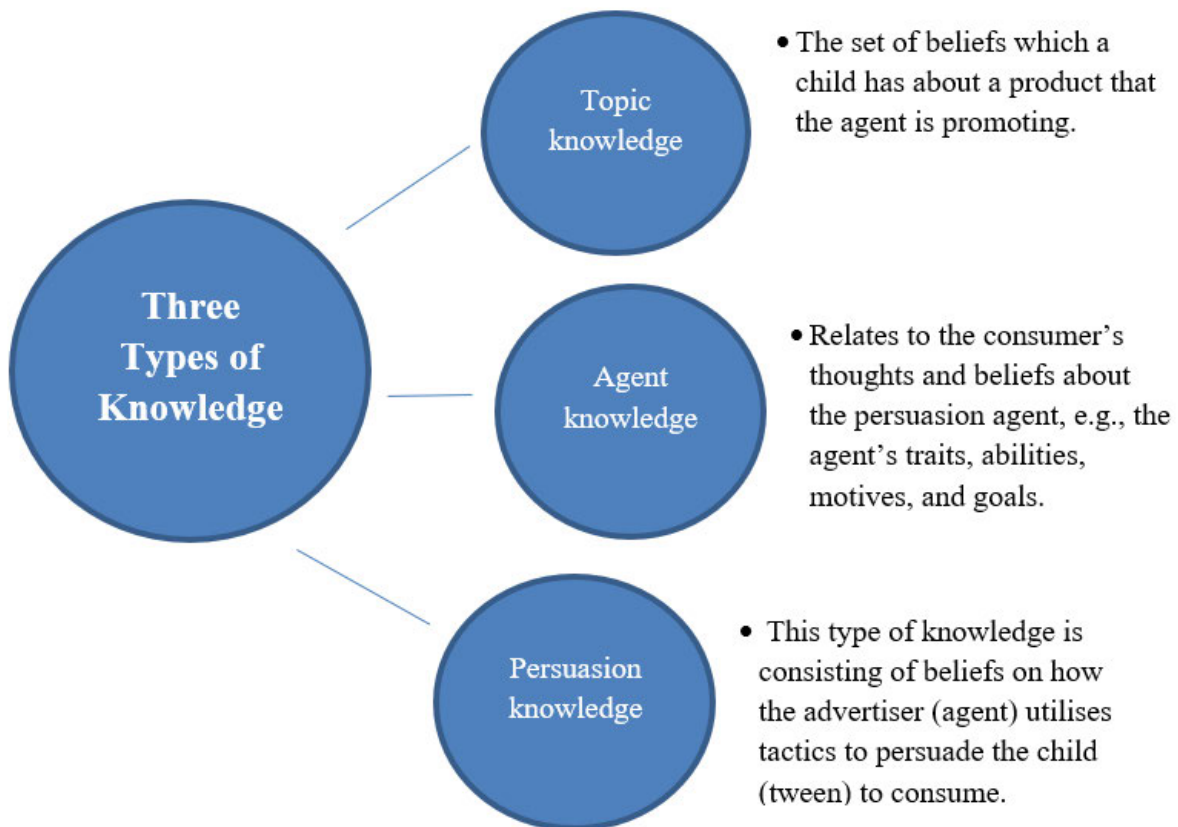
### **2.4.1 Children's understanding of advertising**

The foundation of social learning occurs during childhood as children naturally become novices in every sphere of life while progressively developing their cognitive abilities (Oates, *et al.*, 2003). Children are exposed to a wide range of advertisements and are commonly described as a gullible, naïve and trusting target audience (McNaught, 2021). As a result, advertising to children over the past decade has been extensive as a wide array of mediums allow marketers to target younger audiences. However, given children's cognitive immaturity, scholars and parents question whether children's regular exposure to sophisticated advertising is appropriate (McNaught, 2021).

The phases of Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development are commonly used by developmental psychologists, as well as communication and marketing experts, to explain age-based distinctions in how children interpret television content (Rozendaal, Oprea & Buijzen, 2016). According to Piaget's Hierarchy of Cognitive Development, children develop intellectual capabilities through a succession of adaptable phases, with each phase defined by the appearance of a new set of cognitive structures (Piaget, 1964). Piaget believed that children's comprehension levels in the sensorimotor and preoperational periods (between the ages of zero and seven) are unsystematic as children cannot distinguish between fiction and reality (Keenan, Evans & Crowley 2016). However, through trial and error, young children learn that advertisements may not be truthful and that advertising claims are often too good to be true (Rodgers & Thorson, 2012). Based on Piaget's (1964) study, it is not until the formal operational stage (eleven years of age or older) that the capacity to systematically evaluate abstract circumstances emerges.

According to Stoltz (2018), cognitive abilities in young children develop sooner than the Piagetian model suggests. Infants have an intrinsic understanding of the world around them and their potential to learn is greater than Piaget anticipated (Zupan, Blagrove & Watson, 2018). A significant finding involving the developing mind of a child is the manner in which young children are able to link distinct facts or unrelated observations into systematic frameworks (Allen & Kelly, 2015). Children are not a passive audience that solely assesses the features of an advertised product. Instead, children are able to construct explanatory systems to organise their information about a product as early as their first year of life (Allen & Kelly, 2015).

According to the Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM), children evaluate and respond to the persuasive intent behind commercials by using subjective persuasive knowledge based on their own life experiences (Carter, Patterson, Donovan, Ewing & Roberts, 2011). The PKM presents the notion of persuasion as a dyadic relationship between the marketer (persuasion agent) and the child (target) (Kirmani & Campbell, 2009). The PKM indicates that children between the ages of eight and 12 (tweens) possess three forms of persuasive knowledge, which are identified in Figure 2.1.



**Figure 2.1: The three types of persuasive knowledge among tweens**

**Source: Based on Kirmani and Campbell, 2009**

Rozendaal, Oprea and Buijzen (2016) indicate that children's understanding of advertisements has evolved as their ability to identify persuasive intent develops at approximately seven years of age. Children are exposed to a wealth of advertisements from the early stages of infancy and this can be seen in both a positive and negative light, in the sense that early exposure can result in a quicker understanding of persuasive intent (Rowthorn, 2017). However, research conducted by Boerman *et al.* (2018) shows that food advertising to young children has more of a negative impact on children as it can influence unhealthy purchase decisions.

Children's understanding of persuasive intent naturally develops with age as teenagers are the most mature segment of the child demographic (Allen & Kelly, 2015). Therefore, one may assume that teenagers are more likely to combat persuasive attempts to influence purchase decisions through their cognitive development. However, marketers are aware that teenagers process stimuli at a fast pace and require higher levels of communication strategies to keep them engaged (Šramová, 2017). Teenagers are highly exposed to unhealthy food advertisements as regulations are predominantly aimed at children younger than 12, and the statistics indicate that childhood obesity among teenagers continues to grow (Kelly, Boyland, King, Bauman, Chapman & Hughes, 2019).

Lapierre (2017) notes that audiences are not fully protected against the effects of persuasive advertising; however, adults possess a variety of advertising-related knowledge that may be used to measure children's relative ability in the advertising domain. For children, understanding the nature of advertising and acquiring knowledge on how to deal with it successfully are not easy concepts to grasp (Singh, 2020). A comprehensive set of skills is required, which is likely to show at different ages for children from diverse cultural settings or backgrounds (Singh, 2020). Blades, Oates, Blumberg and Gunter (2014) suggest that future research should not focus on relating advertising literacy to age but rather on matters relating to how children obtain their advertising knowledge. Although children may not be able to understand persuasive advertising as well as adults, businesses deem children as active consumers with significant purchasing power and the ability to influence purchase decisions (Šramová, 2017).

#### **2.4.2 Children as consumers**

The modern environment provides consumers with unprecedented access to communication technology and as a result, children have access to considerable amounts of information (Bertol *et al.*, 2017). The simultaneous use of numerous media types, such as television and mobile phones, are increasingly popular among young children. Exposure to many types of media from an early age can influence children's attitudes and behaviour, resulting in the sophistication of children as consumers (Bertol *et al.*, 2017). The child consumer audience is a crucial demographic for marketers as children have significant spending power and influence over parents' purchase decisions (Pinto, Pauzé, Mutata, Roy-Gagnon & Kent, 2020).

Through daily interactions with family, children are naturally involved in family routines as part of their development and as part of the consumer socialisation process (Chaudhary, 2015). Children are often in the presence of their parents when purchase decisions are made and as a result, parents tend to share information regarding the description or details of specific products (Dikcius, Urbonavicius, Pakalniskiene & Pikturniene 2019). Over the past decade, children have begun to frequently assist parents in stores, serve as information collectors, price checkers and are capable of selecting products for family use or consumption on a regular basis (Dikcius *et al.*, 2019).

According to Smith *et al.* (2019), parents have reported that children often influence grocery purchase decisions for specific brands and products such as snacks, breakfast foods and desserts. Harris, Webb, Sacco and Pomeranz (2020) found that 73% of parents refer to their children as the primary decision-makers regarding the selection of fast foods or snacks. In addition, parents report that children have the greatest purchase influence on food compared to other non-food categories such as electronics and home décor products (Smith *et al.*, 2019).



The growing influence of the child consumer has focused attention on ‘pester power’, which can be described as the ability to influence adult purchase decisions through requests and demands for products (Pinto *et al.*, 2020). Unhealthy food advertising to children influences children’s desire to consume non-nutritive foods and often undermines parents’ attempts to promote the consumption of healthy foods; in turn, this has proven to lead to parent-child conflict (Lavuri & Aileni, 2021). According to the findings of a worldwide systematic review, food advertising triggers ‘pestering’ by children that can lead to the purchase and consumption of unhealthy foods and obesity (Smith *et al.*, 2019). However, Marshall (2014) indicates that many studies highlight the negative effects of children’s involvement in purchase decisions. In addition, Marshall (2014) emphasises that children are cooperative within the retail environment as their overall understanding of healthy eating has evolved since the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Children constitute a major economic segment and are a primary market that spends discretionary capital on a range of products obtained primarily through allowances and other sources of income such as gifts from family and friends, chores and part-time employment (Bertol *et al.*, 2017). The South African youth market accounts for 35% of the population, which holds significant purchasing power (Crouth, 2021). The South African youth market is expected to possess approximately 120 billion Rand of their own disposable income; however, 63% of children engage in rigid saving or investing (Crouth, 2021).

Children’s consumer behaviour patterns are of enormous importance to marketers because children form a large market segment that affects family purchase decisions (Zlatanova-Pazheva, 2019). However, companies also aim to achieve longer-term brand loyalty and successful customer retention, and marketers understand that children’s current behaviour will heavily shape future behavioural and consumption patterns (Zlatanova-Pazheva, 2019).

It can be said that parents and children seek inter-family peace and happiness with the aim of promoting inclusivity within family decision-making (Kumalasari, Karremans & Dijksterhuis, 2020). Therefore, parents tend to attain trust within the family through compromise, which generally results in a satisfactory ending for all family members involved (Dikcius *et al.*, 2019). With regard to the purchasing of sugary snacks, beverages and fast food, parents aim to achieve limited levels of dissonance but are often persuaded into purchasing unhealthy foods (Dikcius *et al.*, 2019). However, the role of children as consumers within a household may vary based on their socio-economic background (French, Tangney, Crane, Wang & Appelhans, 2019).

## **2.5 The influence of socio-economic status on children’s exposure to advertising**

Television provides a multichannel viewing experience as it offers tailored entertainment for families of different socio-economic backgrounds (Stephens, 2020). Television advertisers are known for reaching the desired target audience through primetime advertising; however, the segmentation of a

target market is initiated by the selection of the desired broadcaster in the form of free-to-air or subscription-based television channels (Backholer *et al.*, 2020). Kunkel and Gantz (1992) were one of the first sets of researchers to explore the phenomenon of multichannel advertising to children and found differences in the number of advertisements displayed on various television stations. Backholer *et al.* (2020) found evidence suggesting that television channels can be segmented based on the types of content displayed and through the socio-economic background of viewers.

Lewis, Bhoola and Mafofo (2020) have also recently explored the notion of unhealthy food advertising to children in SA. However, their study focused specifically on corporate fast-food advertising. In addition, although they found that fast-food advertisements target children from underprivileged backgrounds, they did not explore the influence of socio-economic status on children's exposure to television advertising. Therefore, the major differences between the current study and the aforementioned study is that this study focused on all unhealthy food advertisements (not just fast food advertising) and on both subscription-based and free-to-air television (not just free-to-air television).

SA has one of the highest poverty rates in the world, with 19% of its population living in extreme poverty and a total of 13 million citizens living below the South African food poverty line (Saleh, 2021). Over 60% of South African children are multidimensionally poor and based on the upper-bound poverty line in SA, 67% of children live in low-income households (UNICEF, 2020).

Although poverty rates continue to grow, millions of low-income households have access to television but are usually restricted to free-to-air channels that are broadcasted by the SABC (Otitoola, Oldewage-Theron & Egal, 2020). Peitz and Valletti (2008) established that free-to-air channels run more advertisements than subscription-based channels as a large portion of revenue for free-to-air broadcasters stem from advertising deals. In contrast, subscription-based broadcasters (such as DStv) generate income through subscription fees, advertisements and private partnerships (Backholer *et al.*, 2020). Free-to-air channels typically air more unhealthy food advertisements as less differentiated content is promoted, whereas subscription-based channels display differentiated advertising content across an array of product categories (Anderson, Foros & Kind, 2017). Furthermore, the SABC has a total audience of 30 million viewers, whereas DStv has a total audience of 20 million viewers, which indicates that most South Africans are exposed to free-to-air advertising on television (SABC Sales, 2020).

Children from financially disadvantaged backgrounds encounter more health and nutritional disparities in comparison to children from middle to high-income households. According to several studies (Strauss & Knight, 1999; Strauss & Pollack, 2003; French *et al.*, 2019), socio-economic backgrounds are directly linked to the prevalence of childhood obesity. Goisis, Sacker and Kelly (2015) prove that children from both developed and underdeveloped countries face childhood obesity concerns based on income and socio-economic inequalities that are prevalent in preschool-aged children.

According to UNICEF (2020), children who are brought up within underprivileged households are at a higher risk of becoming obese as neighbourhoods tend to be unsafe and schools do not provide extramural activities; as a result, children are more likely to be inactive and spend more time indoors. Households struck by poverty are proven to consume fewer fruits and vegetables and have a lower overall diet quality than those who are financially stable (French *et al.*, 2019). Individual dietary consumption is influenced, in part, by the food purchases made by the family breadwinner, which creates a healthy or unhealthy dietary pattern within the household (Bertol *et al.*, 2017). In addition, a large majority of underprivileged households contain parents or guardians who are addicted to narcotics, practice alcoholism and experience mental health conditions which have proven to trigger non-nutritive dietary patterns within the household (Goisis, Sacker & Kelly, 2016).

Backholer *et al.* (2020) discovered substantial and consistent evidence indicating that children from low-income families and ethnic minorities are disproportionately exposed to harmful food and sugared beverage advertisements. Incentivising the purchase of healthier foods and limiting unhealthy food purchases have been crucial strategies implemented as part of food assistance programs in the United States and have proven to effectively transform low-income households' food purchases through community-based trials (French *et al.*, 2019). The limited research regarding the difference in exposure to unhealthy food advertisements on free-to-air and subscription-based channels based on socio-economic backgrounds is the foundation that this research intends to build upon.

In addition, neuromarketers are able to target and measure a variety of neural indicators that allow for accurate and effective targeting of children from different walks of life, based on their socio-economic backgrounds (Mansor & Isa, 2020).

## **2.6 Neuromarketing**

The field of marketing continues to evolve as companies seek to better understand the effectiveness of advertising; thus, consumers are exposed to a wide range of innovative marketing techniques such as neuromarketing (Mishra, 2019). Every purchase involves the process of decision-making and both neuroscience and marketing can assist marketers in understanding how consumers make decisions and what influences their choices. Therefore, the concept of neuromarketing is a result of the fusion between the fields of neuroscience and marketing (Mishra, 2019).

Neuromarketing includes the analysis of brain images to evaluate the impact of television advertising content, product packaging or any aspect of a product that allows marketers to gain insight into a customer's subconscious decision-making process (Harris, Ciorciari & Gountas, 2018). Companies have utilised research within the field of neuroscience and psychology to enhance marketing campaigns by tapping into the psychology of customers with the aim of converting a thought into a purchase (Harris, Ciorciari & Gountas, 2018).

Research has shown that consumers feel a sense of control and rationality with regard to decision-making; however, Abbas, Chen and Saberi (2019) indicate that consumers are irrational and generally unaware of the full range of factors that dictate the outcome of a purchase decision. Therefore, neuromarketers have adopted a range of technologies such as functional magnetic resonance imaging, to better understand the activity taking place within the brain (Lim, 2018). A wide array of companies such as Porsche, Microsoft and McDonald's invest a substantial amount of capital in neuromarketing as the fields of neuroscience, psychology and behavioural economics provide organisations with data that ultimately drives sales (Pereira, Lago & McGullion, 2020).

Neurological approaches combined with marketing strategies are said to be setting a strong foundation for marketers to probe consumers' brains to gain crucial information about the reasons for an advertisement's success or failure (Hsu, 2017). Neuromarketers could overcome marketing restrictions based on geographic and demographic data by shifting the focus to psychological components that subliminally affect a customer's decision-making process (Pereira, Lago & McGullion, 2020).

Brand marketers understand that the feeling of pleasure associated with a purchase usually diminishes at a rapid rate; therefore, brands send customers through a subconscious experience (via neuromarketing strategies) known as the hedonic treadmill (Jacques, Chaaya, Beecher, Ali, Belmer & Bartlett, 2019). The hedonic treadmill is a metaphor that describes the urge to chase one pleasure after the next because of the spike in happiness that a consumer endures after a purchase or experience (Crollic & Janiszewski, 2016). However, a customer can return to a neutral state almost instantaneously or over time and this can become an unhealthy cycle that may affect one's mental health, physical health and financial stability (Crollic & Janiszewski, 2016).

Unhealthy food has proven to promote a hedonic culture among children more than any other product category (Sato, Rymarczyk, Minemoto, Wojciechowski & Hyniewska, 2019). According to Jacques *et al.* (2019), children are more likely to develop hedonic food consumption patterns than adults, particularly when diets contain high levels of sugar and added fats.

Neuromarketing highlights the significance of invisible social influence which can be described as the subtle manner by which marketers persuade consumers by tapping into their emotional intelligence and decision-making (Harris, Ciorciari & Gountas, 2018). The invisible social influence is persuasive because decisions may produce uncertainty and consumers (particularly children) feel safer when decisions are made by a crowd, which is a natural bias that stems from the brain (Mishra, 2019).

Every year, nine out of ten new food products fail whilst millions of Rands are spent on marketing and the fundamental cause is that conventional marketing overlooks customers' unconscious emotional experiences (Stasi *et al.*, 2018). According to Mansor and Isa (2020), neuromarketing is centred on

creating better customer experiences through understanding the types of marketing activity that best stimulates a customer's mind.

Marketers spend increasing amounts of time analysing children's emotions, intuition and unconscious minds as research has indicated that children make 95% of purchase decisions unconsciously (Gross, 2017). Neuromarketers make use of many research strategies such as the use of eye-tracking, which has yielded positive results, particularly among the child demographic (Stasi *et al.*, 2018). An eye-tracker is a piece of equipment that measures eye movements and visual attention in order to ascertain point-of-regard, which is linked to several parts of the brain (Stasi *et al.*, 2018).

Eye-tracking technology is common in consumer behaviour research including food packaging analysis (Stasi *et al.*, 2018). The eye-tracking device can help identify elements that spark a consumer's interest to purchase and through this technology, child-targeted marketing in grocery stores is heavily reliant on strategic product placement (Harris *et al.*, 2020). For example, child-targeted products are shelved at children's eye level and colourfully packaged items in the form of cereals and candy are placed within a child's reach (Harris *et al.*, 2020).

Neuromarketing is a powerful tool that provides companies with access to the human subconscious, which is an element over which the consumer has limited control (Pereira, Lago & McGullion, 2020). However, scholars believe that neuromarketing is an ethical infringement and that its use for commercial objectives raises ethical concerns, particularly when it involves vulnerable groups such as children (Stanton, Sinnott-Armstrong & Huettel, 2016). Abbas, Chen and Saberi (2019) are unanimous in their belief that analysing data obtained by neuroimaging techniques is still in its infancy. As a result, the commercial advantage gained by using neuromarketing is said to be speculative as countries such as France have prohibited the use of brain imaging and subliminal marketing within a commercial context (Abbas, Chen & Saberi, 2019). Neuromarketing is a relatively new technique that allows marketers to gain insight into the manner in which consumers process various methods of persuasive advertising in the form of advertising appeals and promotional strategies, which have proven to be effective methods for targeting children via television (Casais & Pereira, 2021). However, Abbas, Chen and Saberi (2019) believe that neuromarketing is unethical if used to exploit children for commercial purposes.

## **2.7 Unethical marketing to children**

According to Nautiyal (2021), ethical marketing is a philosophy that guides an organisation's marketing operations. Furthermore, ethical marketing aims to promote equality, responsibility and honesty in areas of marketing such as advertising (Nautiyal, 2021). Children are a vulnerable audience that struggles to identify and interpret persuasive advertising intent; therefore, advertisers may deceive children through persuasive advertising appeals and promotional strategies, which can be considered unethical (Qutteina,

De Backer & Smits, 2019). Dorr (1986:51) states, “Of all the television content children process, interpret, and evaluate, commercial advertising presents the most significant challenges”. From 1970, consumer organisations such as the Action for Children’s Television, media companies and advertisers deemed unhealthy food advertising to children as unethical (Qutteina, De Backer & Smits, 2019).

Grad (2015) suggests that unhealthy food advertising should be prohibited due to its negative impact and influence on children. Advertising to younger audiences has proven to induce poor dietary habits and harmful behaviours in children, who are more likely to fall victim to advanced marketing strategies, particularly within the food and beverage industry (Grad, 2015). For example, children from three years of age identify more unhealthy food brands than healthy food brands (McNaught, 2021). However, Yamoah *et al.* (2021) indicates that unhealthy food advertisements on television continue to rise within developing nations such as SA. Therefore, advertising to children is a growing phenomenon within modern culture and cannot be eluded (Yamoah *et al.*, 2021). Hoffmann (2019) believes that children should strengthen their relationship with advertisements as it forms an integral part of the consumer socialisation process.

Advertising has been a controversial component of marketing to children in the 21<sup>st</sup> century due to the abundance of unhealthy food advertisements displayed via traditional and contemporary forms of media (Nautiyal, 2021). As a result, countries have implemented policies or regulations to prohibit and restrict unhealthy food marketing to children based on the plethora of research highlighting the negative effects and unethical nature of unhealthy food marketing to young audiences (Kelly *et al.*, 2019).

## **2.8 Regulations on food marketing to children**

Kelly *et al.* (2019) discovered that children exposed to television commercials and other persuasive forms of marketing had established positive feelings towards non-nutritive foods, alcohol, cigarettes and materialistic products such as clothing and smart devices. Hawkes and Lobstein (2011:91) state that “regulations may provide general guidance on food marketing to children, impose specific restrictions or mandate messaging.” In addition, the WHO believes that food companies’ promotional efforts can only be constrained by law as opposed to strategies without legal obligations (WHO, 2017).

Hawkes (2007) conducted a review that identified two primary types of regulations that exist at national and international levels, namely statutory and self-regulation. Statutory regulations can be defined as a set of policies, rules, or laws enacted by the government. The purpose of statutory regulation is to safeguard the public from the dangers of unethical behaviours or practices (Hawkes, 2007). Statutory regulations on television advertisements typically have two key objectives: to ensure that marketers follow the proposed regulations and to limit specific advertising such as unhealthy food content (Boyland & Harris, 2017). The restrictions are based on the premise that advertising should not be deceptive or misleading due to its negative effect on children (Boyland & Harris, 2017).

Self-regulation is administered, funded and led by specific industries rather than the government; however, regulations may be mandated by government (Hawkes, 2007). Self-regulation in marketing consists of two key components: firstly, an ethical code of practice that governs the content of marketing or advertising campaigns and secondly, a process for establishing, reviewing, and applying the code of practice which is generally established by the marketing industry with the aim of forming an effective self-regulatory commission or organisation (Hawkes & Lobstein, 2011).

The European Union has taken a stance against marketing to children by implementing a pledge that restricts all forms of advertising to children under the age of 12 due to their ability to easily be persuaded (Landwehr & Hartmann, 2020). According to Taillie, Busey, Stoltze, and Carpentier (2019), 16 countries (UK, South Korea, Ireland, Mexico, Ecuador, Poland, Uruguay, Taiwan, Chile, Turkey, Canada, Norway, Hungary, Sweden, Spain and Costa Rica) were found to have stringent statutory regulations on food marketing to children by either limiting all forms of commercial advertising to children under the age of 12 or by banning the advertising of specific HFSS food products. However, the results varied as the implementation of statutory regulations within five of the 16 countries did not decrease the number of unhealthy food advertisements on television (Taillie *et al.*, 2019). By contrast, South Korea saw an 81% decrease in overall exposure to HFSS food advertisements during children's viewing hours (Taillie *et al.*, 2019).

Since 2010, more national governments have opted for self-regulation guidelines over statutory regulations regarding the marketing of unhealthy foods to children (Whalen, Harrold, Child, Halford & Boyland, 2019). According to Boyland and Harris (2017), however, self-regulation has failed to restrict the marketing of HFSS products to children as 80% of all food products advertised on television fall within the lowest nutritional category, which significantly contributes to the growth of childhood obesity. Whalen *et al.* (2019) add that the WHO and civil society should pressure national governments and the food industry to further encourage the implementation of statutory regulations with the aim of preventing unhealthy food advertising to children. In addition, the food and beverage industry are notorious for developing self-regulation codes as a method for deflecting statutory regulations (Taillie *et al.*, 2019).

Developing nations have paid less attention to the implementation of statutory regulations regarding marketing to children as many prevalent issues (such as unemployment) are prioritised (Backholer *et al.*, 2020). However, childhood obesity rates continue to grow within developing nations due to the lack of legislation, which heightens children's exposure to unhealthy advertisements (Otitoola, Oldewage-Theron & Egal, 2020). In addition, no African country has imposed mandatory regulations or comprehensive legislation prohibiting the marketing of HFSS products to young audiences (Otitoola, Oldewage-Theron & Egal, 2020).

### 2.8.1 Regulations in South Africa

SA has the third-highest obesity rate in Africa, behind Libya and Egypt (Yamoah *et al.*, 2021). In addition, childhood obesity in SA continues to grow as approximately 20% of children are considered obese (Klingberg *et al.*, 2019). In 2010, the National Department of Health developed draft regulation 146 within the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act 54 regarding food and advertising policies, which focused primarily on product labelling and packaging (Igumbor, Sanders & Puoane, 2012). However, in 2014, amendments were made to regulation 146 and regulation 429 of the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act 54 was drafted, which sought to place more emphasis on restricting unhealthy food advertising to children through the implementation of statutory regulations (Davis, 2016). Despite the growing rate of childhood obesity, none of the draft regulations have been enacted by the South African government (Yamoah *et al.*, 2021).

In SA, non-profit organisations enforce self-regulatory measures that restrict unhealthy food advertising to young audiences (Mills, 2016). The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) was founded in 1968 and was the first independent entity in SA that bound advertisers to the ASA Code (prepared by the International Chamber of Commerce) to regulate advertising to children (Mills, 2016). The ASA Code acknowledged that children are susceptible to marketing and advised companies to refrain from promoting advertisements that may mislead children or cause psychological, emotional, physical and moral damage (ASASA, 2016). However, in 2018, the ASA went into liquidation, which led to the emergence and establishment of the Advertising Regulatory Board (ARB) of South Africa, headed by the former CEO of the ASA, Gail Schimmel (Sulcas, 2022).

The ARB is responsible for enacting the Food and Beverage Code devised by the Consumer Goods Council of South Africa (CGCSA), whose board of directors include executives from Nestlé, Unilever, Coca-Cola, Tiger Brands and PepsiCo (Sulcas, 2022). The Food and Beverage Code is tailored to regulate food advertisements targeted to children via traditional and contemporary forms of media (Mialon, Crosbie & Sacks, 2020). The ARB allows members of the public to file complaints against advertising that is considered misleading or harmful. In addition, the ARB makes rulings based on the Food and Beverage Code (Advertising Regulatory Board, 2021). According to Gail Schimmel, there are no real consequences for a breach of the Food and Beverage Code as it is a voluntary, self-regulatory system (Sulcas, 2022). Moreover, some companies do not acknowledge the ARB's jurisdiction and thus do not consider themselves bound by its code. In contrast, there are companies that agree to be bound by the code and are likely to follow it (Sulcas, 2022).

The South African Marketing to Children Pledge was initiated in 2009 by the CGCSA (Mills, 2016). It is a pledge where companies voluntarily agree to refrain from incorporating persuasive tactics (in the form of cartoon characters and celebrities) or misleading information within advertisements targeted at



children (Yamoah *et al.*, 2021). Yamoah *et al.* (2021) emphasise that over 50% of advertisements aimed at children breach The South African Marketing to Children Pledge and the various self-regulatory codes that are employed by the National Department of Health and the ARB.

A study conducted by Dlamini, Mukoma and Norris (2021) suggests that fast-food companies should provide nutritional information on the packaging of fast-food products as over 47% of the biggest fast-food companies do not include nutritional labels on products. The study found that all fast-food meals are high in salt, sugar, fat and carbohydrates (Dlamini, Mukoma & Norris, 2021). Research conducted by König, Ziesemer and Renner (2019) shows that consumers often miscalculate nutritional value when products do not include nutritional labels. Therefore, in order to help consumers to make informed dietary choices, Dlamini, Mukoma and Norris (2021) believe that the South African government should enforce regulations that encourage fast-food companies to include nutritional labelling on product packaging.

The unsatisfactory impact of self-regulatory measures with regards to marketing to children in SA is linked significantly to the food and beverage industry's desire to maximise profits despite the need to shield young audiences from misleading, persuasive and non-nutritive food advertisements (Klingberg *et al.*, 2019). Yamoah *et al.* (2021) add that there is a serious need for stringent regulatory control over unhealthy food advertising on television and that the implementation of statutory regulations in SA would represent a positive change. Otitoola, Oldewage-Theron and Egal (2020) suggest that educating food marketers on the need to adhere to regulations governing food advertising to children could create a positive attitudinal change resulting in the adherence to regulatory measures. Lewis, Bhoola and Mafofo (2020) called for further research regarding unhealthy food advertising to children in South Africa. The current study responds to this call by adding to the existing literature (Lewis, Bhoola and Mafofo 2020; Otitoola, Oldewage-Theron & Egal, 2020; Yamoah *et al.* 2021) and strengthening the call for the enactment of regulatory measures that limit unhealthy food advertising to children in SA. The lack of regulatory intervention allows marketers to utilise persuasive advertising techniques that entice children and influence food preferences (Lewis, Bhoola & Mafofo, 2020).

## **2.9 Persuasive television advertising to children**

Food advertisements on television have elicited emotional responses among children due to the employment of various persuasive advertising efforts, which play a vital role in determining the effectiveness of advertisements (Smith *et al.*, 2019). The WHO suggests that the design, content and execution of televised food advertising to children are fundamental factors that contribute to the power and effectiveness of such advertisements (WHO, 2021).

A systematic review of food advertising to children conducted by Kelly *et al.* (2015) indicates that food advertisements affect children's brand awareness, food consumption habits and food preferences. The study also found that television viewing among children is significantly linked to the formation of positive attitudes towards non-nutritive foods (Kelly *et al.*, 2015). Unhealthy food advertisements typically contain advertising appeals and promotional strategies that are used to draw attention from a particular target audience to a specific brand or product (Bakir, Palan & Kolbe, 2013).

Kelly *et al.* (2019) suggest that it is imperative for parents or guardians to understand the persuasive intent of unhealthy food advertising to children, as similar methods could be used to promote healthier dietary choices and lifestyles. The use of persuasive advertising appeals and strategies within television advertising aimed at children is an under-researched phenomenon in developing nations such as SA, despite the growing rate of childhood obesity over the past decade (Yamoah *et al.*, 2021).

### **2.9.1 Advertising appeals**

According to Belch (2003:266), "The advertising appeal refers to the approach used to attract the attention of consumers and to influence their feelings toward the product, service, or cause". An advertisement appeal can also be referred to as a tactic that piques consumers' curiosity and evokes their desire for specific products (Belch, 2003). Yeshin (2003:337) defines an advertising appeal as, "The particular approach, based on rational or emotional arguments, which seeks to develop a direct link between the product or service and the consumer's needs or wants". Children are more susceptible to persuasive advertising than adults and marketers make use of a wide array of advertising appeals to draw attention to products or brands (Rozendaal, Oprea & Buijzen, 2016).

According to Johar and Sirgy (1991), the two main approaches in advertising are the value-expressive appeal and the utilitarian appeal. The value-expressive appeal aims to create an image or personality for the product by using symbolic and image appeals, while the utilitarian appeal focuses on the product's functional benefits (Johar & Sirgy, 1991). Pechmann (1992) identified two broad categories of advertising appeals referred to as one-sided and two-sided appeals. One-sided appeals present only the benefits or positive attributes of a product or service without acknowledging any potential drawbacks or negative aspects (Pechmann, 1992). They can be effective for products or services with clear-cut advantages. On the other hand, two-sided appeals acknowledge both the positive and negative aspects of a product or service, which demonstrates honesty and credibility (Pechmann, 1992).

Unhealthy food advertisements implement specific messages in the form of advertising appeals that encourage children to consume unhealthy foods. Table 2.2 displays the types of advertising appeals that are identified within studies that explore the phenomenon of television advertising to children. Six out of the 10 journal articles in Table 2.2 address the notion of emotional and rational appeals found in television advertisements aimed at children. A similar trend was found in an array of studies that focus

on identifying the types of appeals within television advertising to children. As seen in Table 2.2, two studies identify and explain all three types of advertising appeals (emotional, rational and moral). However, Bakir, Palan and Kolbe (2013) cover all three primary appeals and the sub-appeals thoroughly, whereas Boyland, Harrold, Kirkham and Halford (2012) do not. Therefore Bakir, Palan and Kolbe's (2013) framework formed a part of the conceptual framework of this study.

**Table 2.2: Types of advertising appeals found in previous research**

Author	Title	Type of appeal		
		Emotional	Rational	Moral
Kunkel and Gantz (1992)	Children's Television Advertising in the Multichannel Environment	✓	✓	
Kotz and Story (1994)	Food advertisements during children's Saturday morning television programming: Are they consistent with dietary recommendations?	✓	✓	
Maher <i>et al.</i> (2006)	Food advertising on children's television	✓	✓	
Warren, Lord, Hughner and Childs (2008)	Food and beverage advertising on U.S. television: A Comparison of child-targeted versus general audience commercials	✓	✓	
Boyland <i>et al.</i> (2012)	Persuasive techniques used in television advertisements to market foods to UK children	✓	✓	✓
Bakir, Palan and Kolbe (2013)	A comparative content analysis of advertising practices to children	✓	✓	✓
Nicolini, Cassia, Bellotto (2017)	Children perceptions of emotional and rational appeals in social advertisements	✓	✓	
Lynn and Zolkepli (2019)	A content analysis of appeals in food advertisements for children on online TV streaming	✓	✓	

Kotler *et al.* (1999) and Belch (2003) identify two specific advertising appeals (emotional and rational appeals). However, Kotler *et al.* (1999) address a third appeal (moral appeal). Bakir, Palan and Kolbe (2013) conducted a study based on advertising practices to children in which much of the focus was placed on emotional, rational and moral appeals, which correspond with the appeals and sub-appeals identified by Kotler *et al.* (1999). The study assessed television advertisements and identified sub-categories of appeals that were most used in advertising to children in America, Mexico and Turkey. Furthermore, Bakir, Palan and Kolbe's (2013) study highlights that the advertising appeals varied in sophistication across the three countries studied. American advertisements were found to be the most sophisticated, with a greater variety and complexity of appeals used. Mexican and Turkish advertisements were found to be less sophisticated in their use of appeals due to cultural differences and less developed advertising industries. Palan and Kolbe's study provided valuable insights into the specific sub-categories of appeals used in advertising to children in America, Mexico and Turkey. The

categories and sub-categories can be seen in Table 2.3 below and were utilised in this study to pinpoint the categories that appear most frequently in South African television advertisements aimed at children.

**Table 2.3: Types of advertising appeals**

Emotional Appeals	Rational Appeals	Moral Appeals
Adventure	New Product	
Fun	Product Performance	
Happiness	Product Features	
Pleasure	Comparison	
Fear		

Source: Bakir, Palan & Kolbe, 2013

These categories and sub-categories of appeals are discussed below.

### 2.9.1.1 Emotional appeal

Emotional appeals relate to a consumer's psychological or social need to acquire a product (Belch, 2003). Children's motivations for food purchase decisions are predominantly emotional and the feeling associated with a particular brand may be more significant than merely understanding the specifics about a product's benefits and its traits or qualities (Belch, 2003). Emotional appeals seek to elicit either positive or negative sensations in order to provoke a favourable emotional response to a product (Kotler *et al.*, 1999). In the minds of consumers, emotional appeals create a sense of likeability and friendliness towards the brand. Fast-food advertisers tend to employ emotional appeals when advertising to children, as rational appeals are deemed monotonous (Casais & Pereira, 2021).

Research has shown that emotional appeals within advertisements aimed at children are more effective and easier to remember (Bakir, Palan & Kolbe, 2013). Marketers typically evoke positive feelings through emotional appeals and as a result, children develop an emotional bias towards a particular brand during the purchase decision process (Casais & Pereira, 2021). Unhealthy food advertisements to children on television often incorporate emotional appeals that link the product to happiness, fun or joy (Roose & Mulier, 2020). For example, most healthy food advertisements focus on rational appeals by describing the product's features and benefits, whereas fast-food companies appeal to a child's emotions which have proven to lead to successful food advertisements (Roose & Mulier, 2020). Scholars (e.g. Kotler *et al.*, 1999; Belch, 2003; Bakir, Palan & Kolbe, 2013) indicate that the most popular emotional

sub-appeals within food advertisements to children on television are adventure, fun, happiness, pleasure and fear.

**a) Adventure**

The adventure sub-appeal is effective when targeting audiences that have a desire for thrill-seeking and is utilised in television advertisements with the aim of increasing consumers' sense of excitement during the advertisement and after purchasing the advertised product (Kotler *et al.*, 1999). According to Bakir, Palan and Kolbe (2013), fun, adventure and happiness are the most popular appeals when advertising to children on television.

**b) Fun**

Advertisements that depict a joyful environment coupled with emotions of delight and pleasure are said to be fun (Belch, 2003). Fun food commercials aimed at young audiences often include physical activity, the use of cartoon characters or portray a cheerful environment with friends and family.

**c) Happiness**

Niedermeier, Albrecht and Jahn (2018) identify happy advertisements by five key emotive characteristics: optimism, generosity, trustworthiness, playfulness and happiness. Within food advertisements, the emotion of happiness is generally displayed after the product has been used or consumed, which indicates that the feeling of positivity is evoked by the consumer's sensory experience with the product (Belch, 2003). However, marketing campaigns may also be centred upon happiness. For example, Coca-Cola launched a successful advertising campaign titled *Open Happiness* from 2009 to 2015, which made use of the happiness appeal in all Coca-Cola advertisements and marketing material (Niedermeier, Albrecht & Jahn, 2018).

**d) Pleasure**

Food and beverage advertising evokes product-induced pleasure by emphasising the positive feeling associated with the advertisement (Bakir, Palan & Kolbe, 2013). The combination of product-induced pleasure and advertisement-induced pleasure increases brand loyalty and the brand's perceived value (Belch, 2003). Although food consumption may provide pleasure instantaneously, it could be harmful to consumers' long-term health, leading to unhealthy food addiction or unhealthy consumption patterns (Casais & Pereira, 2021).

### **e) Fear**

The fear sub-appeal is used in advertisements with the intention of scaring the target audience by illustrating a dangerous or potentially harmful threat (Kotler *et al.*, 1999). This appeal encourages consumers to refrain from or engage in particular behaviours in a manner that leverages the advertised product (Kotler *et al.*, 1999). According to Farías (2020), the fear appeal strengthens brand attachments and consumers have a greater recall for advertisements that evoke fear than advertisements that induce feelings of happiness, adventure or pleasure. Moreover, fear-based health advertising could help consumers make better health-related food choices (Farías, 2020).

### **2.9.1.2 Rational appeal**

Rational advertising appeals arose from traditional information processing theories of decision-making, in which the consumer is expected to make cogent and sensible judgments (Kotler *et al.*, 1999). Such advertising relies on persuasive arguments or reasoning regarding brand qualities to influence consumers' perceptions of the advertised brand (Kotler *et al.*, 1999). Rational appeals highlight the attributes of a product and the advantages or motives for purchasing the desired product (Belch, 2003). In addition, the consumers' need or desire for a utilitarian, functional or practical product are rational elements that advertisers target (Belch, 2003). Brands that use rational-based appeals try to persuade customers into thinking that their product has a certain feature, taste or value that meets the customers' demands (Belch, 2003).

Rational appeals have proven to be less successful when targeting children, as fun and creative elements are more likely to entice a purchase (Nicolini, Cassia & Bellotto, 2017). However, children are sophisticated and with instant access to the internet and social media, are able to search for food promotions online and compare prices or product features (Nicolini, Cassia & Bellotto, 2017). Rational appeals include advertisements that extol the qualities of a food product and can include features such as taste (e.g. sweet, fruity, chocolatey) or texture (e.g. crispy, crunchy) (Casais & Pereira, 2021). Based on Bakir, Palan and Kolbe's (2013) study, the most popular rational sub-appeals utilised within food advertisements aimed at children are new product appeals, product performance, product features and the comparison of products.

#### **a) New product**

New products are unique to the company introducing them but may be produced in the same form by other companies (Belch, 2003). In addition, large food and beverage organisations structure the design or redesign of marketing campaigns around new products (Belch, 2003). The new product sub-appeal is popular among fast-food chains, and three new product categories are commonly found in fast-food marketing campaigns (Dean, Griffith & Calantone, 2016). The categories are new product lines,

additions to existing product lines and improvements to existing products (Dean, Griffith & Calantone, 2016).

#### **b) Product performance**

Product performance is based on the consumers' reaction to the advertised product in its working environment (Kotler *et al.*, 1999). The performance of a product is determined by how well it functions, executes claims that are made by the brand, and by the sales revenue generated by the product (Oates *et al.*, 2003). Marketers are fond of emphasising the success of the brand in advertisements with the aim of transferring that image onto the advertised product (Bakir, Palan & Kolbe, 2013).

#### **c) Product features**

Product features refer to the qualities that a product possesses (Kotler *et al.*, 1999). Food advertisements highlight features of the product that attract consumers and this is achieved through the use of descriptive words and positive behavioural cues of the actors or actresses (Institute of Medicine, 2006).

#### **d) Comparison**

Comparative advertising is a sub-appeal where a company's product is portrayed as the better choice in comparison to a competitor's product (Belch, 2003). The main objective of comparative advertising is to determine and display the positive differential components of the advertised product, which presents the shortcomings of the competitor's product (Belch, 2003). The advertisement essentially provides consumers with a reference point while presenting and promoting the product's unique benefits (Belch, 2003). An example of a popular comparative advertising campaign involves Pepsi and Coca-Cola as both companies would compare the taste (among other features) of one product over the other (Kenton, 2019).

#### **2.9.1.3 Moral appeal**

Moral appeals are designed to stimulate an audience's sense of integrity by linking products to social causes such as equal rights for women or assisting the disadvantaged through various campaigns (Kotler *et al.*, 1999). For example, KFC's 'Add Hope' campaign is a successful initiative that helps feed underprivileged children in South Africa; the campaign logo or slogan can be identified within television advertisements, on product packaging and in stores (Ngema, 2021). Kotler *et al.* (1999) believe that moral advertising to children is contradictory because food advertising to children under the age of 12 can be described as inherently immoral due to their limited understanding of persuasive intent. The moral appeal does not contain any sub-appeals.

### 2.9.2 Promotional strategies

According to Lamb, Hair and McDaniel (2017:262), a “promotional strategy is a plan for the optimal use of the elements of promotion: advertising, public relations, personal selling, sales promotion, and social media”. Promotional strategies may also be described as a set of actions and tactics designed to communicate the benefits and value of a product or service to a target audience (Thackeray, Neiger & Hanson, 2007). In essence, promotional advertising seeks to increase the demand for a specific brand or product and aims to educate, persuade or remind consumers of the advertised product (Institute of Medicine, 2006).

Push and pull promotional strategies are two different approaches that companies use to promote products (Yeshin, 2003). The push strategy focuses on pushing the product through the distribution channel towards the end consumer by utilising trade promotions, personal selling and other direct marketing tools (Brocato, 2010). This strategy is usually adopted by businesses with limited marketing budgets or those that sell low-priced products (Lamb, Hair & McDaniel, 2017). On the other hand, the pull strategy focuses on creating demand for the product or service by creating brand awareness, generating interest and encouraging customers to seek out the product (Brocato, 2010). This strategy is usually adopted by businesses with strong brand recognition or those that sell high-priced products (Lamb, Hair & McDaniel, 2017).

The work of Story and French (2004), as well as the Institute of Medicine’s (2006) published book *Food Promoting to Children and Youth: Threat or Opportunity*, are utilised to discover promotional strategies employed in unhealthy television advertisements to children. Page and Brewster (2007) identified 17 individual youth-targeted promotional strategies based on the aforementioned literature, which form a part of this study’s conceptual framework. Page and Brewster’s (2007) purpose was to identify the extent to which promotional strategies appeared in a sample of children’s food advertisements. They believed that their study had practical implications for health and nutrition educators who could use the study’s findings to create more effective nutrition and health promotion messages designed to counter the promotional strategies identified in the study.

Various studies (e.g. Wright, Friestad & Boush, 2005; Page & Brewster, 2007; Calvert, 2008; Kelly *et al.*, 2013; Jenkin *et al.*, 2014; Folkvord, Anschütz, Wiers & Buijzen, 2015) identify promotional strategies found in television advertisements targeting children. Miles and Huberman (1984) describe a conceptual framework as a map of the current territory in which the researcher works. Page and Brewster’s (2007) framework provides a clear map of the current territory involving the research phenomenon and is a vital component of this conceptual framework as it involved the analysis of 59 hours of television advertisements; the results indicate that 17 youth-targeted promotional strategies were found within television advertisements during popular viewing hours for children. The



aforementioned studies identified an average of eight promotional strategies in comparison to Page and Brewster's 17.

Page and Brewster's (2007) 17 promotional strategies are cross-selling (five types), jingle or slogan, children shown with food, collectables, contest, celebrities, fictional characters, product identification characters, targeting of parents rather than children, implying or telling children to persuade parents into purchasing, website promotion, age targeting and gender targeting. Each promotional strategy is now elaborated upon.

**a) Cross-selling**

Cross-selling is a strategy used by marketers with the hopes of persuading customers into purchasing ancillary items (Institute of Medicine, 2006). Ancillary items are complementary add-ons that are incorporated within the purchase of the primary item (Institute of Medicine, 2006). For example, a McDonald's Happy Meal is advertised as a promotion targeted to children and the meal comes with a toy (an ancillary product); therefore, this can be identified as a form of cross-selling. Page and Brewster's (2007) study identifies five commonly used cross-selling methods, namely movie tie-ins, television show tie-ins, toy tie-ins, food tie-ins, and other product tie-ins.

**b) Jingle or slogan**

A jingle can be referred to as a brief song or piece of music that promotes a specific product. Jingles are typically displayed within television advertisements aimed at children or within radio advertisements (Institute of Medicine, 2006). On the other hand, slogans are short catchphrases that may be utilised to draw attention to the product or brand's unique characteristics (Institute of Medicine, 2006). However, many food companies combine slogans with jingles. For example, the Rice Krispies slogan 'Snap, Crackle and Pop' is often incorporated within the brands' jingles.

**c) Children shown with food**

Advertisers depict happy children in food advertisements as it creates a desire to purchase and experience a similar type of joy that the advertisement exudes (Page & Brewster, 2007). By depicting children within advertisements, brands create the feeling of a family-orientated environment (Page & Brewster, 2007).

**d) Collectables**

Collectable toys have been associated with promoting unhealthy foods to children over the past five decades (Institute of Medicine, 2006). Research indicates that the element of surprise and the will to collect toys have a strong emotional pull over children (Institute of Medicine, 2006). For example, Kinder Joy is an unhealthy chocolate snack that includes a surprise toy that children are required to

piece together. Kinder Joy toys are collected by children and can be traded among friends; therefore, children experience higher levels of satisfaction through the primary product and the collectable.

#### **e) Contest**

The contest strategy encourages viewers to participate in challenges, answer trivia questions or demonstrate a skill or talent to stand a chance of winning a prize (Story & French, 2004). For instance, Burger King America ran a campaign that required participants to post videos of themselves dancing to a specific song on social media while utilising the ‘Whopper Dance’ hashtag and by doing so, the participant won a burger at the price of a dollar (Schaltegger, 2020). Successful contest strategies drive brand awareness and assist in promoting products (Page & Brewster, 2007).

#### **f) Celebrities**

Celebrities are commonly used for advertising HFSS products to children, and celebrity endorsements have proven to increase sales, generate positive attitudes toward the brand, symbolise trust and increase purchase intentions among younger audiences (Packer *et al.*, 2022). According to Bragg *et al.* (2018), 76% of food advertisements that professional athletes endorse are HFSS products. However, brands have no control over an endorsed celebrity’s personal life, which may positively or negatively affect the brand’s image based on how the celebrity conducts themselves (Packer *et al.*, 2022).

#### **g) Fictional characters**

A fictional character is an animated being that brands use to promote a product, its features and benefits (Institute of Medicine, 2006). Superhero characters such as Batman and Wonder Woman can be identified as fictional characters. Children form strong emotional bonds and attachments to fictional characters from an early age (Mashwama, 2020). Fictional characters are easily identifiable, and children associate qualities of fictional characters with brands, which is a primary reason for the success of fictitious character endorsements (Mashwama, 2020).

#### **h) Product identification characters**

Product identification characters or branded spokes-characters can be defined as brand personalities depicted as characters that portray human characteristics that children resonate with (Page & Brewster, 2007). Ronald McDonald and Kellogg’s Frosted Flakes’ Tony the Tiger are examples of product identification characters. According to Page and Brewster (2007), product identification serves as a shorthand for brands and assists in developing relationships with children. Product identification characters can be found on product packaging, in grocery stores, on social media and within television advertisements. The popularity of branded spokes-characters has increased over the past decade due to the advancement of animation technologies (Mashwama, 2020).

#### **i) Targeting of parents**

Parents have control over household dietary patterns and as a result, food companies target parents due to their purchasing power (Institute of Medicine, 2006). Unhealthy food brands target parents with the hopes of gaining traction from children through exposure to the product (Institute of Medicine, 2006). Food advertisements aimed at parents usually incorporate positive nutritional appeals (to prompt a purchase), although many of the products that are aired during primetime television are high in saturated fats and sugar (Kelly *et al.*, 2019). However, unhealthy food advertisements targeted to the child consumer are more creative (Story & French, 2004).

#### **j) Children's influence over parents**

Advertisers understand that children have the power to influence parents' decision-making and as a result, food advertisements play on children's emotions by creating a deep desire for the product through various promotional strategies (Page & Brewster, 2007). There is increased competition within the food and beverage industry; therefore, brands appeal to young audiences, which has proven to lead to the repetitive nagging and pestering of parents (Smith *et al.*, 2019). Pester power can influence purchase decisions and household food environments (Lavuri & Aileni, 2021). Savvy advertisers achieve high profits by igniting the notion of pester power through television advertisements (Lavuri & Aileni, 2021).

#### **k) Website promotion**

Reputable food and beverage companies have functional websites where children access websites via smart devices to conduct research on various products and search for promotions (Page & Brewster, 2007). In addition, many fast-food franchises and grocery stores have websites that serve as online stores where customers can purchase items which are delivered to the desired destination (Gallagher, 2016). Therefore, many television advertisements direct consumers to company websites to drive sales and utilise customer data such as e-mail addresses or cell phone numbers (Gallagher, 2016).

#### **l) Gender targeting**

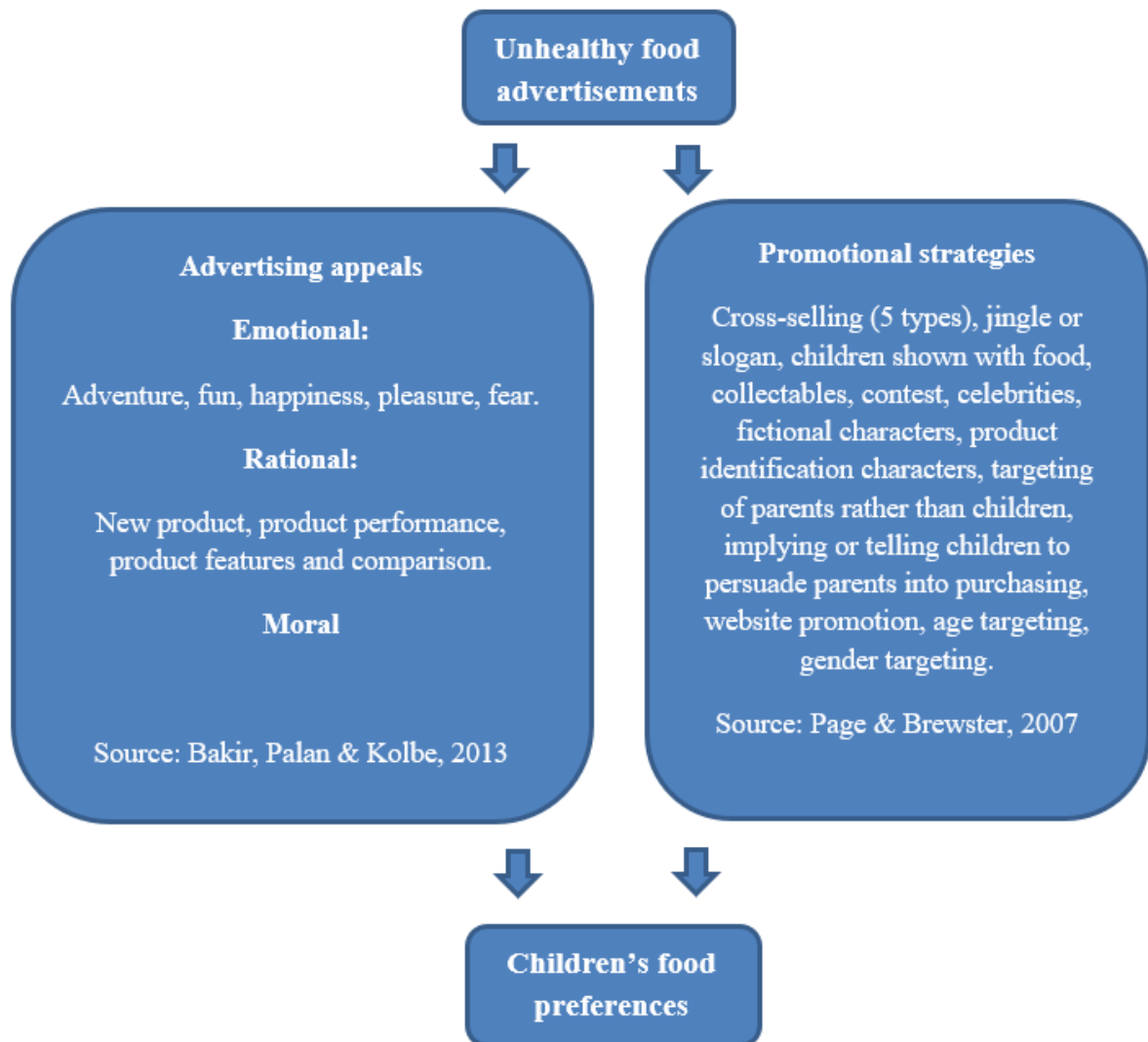
Gender stereotypes regarding food are recognised by advertisers and translated into commercials that target boys and girls in specific ways (Institute of Medicine, 2006). Castonguay and Bakir (2018) discovered that boys are the primary target audience for food advertisements. According to Castonguay and Bakir (2018), boys feature as the main character in 59% of food advertisements, whereas 10% of food advertisements include girls as the lead character. Mus, Rozas, Barnoy and Busse (2021) provide evidence suggesting that there are many gender stereotypes within food advertisements aimed at children in developed countries such as Spain, the United States and England.

### **m) Age targeting**

Advertisers target children within particular age groups based on their cognitive abilities (Stoltz, 2018). Children under the age of 12 possess limited cognitive abilities, whereas children above 12 years of age possess a stronger understanding of persuasive intent; therefore, advertising strategies tend to differ based on the target audience's age (Stoltz, 2018). Page and Brewster (2007) suggest that food advertisements aimed at children below the age of 12 contain product identification characters, fictional characters and collectables. In comparison, food advertising to teenagers incorporates strategies such as the use of celebrities, music and promotions.

### **2.9.3 Conceptual framework**

Among this study's objectives were to identify the advertising appeals and promotional strategies used in unhealthy food advertisements. A conceptual framework was constructed in order to help address these objectives. As discussed earlier in the chapter, Page and Brewster (2007) and Bakir, Palan and Kolbe (2013) identify advertising tactics (in the form of promotional strategies and advertising appeals respectively) utilised in unhealthy food advertisements aimed at the youth. These advertising tactics form an integral part of this study's conceptual framework, as they are often employed with the intention of creating a desire among children for the advertised product (Belch, 2003). To the best of the author's knowledge, previous South African studies have not explored the advertising appeals and promotional strategies used in unhealthy food advertisements using these frameworks. Therefore, establishing the advertising appeals and promotional strategies used in unhealthy food advertising, in terms of the study's conceptual framework, builds on the existing literature while adding valuable research that bridges the existing gap of knowledge that this study aims to fill.



**Figure 2.2: Conceptual framework**

Figure 2.2 exhibits the types of advertising appeals and promotional strategies utilised within unhealthy food advertising that ultimately influence children's food preferences. This figure constitutes the study's conceptual framework, which is based on Bakir, Palan and Kolbe's (2013) advertising appeals, along with Page and Brewster's (2007) promotional strategies.

## 2.10 Conclusion

This chapter focused on unhealthy food advertising to children via television. Although contemporary forms of media are growing in popularity, the literature indicates that television advertisements are an effective method for targeting children. The consumer socialisation of children was discussed within this chapter as the literature reveals that children's understanding of advertisements strengthens over time. In addition, children are active consumers with purchasing power and a strong influence on family decision-making (Smith *et al.*, 2019). The key advertising appeals and promotional strategies used within television advertisements aimed at children were identified and formed an integral part of this

chapter. The literature highlights the ineffectiveness of self-regulation in SA and emphasises the need to implement statutory regulations. The research suggests that children are exposed to an abundance of unhealthy food advertisements that influence consumption habits and purchase decisions which, according to the WHO, contributes to childhood obesity (Yamoah *et al.*, 2021; WHO, 2016).

Chapter Three focuses on providing a detailed discussion and justification of the research methodology behind this content analysis study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the methodology used in this study in order to address the research objectives, whilst also justifying the methodological choices made. As previously stated, the objectives of this study were to determine the extent of unhealthy food advertising to children in SA on both subscription and free-to-air television, as well as to identify the advertising appeals and promotional strategies found within such advertisements.

The research philosophy, methods, sample design and data analysis are critical components that aid in meeting the study's research objectives. In addition, data quality control is a fundamental component; therefore, concepts such as reliability, validity and trustworthiness are discussed in this chapter. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the ethical considerations pertinent to the study.

#### **3.2 Research philosophy**

The research philosophy refers to the underlying beliefs regarding the manner by which the data about a research phenomenon (such as unhealthy food advertising to South African children) should be collected, analysed and used (Holden & Lynch, 2004). According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), research paradigms comprise of the epistemology and ontology used by a researcher. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) add that these two elements are intertwined and often influence each other.

Blaikie (2000) refers to ontology as a set of presumptions and assertions regarding social realities and their interactions. Based on Al-Ababneh's (2020) research, ontology is concerned with the creation, comprehension and meaning of a common social reality, where the primary goal is to generate knowledge from multiple entities. Gray (2017) states that epistemology differs from ontology in the sense that it adopts more of a philosophical lens in an effort to comprehend and emphasise the truth about a phenomenon. Cohen and Bolt (2005) add that epistemology is centred upon explaining how knowledge is produced and conveyed. According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), both ontology and epistemology possess qualities that relate to an individual's worldview.

According to Holden and Lynch (2004), there are several research philosophies; however, the most popular are positivism and interpretivism. Both philosophies are discussed further as they are pertinent to this mixed-methods study. Ryan (2018) states that research philosophies are pragmatic but not mutually exclusive. Therefore, the positivist and interpretive approaches can work hand-in-hand to strengthen a study.

### **3.2.1 Positivism**

The positivist philosophy is synonymous with quantitative research as it predominantly focuses on the collection of factual information (in the form of numerical or statistical data) that is obtained through observation (Hunt, 1991). Carson, Gilmore, Perry and Gronhaug (2001) state that positive ontology is based on the premise that the world is external and that any phenomenon has a single objective reality irrespective of the researcher's views or beliefs. Therefore, researchers implement systematised methods of research by selecting strong research questions, devising logical hypotheses and selecting an appropriate research methodology (Carson *et al.*, 2001).

The investigator's role in positivist research is restricted to data collection and neutral interpretations (Park, Konge & Artino, 2020). The positivist approach aligns with this study's research objectives, which were quantitative by nature as they sought to determine the extent of unhealthy food advertising to children via television in SA, as well as the prevalence of various advertising appeals and promotional strategies in such advertising.

### **3.2.2 Interpretivism**

Interpretivism refers to epistemologies or theories regarding the manner in which researchers learn about a phenomenon and rely on interpreting, understanding or finding the meanings located within the data (Babones, 2015). According to Zahle (2021), interpretive research is associated with the qualitative research method and has the potential to yield results that strengthen the study, making it easier to comprehend than the traditional positivist approach as it is often supported by strong theoretical or conceptual foundations, which relies on identifying and describing the concepts derived from the data. The view of interpretivism regarding ontology and epistemology is that interpretivists believe in the notion of a world with multiple realities (Edirisingha, 2018). Lincoln and Guba (1985) note that this view can pose challenges in terms of interpreting fixed meaning, as the idea of a world with multiple realities depends on various systems of meaning.

The last two research objectives of this study aimed to identify the advertising appeals and promotional strategies used within unhealthy food advertisements aimed at children. Addressing these objectives relied in part on the researcher's qualitative interpretations of the text and images used in the advertisements. In addition, the research objectives were supported by a robust conceptual framework based on studies conducted by Bakir, Palan and Kolbe (2013), as well as Page and Brewster (2007). The advertisements were analysed against categories drawn from previous literature. Therefore, existing literature on the phenomenon guided the researcher when interpreting the data.



### **3.3 Research design**

A research design binds the methodological components of a research study together and can be described as a blueprint or framework for gathering, measuring and analysing data with the aim of meeting the research objectives of a study (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Lamont and White (2020) believe that research designs are considered effective when bias is reduced and maximal data pertaining to the research problem are extracted. Therefore, it is imperative that an appropriate design is selected before the research process commences. Research designs may be exploratory, causal or descriptive by nature (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

#### **3.3.1 Causal research**

Causal research may also be referred to as explanatory or experimental research and can be described as conclusive research that aims to identify a cause-and-effect relationship among variables (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Causal research does not only identify the cause-and-effect relationship between variables but seeks to investigate the bond between variables (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). For example, a marketing manager may want to establish whether the increase in a company's advertising budget will improve sales. Therefore, the manager seeks to establish the relationship between the variables, which, in this example, refers to the advertising budget and the improvement of sales.

#### **3.3.2 Exploratory research**

As the name indicates, exploratory research designs aim to widely explore a phenomenon (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). According to Creswell (2014), exploratory research is generally conducted when the phenomenon has not been clearly defined or studied in-depth. In addition, exploratory research designs do not provide definitive and conclusive solutions to the proposed research questions (Creswell, 2014). For example, a study that seeks to understand the role of social media as an effective marketing channel for small to medium businesses may utilise an exploratory research design as the goal involves developing a better understanding of the phenomenon through exploration.

#### **3.3.3 Descriptive research**

Descriptive research is widely used within the natural or physical science fields but is also commonly adopted within the interdisciplinary areas of the social sciences such as socio-economics and marketing (Silva, 2017). A descriptive research design was utilised within this research study as the primary goal of descriptive research is to describe a phenomenon and its characteristics by identifying trends or categories (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016) such as, in the case of this study, types of advertising appeals and promotional strategies. Descriptive research aims to accurately and validly provide an in-depth

description of the variables or characteristics that are relevant to the study's research questions and objectives (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

According to Williams (2007), descriptive research builds on exploratory research, whereby quantitative and qualitative methods may be implemented within a single study. This study explored the extent to which unhealthy food is advertised to children by describing the characteristics (advertising appeals and promotional strategies) of television advertisements during children's viewing times. Unlike causal or experimental research, the researcher does not manipulate or influence the variables as they are assessed in their natural setting or environment (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

### **3.4 Research approach**

Quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods research are the three most popular approaches to conducting research (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). These approaches are outlined below.

#### **3.4.1 Quantitative methods**

According to Kumar (2018), quantitative research attempts to explain a phenomenon by gathering, quantifying and presenting numeric or statistical data. Creswell (2014) states that one of the primary goals of a quantitative study is for the researcher to be able to extrapolate their findings to a larger population. Another goal of this form of research is usually based on measuring and quantifying social reality; therefore, quantitative research questions are created to find and establish the extent of a particular occurrence (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

#### **3.4.2 Qualitative methods**

According to Hanson and Grimmer (2007), qualitative research aims to present explanations for social occurrences and is focused on establishing ways in which society perceives reality. In addition, qualitative research focuses on analysing or observing the target population without manipulating any of the variables, with the goal of building upon existing theories and notions or formulating new theories (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). It was first implemented within the field of social science and is now commonly adopted within the field of marketing to help inform market research or add to existing literature (Hanson & Grimmer, 2007). Intangible aspects including gender roles, socioeconomic position, social norms, ethnicity and religion can also be identified using qualitative methodologies (Hammarberg, Kirkman & De Lacey, 2016).

According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is distinguished by the availability of contextual data in the form of interviews, questionnaires, focus groups and the analysis of texts in the form of videos, written text, symbols or language. These are common methods of gathering information. Williams

(2007) identifies five types of qualitative research, namely, grounded theory studies, phenomenological studies, case studies, ethnography studies and content analysis studies.

This study undertook a content analysis of TV advertisements, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative aspects, as explained in the next section. Content analysis is elaborated upon in Section 3.6.4.

### 3.4.3 Mixed methods

Creswell and Plano Clark (2017) describe mixed methods research as a process that includes investigative and philosophical notions. Therefore, the combination of qualitative and quantitative data in a study is referred to as the mixed methods approach. According to McKim (2017), mixed methods research is based on the premise that merging quantitative and qualitative approaches improves the understanding of the research problem and objectives through the use of different types of data. McKim (2017) adds that this cannot be accomplished by utilising either method individually. Moreover, mixed methods research also aids in the development of broader skill sets among researchers and is growing in popularity within the field of marketing research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

Morce (2009) states that the mixed methods approach is complex as it goes beyond simply collecting or tabulating quantitative and qualitative data. However, a key advantage of the mixed methods approach is that it allows the researcher to utilise the strengths and limit the weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative research methods by merging inductive and deductive logic via abductive reasoning (Williams, 2007). The three approaches vary in a number of ways (Creswell, 2014), as outlined in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1: The key differences between the three research methods**

Quantitative Methods	Mixed Methods	Qualitative Methods
Pre-determined	Both predetermined and emerging methods	Emerging methods
Instrument based questions	Both open and closed-ended questions	Open-ended questions
Performance data, attitude data, observational data, and census data	Multiple forms of data drawing on all possibilities	Interview data, observation data, document data, and audio-visual data
Statistical analysis	Statistical and text analysis	Text and image analysis
Statistical interpretation	Across databases interpretation	Themes, patterns interpretation

**Source: Creswell, 2014:15**

This study followed a mixed methods research approach as it equipped the researcher with the necessary tools to meet the study's research objectives. A quantitative component was linked to all four of this study's objectives, which involved determining the frequency of unhealthy food advertising to children in South Africa, comparing the extent of unhealthy food advertising on subscription versus free-to-air television, establishing the frequency of the use of various advertising appeals, and establishing the frequency of use of various promotional strategies. The qualitative component of the study involved the analysis and interpretation of the text and images of the television advertisements for unhealthy foods in order to identify the underlying promotional strategies and advertising appeals used. Therefore, the qualitative component is related primarily to the third and fourth research objectives. Hence, adopting a mixed methods approach in this study enabled all the study's objectives to be addressed appropriately.

### **3.5 Sample design**

A sample design can be described as an overall strategy for selecting a representative sample from a population (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). Bell, Bryman and Harley (2022) define sampling as the process of selecting a representative sample or subset of the entire population of interest. It refers to the procedures used by the researcher to select components that relate to the sample. The elements that made up the sample design are target population, sampling techniques, sample and sample size.

#### **3.5.1 Target population**

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009:212) define a target population as "the full set of cases from which a sample is taken". In addition, the target population refers to an entire group that the researcher would like to extract data from, whereas the sample refers to a specific group or subset of the population from which data is actually extracted (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

This study involved the analysis of advertisements that are displayed on South African television stations. The television channels selected for this study were SABC 1 and M-Net (channel 101). SABC 1 is the most popular free-to-air channel with an average reach of 9.6 million viewers and M-Net is one of the most popular subscription-based channels with an average reach of 1.1 million viewers (SABC Sales, 2020). M-Net is accessible via a DStv premium subscription which costs a minimum of R779 per month, whereas SABC 1 can be accessed for free (DStv, 2021). SABC 1 has an audience that comprises of middle-to-low-income households, whereas M-Net has a middle-to-high-income audience (Business Tech, 2019).

In terms of advertising to children in SA, previous content analyses such as those conducted by Delport (2015), Maikoo (2016) and Yamoah *et al.* (2021) sampled free-to-air channels only. The major differential between this study and other South African studies is that this study incorporated a popular subscription-based channel (M-Net) as well as a free-to-air channel (SABC 1). Therefore, this study's

target population comprised all advertisements aired on M-Net and SABC 1 during popular viewing hours for children.

The primary aim of incorporating one free-to-air channel and one subscription-based channel into this study was to establish the extent of free-to-air television advertisements compared to subscription-based advertisements. As mentioned in the previous chapter, low-income households may have access to television but are often restricted to free-to-air television, which typically airs more advertisements than subscription-based channels (Peitz & Valletti, 2008). In addition, incorporating a free-to-air and subscription-based channel limits exclusivity as the television viewer demographics of each channel indicate that the socio-economic backgrounds of viewers differ (Otitoola *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, a fair representation of the South African population was facilitated by incorporating one free-to-air channel and one subscription-based channel within this study.

### **3.5.2 Sample**

A sample refers to the subgroup of a population and is utilised to make inferences about the target population (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022). According to Andrade (2020), samples are highly effective as they can be described as inexpensive, practical and controllable. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) suggest that, in most cases, it is impractical for researchers to collect data from an entire population and strongly advise researchers to select appropriate samples regardless of the chosen data collection method.

As mentioned previously, the target population for this study all advertisements aired on M-Net and SABC 1 during popular viewing hours for children. The sample comprised all advertisements aired on these two channels from 4 May 2022 to 17 May 2022 during popular viewing hours for children.

Yamoah *et al.* (2021) found that child-focused television content is aired during the 15:00 to 17:00 hour period on weekdays, and the 17:00 to 19:00 hour period is targeted to the entire family, including young children. Preedy, Watson and Martin (2011) state that unhealthy food advertisements aimed at young children are aired more regularly on weekends than on weekdays, particularly between 8:00 to 11:00 on Saturday and Sunday mornings. Therefore, recording took place between 15:00 and 18:00 on weekdays and between 8:00 and 11:00 on weekends, resulting in a total of 41 recorded hours over the course of ten weekdays and two weekends (four days). In addition, the recording of advertisements on M-Net and SABC 1 was conducted on alternate days. A total of one hour was lost due to a 30-minute technical error on day 12, a 20-minute connectivity error on day one and a 10-minute connectivity error on day 10. A total of 627 advertisements formed the sample; this included all advertisements, not just those related to unhealthy foods. Duplicate advertisements were tabulated when calculating the total number of advertisements in the data set; however, each advertisement was only analysed once.

### **3.5.3 Sampling techniques**

Bell, Bryman and Harley (2022) pinpoint two primary sampling techniques, identified as probability and non-probability sampling. Zikmund, Babin and Griffin (2013:392) define probability sampling as “a sampling technique in which every member of the population has a known, non-zero probability of selection”. The most common type of probability sampling is simple random sampling, in which each member or unit of the population has an equal chance of being chosen (Zikmund, Babin & Griffin, 2013). Alternatively, non-probability sampling relies on the researcher’s judgement when selecting sample units (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). This study utilised the non-probability sampling method. The major advantage of non-probability sampling is that it allows the researcher to target specific data sources within the population in a cost-effective manner (Raina, 2015). Sekaran and Bougie (2016) identify three common types of non-probability sampling, which are identified and explained below.

#### **3.5.3.1 Convenience sampling**

Convenience sampling is a technique that involves the collection of data from an easily accessible pool of respondents or data sources (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022). According to Clark (2017), convenience sampling is the most used non-probability sampling technique as it can be characterised as inexpensive, quick and flexible. There are no requirements for respondents’ participation, nor are there specific criteria for the selection of data sources (Clark, 2017). Therefore, the entire population are eligible to participate in a research study where this sampling technique is applied.

#### **3.5.3.2 Quota sampling**

Quota sampling is a technique where subgroups of the target population are represented within the sample based on a set of relevant characteristics (such as age, ethnicity and gender) predetermined by the researcher (Zikmund, Babin & Griffin, 2013). Therefore, participants or data sources from the population are selected on a non-random basis, meaning that the population do not have an equal chance of selection (Zikmund, Babin & Griffin, 2013).

#### **3.5.3.3 Purposive sampling**

Purposive sampling, also referred to as judgement sampling, is a technique that consists of the selection of a sample based on the researcher’s knowledge and comprises of information sources that are deemed advantageous (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). With regard to purposive sampling, the researcher does not randomly select a sample (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan & Hoagwood, 2015). Instead, the selection of a sample is generally based on a set of predetermined characteristics that aid in the selection of a sample that yields the most relevant or appropriate data (Palinkas *et al.*, 2015). According to Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, Utriainen and Kyngäs, (2016), the purposive sampling approach is the most

employed non-probability technique within content analysis research. This study utilised the purposive sampling technique as the focus was placed on specific features of the target population.

This study involved the analysis of television advertisements displayed on one free-to-air channel and one subscription-based channel (SABC 1 and M-Net) and were selected based on the fact that they are the most popular television channels (SABC Sales, 2020). Furthermore, the scheduled time periods in which the data collection took place were selected based on the premise that they were popular viewing hours for children. In addition, this study's sample is homogenous by nature. Homogenous sampling is one of six purposive sampling techniques and refers to a sample or target population that shares similar characteristics (Benoot, Hannes & Bilsen, 2016). Therefore, this study's target population comprised of two television channels that display similar content in the form of movies, series and game shows or talk shows.

#### **3.5.4 Sample size**

The sample size is critical for determining the sample's representativeness and generalisability (Andrade, 2020). No sample design, regardless of its complexity, will be useful to the researcher in accomplishing the study's objectives unless the sample size is appropriate for the desired level of precision (Andrade, 2020). This study involved the analysis of television advertisements; therefore, the sample size (i.e. the number of advertisements analysed) pertains to the number of hours recorded. The recording of television advertisements commenced on 4 May 2022 and ended on the 17 May 2022. These specific dates were selected to bypass public holidays that took place on the first and second of May. This study involved 41 hours of data collection (recording), which is greater than some previous studies. For example, Folta, Goldberg, Economos, Bell, and Meltzer (2006) logged 28 hours of children's programming over a week. However, Kelly, Chapman, King and Hebden (2011) recorded 199 hours of television which resulted in the analysis of many more unhealthy food commercials.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

This data consisted of video content in the form of recorded television advertisements on South African television. Therefore, the data for this study was predominantly qualitative in nature. Flick (2018) identifies four common types of qualitative data analysis methods that are outlined below.

#### **3.6.1 Narrative analysis**

According to Flick (2018), narrative analysis is based on the premise that participants are storytellers who attempt to make sense of the developing world. Therefore, the narrative method involves investigating human experiences that result in the collection of narrative data, which are usually extracted through interviews, documents or observations (Flick, 2018). Within the narrative analysis

method, sample sizes are relatively small due to the time-consuming process of capturing data. Hence, it may be difficult to reproduce and test the findings of this particular method (Butina, 2015).

### **3.6.2 Discourse analysis**

Discourse analysis, like narrative analysis, is used to examine human interactions and can be applied within various disciplines (Flick, 2018). Thus, discourse analysis examines written or spoken language relative to the social context (Flick, 2018). Therefore, it refers to language analysis (such as a conversation or speech) within a specific cultural or societal setting (Flick, 2018). The researcher's core objective is to grasp the manner in which language is employed daily (Ziskin, 2019). Mogashoa (2014) believes that researchers should focus on understanding the functions and effects of languages when conducting a discourse analysis study.

### **3.6.3 Grounded theory**

Glaser and Strauss (1967) were the first to propose the grounded theory method, which may be characterised as a dynamic data analysis technique with the goal of developing a new theory or theories utilising the data gathered through a series of tests and revisions. Khan (2014) adds that researchers should approach the analysis with an open mind. The grounded theory method is based on extracting information from the data instead of drawing upon existing hypotheses, theories, or preconceived notions (Khan, 2014).

### **3.6.4 Content analysis**

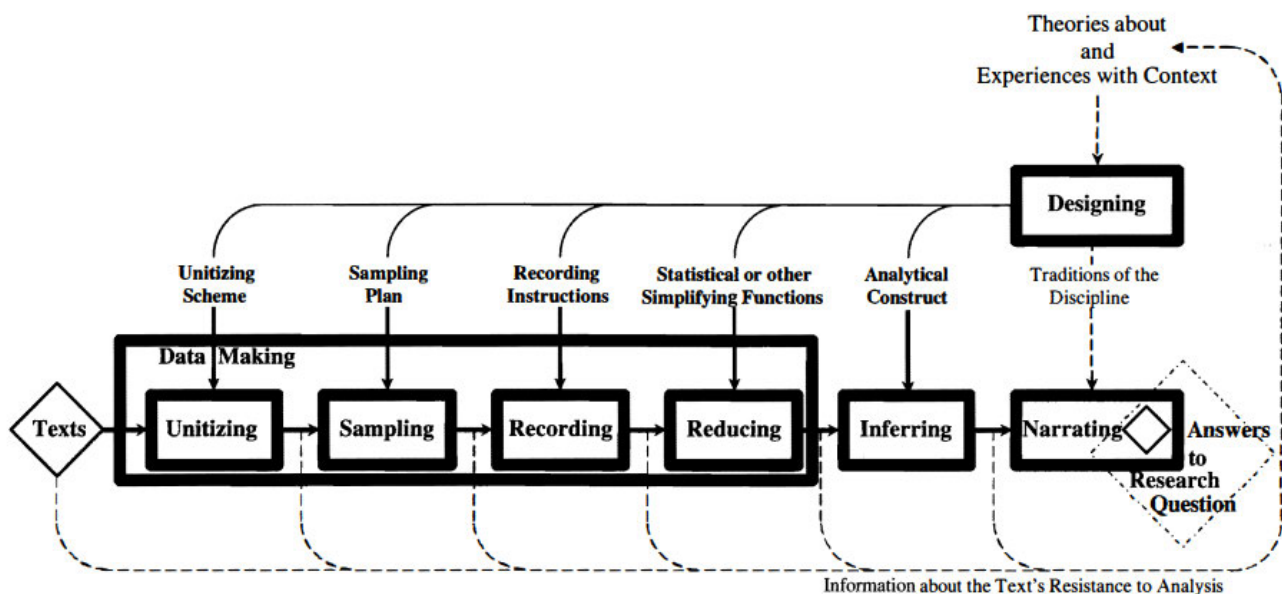
In the 1950s, the study of mass communications gave birth to the content analysis method (Neuendorf, 2017). Researchers first focused on making inferences based on the quantified analysis of common, easily identifiable features of texts based on the elementary communications model, which identifies three fundamental components known as the sender, messenger and receiver (Neuendorf, 2017). According to Krippendorff (2018), content analysis can be described as a research technique employed to generate accurate and replicable conclusions from a collection of texts, which refer to forms of written, verbal or visual modes of communication. Neuendorf (2017) believes that the popularity of content analyses is on the rise within the field of marketing as researchers have access to data through interactive media such as television, mobile phones, laptops and other smart devices, which have proven to be formidable sources of textual data.

According to Downe-Wambolt (1992:314), content analyses aim to “provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study”. Carlson, Grove and Kangun (1993) believe the content analysis method is beneficial when the study aims to establish patterns that support existing concepts or theories. Gwyer (2015) adds that content analyses are effective when research questions focus on



identifying trends, frequencies and types of advertising techniques found within texts. As this study focused on identifying trends and frequencies in advertising appeals and promotional strategies within advertisements, content analysis was considered an appropriate method.

Krippendorff (2018) established six critical components of content analysis studies that aid in turning raw data into results: unitising, sampling, recording, reducing, inferring and narrating. The first four components can be referred to as the data-making phase, which is the process of synthesising raw textual data (Krippendorff, 2018). In social sciences, data collection usually begins with the observation of written, audio or visual texts (Blake, 2021). However, Krippendorff (2018) notes that the flowchart depicted in Figure 3.1 serves as a guide to content analysts and adds that there is no specific method for conducting an objective content analysis. Each of the six components found in Figure 3.1 is further elaborated upon in the following paragraphs.



**Figure 3.1: Components of content analysis**

**Source: Krippendorff, 2018:90**

#### **a) Unitising**

Unitising refers to the systematic segmentation of textual data (Krippendorff, 2018). In addition, it is centred on identifying distinct units of analysis, which refers to the mode of communication being studied (written, oral or visual texts) (McKibben, Cade, Purgason & Wahesh, 2020). Within this content analysis study, audio-visual texts (television advertisements) were analysed.

#### **b) Sampling**

As mentioned in the previous section, sampling can be described as a process in which the researcher systematically draws a sample of units that represent a population (Krippendorff, 2018). The purposive

sampling method was implemented in this study as the focus was placed on specific features of the target population considered important by the researcher, such as the popularity and characteristics of the television channels on which the advertisements were aired (free-to-air or subscription-based; the presence of child-related content), as well as the viewing hours pertinent to child-related content.

#### **c) Recording**

The process of recording involves a cohesive classification framework for arranging textual data to provide an understanding of what is seen or found within the data and is typically followed by an assessment of the content against a theoretical or conceptual framework (Blake, 2021). This study's classification framework combined the advertising appeals and promotional strategies conceptualised by Bakir, Palan and Kolbe (2013) and Page and Brewster (2007). Therefore, the appeals and strategies found within the data were categorised and assessed based on the aforementioned literature.

#### **d) Reducing**

Krippendorff (2018) believes that data reduction assists analysts in creating efficient representations of sizable quantities of diverse data by identifying meaning through a systematic summary of the content. The raw data collected from this study included all television advertisements from various product categories. However, the construction and utilisation of a data capturing sheet (see Appendix A) assisted the researcher in accurately representing and summarising the large volume of recorded data in relation to the pre-determined categories of appeals and strategies discussed earlier.

#### **e) Inferring**

The process of inferring extends beyond the data-making phase as the aim is to mend the gap between descriptive interpretations of textual data to reveal specific provocations, orientations, connotations or causes based on evidence (Krippendorff, 2018). The data from this study revealed the popular types of advertising appeals and promotional strategies implemented within unhealthy food advertisements aimed at children. In addition, this study identified the extent of such advertising on subscription versus free-to-air television.

#### **f) Narrating**

Narrating refers to the meticulous recording of results and is a popular form of reporting where the format is centred on coding categories (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen & Snelgrove, 2016). In addition, it involves the depiction and explanation of results in a comprehensible manner (Krippendorff, 2018). This can include describing the findings' practical implications or how they contribute to the existing research. Furthermore, it could necessitate advocating that content analysis be used instead of direct

observational techniques (Krippendorff, 2018). The results of this study were depicted in a concise manner, through visual and narrative depictions and interpretations of the data.

#### **3.6.4.1 Quantitative and qualitative content analysis**

Content analysis is a versatile method that typically involves the examination of open-ended data and may be utilised in a range of disciplines, ranging from medicine to commerce (Kleinheksel, Rockich-Winston, Tawfik & Wyatt, 2020). It is a multi-dimensional analysis method that can be applied to qualitative and quantitative research studies. Both research designs require the categorisation of concepts or themes, followed by an analysis of results where conclusions are drawn (Kleinheksel *et al.*, 2020). This study involved the analysis of qualitative data in the form of recorded television advertisements. However, a combination of quantitative and qualitative content analysis methods was used to analyse, interpret and depict the results.

Content analyses that aim to quantify the existence of categories, concepts, phrases or words from a dataset are quantitative in nature. The quantitative content analysis method employs both visual and written forms of analysis and can contain a variety of illustrations such as graphs or charts (Krippendorff, 2018). According to Pillay (2019), the combination of written texts and images conveys greater clarity in tandem than alone. All four research objectives contained quantitative elements in that they involved tabulating and depicting the frequency of specific codes or categories in the dataset. Addressing the first objective involved counting the total number of unhealthy food advertisements, the second involved comparing the number of such advertisements across free-to-air and subscription television, the third involved determining the prevalence of various types of advertising appeals and the fourth involved determining the prevalence of various types of promotional strategies.

Harwood and Garry (2003) state that qualitative data, compared to quantitative data, is multifaceted and diverse within the field of marketing research. A wide range of data sources are available to the qualitative researcher, including data extraction from observations (visual or audio), focus groups, completed questionnaires, or interviews (Lock & Seele, 2015).

Kleinheksel *et al.* (2020) state that qualitative content analyses are based on the idea that texts are rich data sources capable of revealing pertinent information regarding a specific phenomenon. Qualitative content analysis involves a systematic description and categorisation of the various themes, appeals, concepts or trends found within the qualitative data. Scholars (Berelson, 1952; Krippendorff, 2018; Blake, 2021) believe that this is the heart of the qualitative analysis method. According to Berelson (1952:147), “content analysis stands or falls by its categories ... since the categories contain the substance of the investigation, a content analysis can be no better than its system of categories”. This study sought to establish the advertising appeals and promotional strategies found within unhealthy food advertisements aimed at children, using categories drawn from accepted existing frameworks.

Hsieh and Shannon (2005) identify three approaches to qualitative content analysis studies: conventional, directed and summative. They state that conventional content analysis is often employed when a study aims to describe an under-researched phenomenon. In this case, researchers do not use predetermined categories but rather allow categories to emerge from the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Researchers who utilise the directed content analysis method begin by defining major variables, concepts or keywords as primary coding categories based on theoretical backgrounds or conceptual frameworks (Kibiswa, 2019). Therefore, this study utilised the directed approach as Bakir, Palan and Kolbe's (2013) advertising appeals and Page and Brewster's (2007) promotional strategies formed the underlying conceptual framework of this study. However, in addition to the given definitions of these advertising appeals and promotional strategies (see Table 3.2), the analysis of the unhealthy food advertisements also required the researcher's interpretation of text and/or images from the advertisements, to determine the types of appeals and strategies used. As such, the analysis involved both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative approach involved counting the extent of the various codes or categories (i.e. appeals and strategies) in the sample, while the qualitative approach involved interpreting the text or images of the advertisements to identify supporting evidence for specific codes or categories. Finally, the summative approach involves counting and comparing specific words or phrases and is followed by interpreting the underlying context of those words or concepts (Shaw, 2020).

In summary, the quantitative component of this content analysis laid a strong foundation by establishing the extent to which unhealthy food advertisements are aired on South African television channels during popular viewing hours for children. By contrast, the qualitative component of this study involved an in-depth analysis of the various advertising appeals and promotional strategies found in unhealthy food advertisements.

### **3.6.5 Development of the data capturing sheet**

Data capturing sheets are used to collect, organise and ultimately make sense of raw data to turn it into meaningful information that contributes to the findings and results of a study (Wutich & Brewis, 2019). According to Hessing (2014), data capturing sheets allow researchers to conduct a systematic analysis by organising data timeously and efficiently. Hessing (2014) adds that a data capturing sheet simplifies the data collection process as the categorisation of information is uncomplicated.

All advertisements were organised and analysed using the data capturing sheet in Appendix A. The data capturing sheet was developed to accurately capture raw data presented through recorded television advertisements. The sheet consisted of two tables. The first table was used to capture contextual information in the form of the date, time, television channel, brand, product category and a description of the advertisement. The data gathered in the first table allowed the researcher to tabulate and illustrate

the types of product categories advertised and more specifically, determine the extent to which unhealthy food advertisements are displayed on television during popular viewing hours for children. In addition, non-food-related advertisements were not assessed further than the first table depicted in Appendix A, as the focus of this study was on food advertising.

The second table in the data capturing sheet was used to first determine the types of unhealthy or healthy foods advertised. The determination of healthy or unhealthy foods in the study was based on the UK's nutrient profile model, which is used by the UK's Office of Communication to limit unhealthy food advertising to children (Public Health England, 2018). The model is considered one of the top three in Europe by the WHO (WHO, 2015). Since South Africa does not have a similar model, the UK's model was used in the study to determine unhealthy foods, which are those high in saturated fat, salt, and sugar.

Food advertisements that were deemed healthy were not analysed further as this study sought to determine the types of advertising appeals and promotional strategies found within unhealthy food advertisements targeted at children. Therefore, after determining whether the advertisement was categorised as healthy or unhealthy, all unhealthy food advertisements were categorised into columns representing the types of advertising appeals and promotional strategies used. Bakir, Palan and Kolbe's (2013) advertising appeals and sub-appeals were utilised along with Page and Brewster's (2007) promotional strategies. The previous chapter defined and discussed the advertising appeals and promotional strategies utilised within this study. Table 3.2 below provides definitions of the categories used in this study. It is worth noting that there is no definition provided for healthy foods as this category included all advertisements that were not deemed unhealthy. In addition, the second table in the data capturing sheet allowed for capturing notes about the aspects of the advertisement that supported the allocated advertising appeal and promotional strategy.

**Table 3.2: Definition of categories used in this study**

Category	Definition	Source
Unhealthy foods	Foods that are high in saturated fat, salt and sugar.	Public Health England (2018)
Advertising appeals		
Emotional appeal	Relates to a consumer's psychological or social need to acquire a product.	Bakir, Palan and Kolbe (2013)
Rational appeal	Highlights attributes of a product and the advantages or motives for purchasing the desired product.	Bakir, Palan and Kolbe (2013)
Moral appeal	Designed to stimulate an audience's sense of integrity by linking products to social causes.	Kotler <i>et al.</i> (1999)
Sub-appeals		
Adventure	Used when targeting audiences that have a desire for thrill-seeking and is implemented with the aim of increasing consumers' sense of excitement.	Kotler <i>et al.</i> (1999)
Fun	Advertisements that depict a joyful environment coupled with emotions of delight and pleasure.	Belch (2003)

Happiness	Seeks to evoke feelings of happiness and positivity through the consumer's experience or association to the advertised product.	Belch (2003)
Pleasure	Emphasises the satisfaction one gains through the use or purchase of the product.	Bakir, Palan and Kolbe (2013)
Fear	Used with the intention of scaring the target audience by illustrating a dangerous or potentially harmful threat.	Bakir, Palan and Kolbe (2013)
New product	Where emphasis is placed on the introduction of a new product.	Bakir, Palan and Kolbe (2013)
Product performance	Where emphasis is placed on the product's specific capabilities.	Bakir, Palan and Kolbe (2013)
Product features	Emphasises the unique characteristics and qualities of a product to persuade consumers to purchase.	Belch (2003)
<b>Promotional strategies</b>		
Cross-selling	Cross-selling is a strategy used by marketers with the hopes of persuading customers into purchasing ancillary items.	Institute of Medicine (2006)
Jingle/slogan	A jingle can be referred to as a brief song or piece of music that promotes a specific product. Slogans are short catchphrases that may be utilised to draw attention to the product or brand's unique characteristics.	Institute of Medicine (2006)
Children shown with food	Advertisers depict happy children within food advertisements as it creates a desire to purchase.	Page and Brewster (2007)
Collectables	Represent a single component of a complete toy set obtained through a product purchase.	Page and Brewster (2007)
Contest	Used to encourage viewers to participate in challenge to stand a chance of winning a prize.	(Story & French, 2004)
Celebrities	Famous individuals used in advertisements to generate positive attitudes toward the brand.	Packer <i>et al.</i> (2022)
Fictional characters	Animated being that brands use to promote a product, its features and benefits.	Institute of Medicine (2006)
Product identification characters	Brand personalities depicted as characters that portray human characteristics that children resonate with.	Page and Brewster (2007)
Targeting of parents	Advertisement aimed specifically at parents, rather than children.	Page and Brewster (2007)
Children influencing parents	Where brands appeal directly to young audiences creating a strong desire for their products leading to the nagging of parents.	Page & Brewster, (2007)
Website promotion	Where the audience is directed to the company's website to drive sales.	Gallagher (2016)
Gender targeting	The practice of delivering advertisements to specific gender segments within a target audience	Institute of Medicine (2006)
Age targeting	The practice of delivering advertisements to specific age segments within a target audience.	Institute of Medicine (2006)

Data quality control is a vital component of the methodology chapter and is thoroughly discussed in the next section.

### 3.7 Data quality control

Walby and Luscombe (2017) describe quality control as the efforts and procedures used by researchers to ensure that the gathered data is of high quality through accurate analysis and interpretation. Quality control may also be referred to as quality assurance or quality management and may aid in detecting, reducing and correcting any drawbacks relating to the data collection and analysis components of studies that utilise the content analysis method (Walby & Luscombe, 2017). In addition, the process of

quality control strives to achieve consistency throughout research projects by ensuring a coherent correlation between the literature, methodology and outcomes of a study (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

In quantitative research, data quality control and the overall quality of research are synonymous with two concepts known as reliability and validity (Kleinheksel *et al.*, 2020). However, qualitative studies ensure that data quality is attained through trustworthiness (Kleinheksel *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, reliability, validity and trustworthiness are concepts that will be further elaborated upon as the study comprised both quantitative and qualitative aspects.

### **3.7.1 Reliability and validity**

Reliability refers to the consistency of measures used within the analysis (Golafshani, 2003). The measurement is considered reliable if the same or similar outcome is achieved twice when tested using the same research methods and processes in the same setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Validity refers to how accurately and appropriately the data pertaining to the research phenomenon is measured (Golafshani, 2003). Furthermore, validity aids in determining the accuracy of the methodology, sampling procedure, data analysis and research outcome (Golafshani, 2003). Smith (1984) asserts that the concept of validity should not exist when analysing qualitative or textual data. However, Johnson (1997) states that it should be considered and proposes a construct for understanding validity in its descriptive, theoretical, interpretive, internal and external facets. Regarding quantitative data analyses, reliability and validity are considered separately, while in qualitative research, these are intertwined (Elo *et al.*, 2014).

The categories used in this study (e.g. healthy foods, unhealthy foods, and the various promotional strategies and advertising appeals) were precisely defined before the data collection and analysis process commenced, in order for the advertisements to be correctly classified during the analysis process and to facilitate similar outcomes should other researchers try to replicate the study. In addition, a deductive codebook was utilised. A codebook consists of a list of categories that are clearly defined and may include pertinent examples that may be used to guide the researcher (DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall & McCulloch, 2010). The use of a codebook helped to ensure that reliability and validity were achieved.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness is the term utilised when ensuring that the process of qualitative data collection and analysis is both reliable and valid.

### **3.7.2 Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness can be described as the level of assurance found in the data, data analysis and techniques used to ensure that the quality of a qualitative study is upheld (Connelly, 2016). Although researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2000; Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Kleinheksel *et al.*, 2020)



agree that trustworthiness is an essential component when gathering and interpreting quality information, there are differences of opinions regarding the elements representing trustworthiness.

According to Connelly (2016) and Amankwaa (2016), researchers have predominantly used Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for evaluating and ensuring trustworthiness within studies that adopt the qualitative content analysis approach to research. This study was largely qualitative in nature and involved the analysis of qualitative data; therefore, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria were implemented. According to these authors, credibility, dependability, conformability, and transferability are the four pillars that form the criteria for attaining trustworthiness.

### **3.7.2.1 Credibility**

The credibility of a study refers to confidence in the truth, which in turn validates the findings of a study (Elo *et al.*, 2014). Therefore scholars (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Connelly, 2016) label this component as the principal criterion for establishing rigour and trustworthiness. Connelly (2016) adds that it is imperative for researchers to ensure that the data sources are rich in information but, above all, are credible. The two data sources utilised within this study are among the most popular television channels on South African television, with a combined reach of 60 million viewers (UNICEF, 2020). In addition, this study is centred on unhealthy food advertising to children specifically; therefore, advertisements were recorded during prime-time viewing hours for children, ensuring credibility. The advertising appeals and promotional strategies found within the recorded data were analysed deductively as they were categorised based on accepted categories identified in existing research.

### **3.7.2.2 Dependability**

Dependability is similar to the concept of reliability in quantitative research (Elo *et al.*, 2014). It can be described as the constancy and stability of data over time to evaluate the quality of the data collection and analysis process (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). All the recorded television advertisements were scanned and rechecked to reduce possible errors when the data was recorded and categorised. This made it possible for the researcher to repeatedly view the recorded advertisements to ensure that the coding was correct. Moreover, the use of a codebook during the data analysis phase, along with pretesting, contributed to the overall dependability of the study. In addition, a pre-test took place, whereby another individual coded four hours of recorded advertisements. The pre-test allowed for a comparison between advertisements coded by the researcher and advertisements coded by the individual who conducted the pre-test. At the conclusion of the pre-test, there was an intercoder agreement of 92%. It was found that the differences were related to the definitions of three advertising appeals (happiness, fun and pleasure). As a result, the three concepts were defined more clearly in the codebook. In summary, the pre-test helped alert the researcher to definitions of codes that were previously unclear.



### **3.7.2.3 Conformability**

The extent to which other researchers can validate or corroborate outcomes can be referred to as confirmability (Elo *et al.*, 2014). Ultimately, conformability seeks to produce information that accurately represents the data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Confirmability can be enhanced in a variety of ways. Throughout the investigation, researchers can document the processes and techniques for checking and rechecking the gathered data (Connelly, 2016). With reference to the current study, all advertisements were examined and stored on an external hard drive to facilitate categorising and cross-checking advertisements during the analysis. The process followed in collecting, organising and analysing the data, which was set out in detail to enable corroboration.

### **3.7.2.4 Transferability**

Polit and Beck (2012) describe transferability as the process where findings may be shifted to other research, environments or individuals. Although authors may provide suggestions concerning transferability, readers are advised to use their discretion and personal judgement to decide whether the presented results are transferrable to other settings or environments (Chibwe, 2017). The research setting was described in detail to help such a decision be made.

## **3.8 Ethical considerations**

According to Nair (2020), ethical difficulties might arise in any element of research. As a result, it is critical for researchers to follow ethical guidelines. Although no human participants were involved in this study, ethical clearance or exemption was sought from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The approval letter can be found in Appendix C.

For desktop studies involving the analysis of secondary data, a potential ethical issue relates to the use of sensitive, private or confidential data. In this study, however, only data that was freely available in the public domain was used. SABC 1 and M-Net, the two data sources for this study, are available to the South African public.

## **3.9 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed and justified the research methodology adopted in the study. Critical elements such as the research philosophy, purpose and objectives, research methods, sample design and data analysis were highlighted. In summary, a mixed-methods research design was implemented, and the content analysis method was employed to best meet the study's research objectives. The data was collected from a free-to-air channel (SABC 1) and a subscription-based channel (M-Net) during popular viewing hours for children. This study involved the analysis of 41 hours of recorded television, where

a total of 627 advertisements formed the sample. Data quality measures and ethical considerations were also described.

The following chapter presents and discusses the findings extracted from the data.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

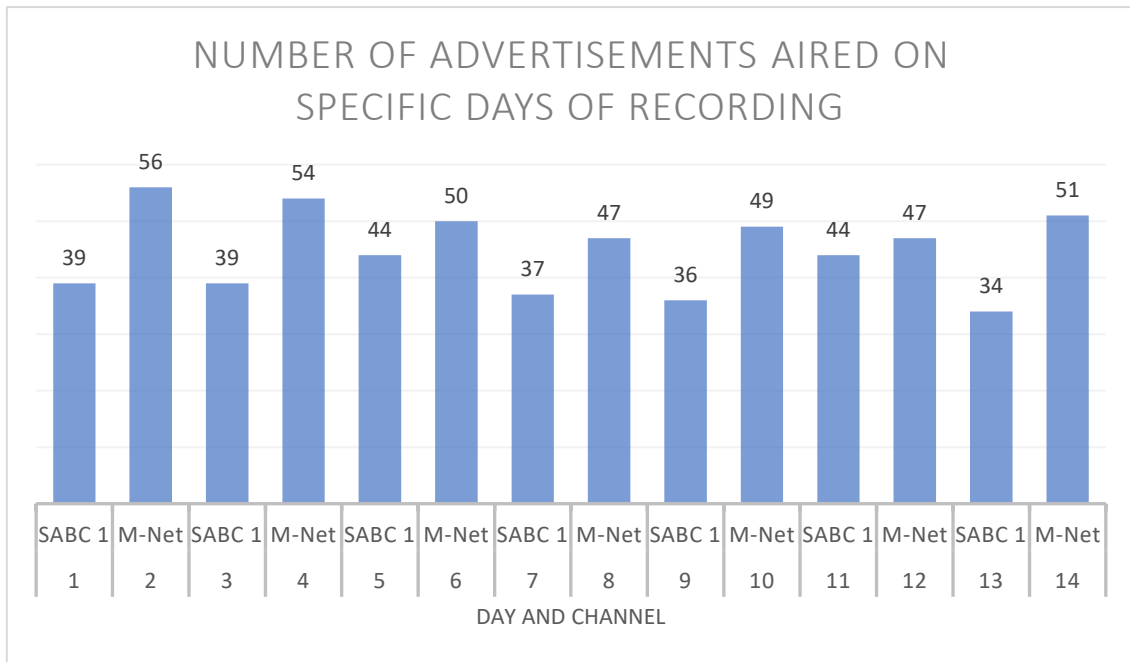
This chapter involves the presentation, description and discussion of this study's findings. The chapter begins with an overview of the data set. Thereafter, the findings derived from this data are provided. The presentation and description of the findings begin with an overview of the scope of unhealthy food advertising to children. The focus then shifts to the number of unhealthy food advertisements aired on free-to-air versus subscription-based television. This is followed by the findings of a deductive content analysis, which was implemented in order to identify the advertising appeals and promotional strategies used in unhealthy food advertisements. An analysis of each advertisement is presented individually, followed by a summative look at the advertising appeals and promotional strategies found in the unhealthy food advertisements overall. The findings are then discussed in relation to the research objectives.

#### **4.2 Overview of the data set**

Television advertisements were recorded over a 14-day period on SABC 1 (free-to-air) and M-Net (subscription). The recordings for each channel were carried out on alternate days, resulting in seven days of recording per channel. In addition, recording took place between 15:00 to 17:00 on weekdays and 17:00 to 19:00 on weekends, as these were identified as peak viewing hours for children (Yamoah *et al.*, 2021).

In total, 41 hours of television were recorded over the specified timeframe. The recordings included a total of 627 advertisements. (It should be noted that this includes all advertisements, not just those related to unhealthy foods).

Figure 4.1 displays a breakdown of the total number of advertisements aired by day. It was found that in total (i.e. over the entire recording period), 273 advertisements were flighted on SABC 1 and 354 on M-Net. It is evident that a similar number of advertisements was flighted on the respective channels, although more advertisements were aired on M-Net.



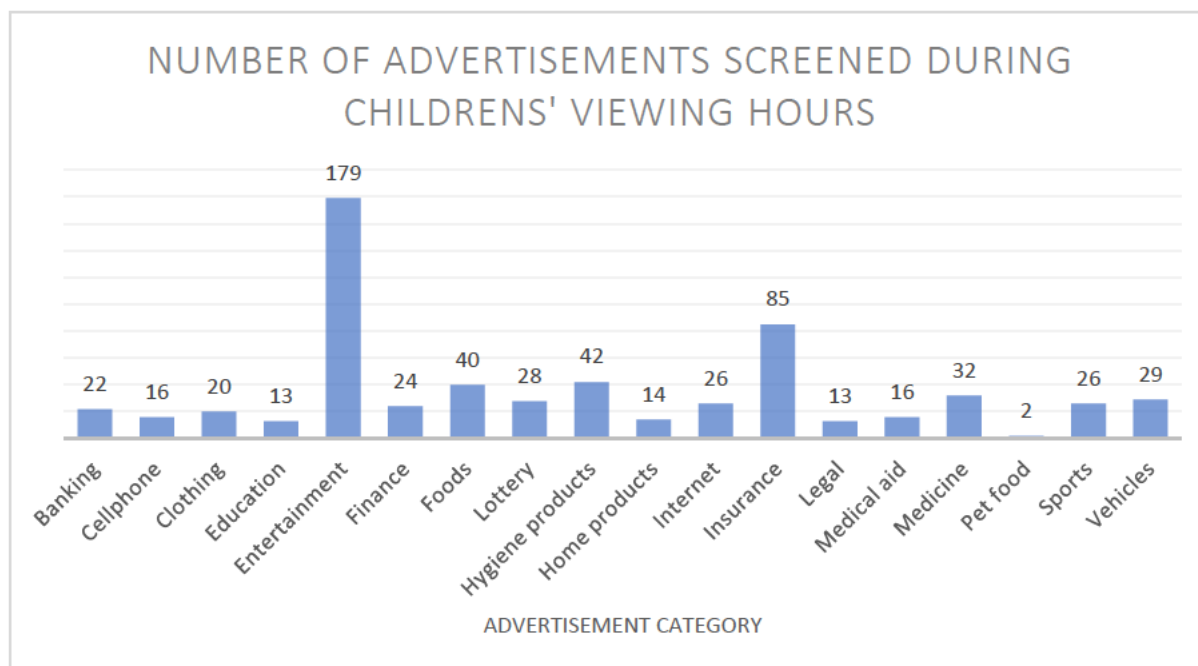
**Figure 4.1: Number of advertisements aired on specific days of recording**

### 4.3 Findings

#### 4.3.1 Scope of unhealthy food advertising during children's television viewing hours

As mentioned previously, a total of 627 advertisements were aired over the 41 hours of recorded television. This figure includes repeated flightings, as this reflects what the audience would have actually been exposed to (i.e. repeat exposures). Moreover, authors such Mchiza *et al.* (2013) and Maikoo (2016) included repeat advertisements in their research.

This total of 627 advertisements includes all food-related and non-food-related advertisements screened over the 14 consecutive days (during the 41 recorded hours of television). The various categories of advertisements screened, and the number of advertisements in each category, are presented in Figure 4.2.



**Figure 4.2: Number of advertisements (per category) screened during children’s viewing hours**

As depicted in Figure 4.2, 179 of the 627 advertisements fell into the entertainment category (which made it the category with the most flightings). The insurance category was the category with the second highest flightings (85 advertisements) and the pet food category was the lowest, with a mere two flightings. The remainder of the categories ranged from 10 to 30 flightings, respectively.

The advertisements were first categorised into food-related and non-food-related advertisements (as depicted in Figure 4.2). Thereafter, the food-related advertisements were further split into healthy and unhealthy categories, and all unhealthy food advertisements were analysed further.

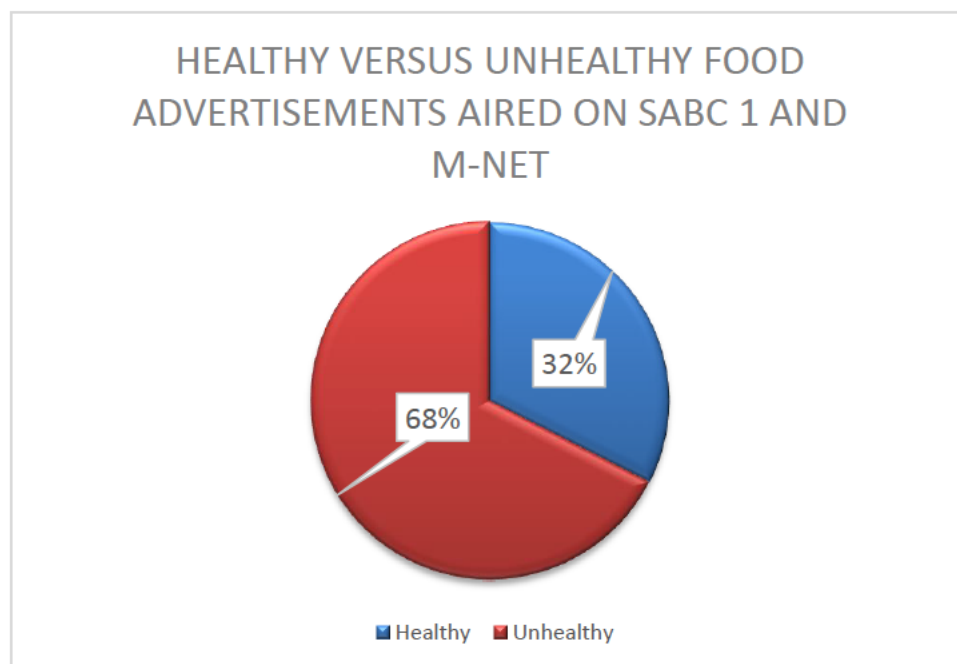
At the conclusion of the first stage of the analysis, a total of 40 (6%) food-related (healthy and unhealthy) advertisements were identified among the 627 advertisements. In comparison, the combined average of all food advertisements found in studies conducted by Maikoo (2016) and Yamoah *et al.* (2021) was 55%.

The 40 food advertisements were then divided between healthy and unhealthy foods in the second stage of analysis. The healthy foods category comprised of all advertisements that were not deemed unhealthy. It emerged that 32% (13) of food advertisements comprised of healthy foods, while 68% (27) comprised of unhealthy foods. Repetitions were included in the calculation.

The determination of healthy or unhealthy foods were based on the United Kingdom’s (UK’s) nutrient profile model. This model provides detailed guidelines on food advertising and is successfully applied by the UK’s Office of Communication, which monitors the types of content circulated through various

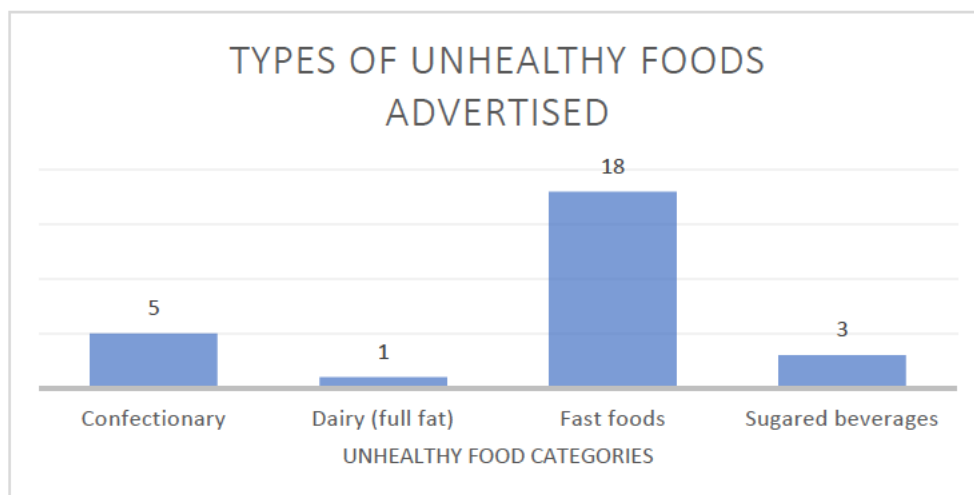
kinds of media such as television and social media, with the aim of limiting unhealthy food advertising to children (Public Health England, 2018). According to the WHO (2015), the UK's nutrient profile model ranks among the top three in Europe alongside the Danish and Norwegian models. In addition, SA does not have a nutrient profile model, and research by Frank, Thow, Ng, Ostrowski, Bopape and Swart (2021) highlights this as obesity rates continue to escalate. Therefore, all products that fell under the unhealthy foods category in this study were based on the UK's nutrient profile model, which deems unhealthy products as foods that are high in saturated fat, salt and sugar. Examples of foods that are high in saturated fat, salt and sugar are fast foods, confectionary items such as candy and chocolate, breakfast cereals, cakes, pastries and soft drinks (Snowdon, 2019).

A South African study conducted by Delport (2015) found that unhealthy food products made up 22% of advertised foods. By contrast, as depicted in Figure 4.3, in this study, 68% of foods advertised during popular viewing hours for children were deemed unhealthy and a mere 32% were considered healthy. Therefore, it is evident that unhealthy food advertisements significantly outweighed healthy food advertisements.



**Figure 4.3: Healthy versus unhealthy food advertisements (SABC 1 and M-Net)**

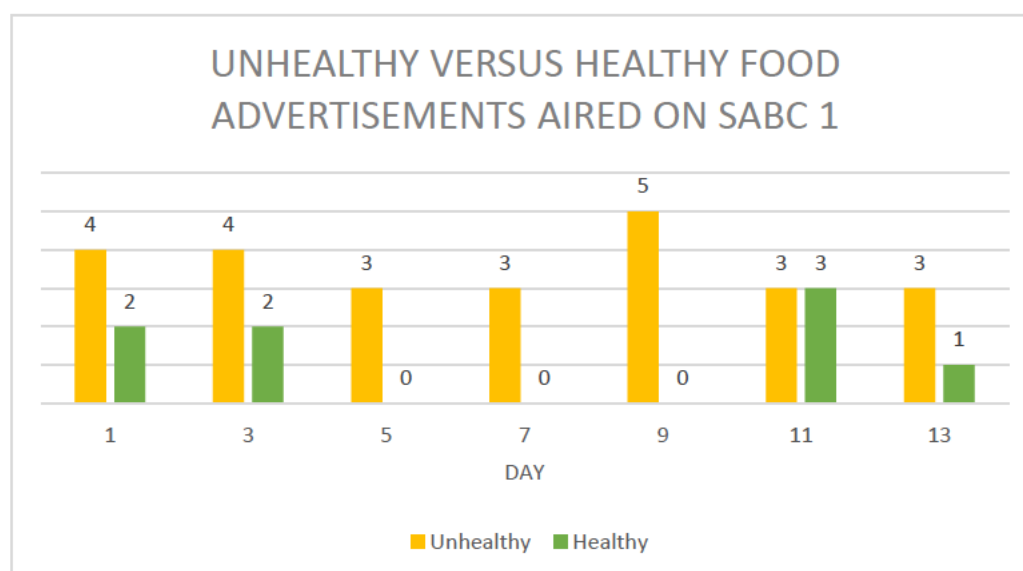
Figure 4.4 reveals the extent to which various types of unhealthy foods are advertised during popular viewing for hours for children. The fast foods category was top with a total of 18 advertisements (67% of the unhealthy foods category). The remainder of the unhealthy food advertisements were split between the confectionary (18%), dairy (4%) and sugared beverage (11%) categories.



**Figure 4.4: Types of unhealthy foods advertised (SABC 1 and M-Net)**

#### 4.3.2 Comparison of unhealthy food advertising on subscription versus free-to-air television

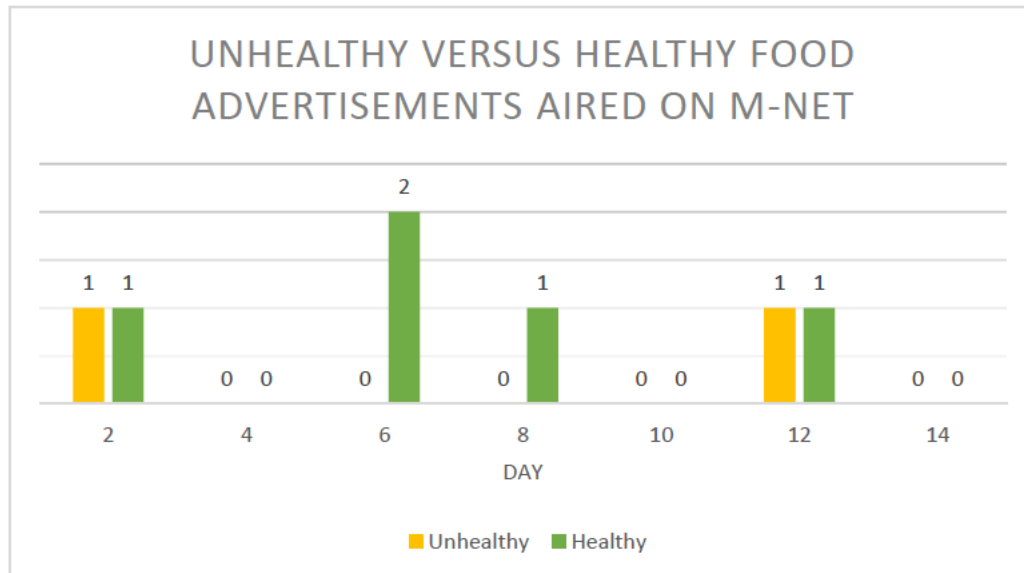
Figures 4.5 and 4.6 display the number of unhealthy versus healthy food advertisements on SABC 1 and M-Net, respectively. Figure 4.5 shows that there were 25 unhealthy food advertisements and eight healthy food advertisements aired on SABC 1. Therefore, unhealthy foods were flighted approximately three times more than healthy food advertisements on SABC 1. Based on the data presented in Figure 4.5, an average 3.57 unhealthy food advertisements were aired daily on SABC 1 over seven days. In comparison, an average of 1.14 healthy food advertisements were aired over the same period.



**Figure 4.5: Unhealthy versus healthy food advertisements aired on SABC 1**

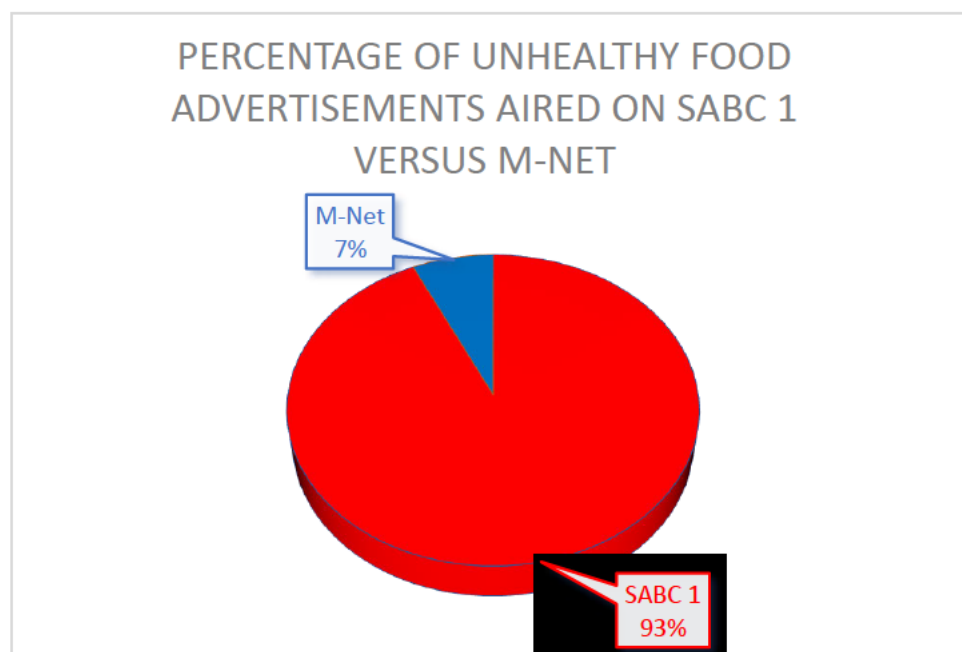
Figure 4.6 shows that a total of seven food-related advertisements were aired on M-Net in the specified timeframe, with five of these for healthy foods and two for unhealthy foods. Therefore, healthy food

advertisements were 2.5 times more prevalent than unhealthy food advertisements on M-Net. Based on the statistics presented in Figure 4.6, an average of 0.28 unhealthy food advertisements were aired daily on M-Net over a seven-day period, compared to an average of 0.71 for healthy food advertisements in the same period.



**Figure 4.6: Unhealthy versus healthy food advertisements aired on M-Net**

In total, 27 unhealthy food advertisements were aired on SABC 1 and M-Net combined. It is apparent from Figure 4.7 that SABC 1 flighted more unhealthy food advertisements than M-Net, as 93% of such advertisements were aired on SABC 1 and just 7% were aired on M-Net.



**Figure 4.7: Percentage of unhealthy food advertisements aired on SABC 1 versus M-Net**



### **4.3.3 Analysis of the advertising appeals and promotional strategies used in unhealthy food advertisements**

This section provides a description and analysis of each unhealthy food advertisement in the data set to identify the advertising appeals and promotional strategies that the various brands implemented. This approach (i.e. providing a full description and analysis of each advertisement one-by-one, rather than simply a summary of the overall findings arising from the analysis) was adopted in order to enhance the trustworthiness of the study.

Each unhealthy food advertisement is presented in the order in which it was flighted during the 41-hour recording period. For each advertisement, a description is first provided, followed by a discussion of the advertising appeals and promotional strategies used. All advertising appeals, sub-appeals and promotional strategies are italicised, for easy identification.

As mentioned previously, repeat advertisements were tabulated when calculating the total number of advertisements in the data set; however, for the purposes of the current analysis, each advertisement is only analysed once (i.e. only unique advertisements are included in this section). Some brands aired multiple (different) advertisements for various products. Any such advertisements that are not identical are included in this analysis and are described and discussed below. In addition, companies, brands or products have been de-identified in the following descriptions in order to comply with ethics requirements,. The data set comprised a total of 17 unique advertisements for unhealthy foods.

#### **Advertisement A: Fast food restaurant advertisement for their new burger**

Description of Advertisement A:

The advertisement began with a close-up view of the new burger. The burger was rotated in slow-motion, which displayed the new burger in its entirety which encapsulated the features of the product such as the burger buns, burger patty, cheese, sauce and jalapenos. The advertisement moved to a shot of the new burger meal, followed by an image of all three burgers in the range, with the new burger in the middle of the image. The advertisement contained a voice-over from the start of the advertisement till its completion. The voice-over stated, “When it’s just been one of those days. The one thing you need is a meal that tastes like everything will be alright.” The advertisement concluded with the fast food restaurant’s jingle and logo.

The advertising appeals used in Advertisement A:

The *rational* advertising appeal was used in the advertisement as it highlighted various attributes of the product through the utilisation of slow-motion, close-up shots. Therefore, the

product *features* sub-appeal was implemented. The *new product* sub-appeal was also used as the advertisement focused on introducing the new product.

The promotional strategy used in Advertisement A:

The use of the fast food restaurant's jingle was the promotional strategy implemented within Advertisement A. The advertisement concluded with the popular jingle followed by the brand logo.

### **Advertisement B: Carbonated soft drink**

Description of Advertisement B:

This was a short advertisement that lasted 15 seconds. It began with a clip of a teenager sweating on a sports field. The next scene depicted the same teenager opening a fridge, pulling out the carbonated soft drink and consuming it. The teenager's bag then fell off his shoulders and through the floor, into the living room of the residence below. The words "Nothing can weigh us down" appeared in yellow. The concluding scene of the advertisement showed the teenager playing basketball and winning the game for his team.

The advertising appeals used in Advertisement B:

The advertisement made use of the *emotional* advertising appeal, more specifically, the *happiness* and *fun* sub-appeals. *Happiness* was indicated through a smile by the teenager after consuming the product. As mentioned in the description, the teenager's bag had fallen off his shoulders which also added to the feeling of happiness and relief. Fun was a sub-appeal implemented in the advertisement when the teenager played a basketball game and scored the winning point.

The promotional strategy used in Advertisement B:

The teenager was shown drinking the product during the middle of the advertisement and experienced happiness after consuming it. Therefore, the promotional strategy that was used was *children shown with food*.

### **Advertisement C: Chocolate slab**

#### Description of Advertisement C:

The advertisement was presented in isiZulu; however, subtitles allowed for a smooth interpretation of the advertisement. The opening scene showed the mother of a young boy leaving to work in the morning and having her mother (the boy's grandmother) take care of the young boy. The young boy frowned and appeared to be unhappy because he knew that his grandmother would ensure that he worked on chores and homework throughout the day. In the final scene, the mother came back from work, thanked her mother and offered her money as a token of appreciation, which she did not accept. The son had overheard the conversation and took his slab of chocolate out of his school bag, smiled at the chocolate and placed it into his grandmother's purse as a token of appreciation. On her way out, the grandmother opened her purse, saw the chocolate slab and smiled graciously. The advertisement ended with a catchphrase and an image of the chocolate slab was shown in the background.

#### The advertising appeals used in Advertisement C:

The *emotional* advertising appeal was utilised in this advertisement and the sub-appeal, *happiness* was implemented. When the child showed gratitude towards his grandmother by placing a slab of chocolate in her bag, it created a feeling of happiness for the viewer. In addition, the grandmother showed her happiness with a warm smile and nod of her head.

#### The promotional strategy used in advertisement C:

*Children shown with food* was the promotional strategy used in this advertisement as the young boy smiled at the product before placing it into his grandmother's purse as a token of appreciation.

### **Advertisement D: Fast food restaurant advertisement for their chicken**

#### Description of Advertisement D:

The advertisement started with the father of a family placing a bucket of chicken on the dinner table for his family. A child takes a piece of chicken from the bucket before his family and the rest of the family followed. A voice-over began, "They say that every family needs a table, like this?". The advertisement indicated that despite the setting, the environment can be used as a table for the bucket of chicken. Settings included places such as a skatepark, racing track and Table Mountain. Each setting showed an actor enjoying a piece of chicken while making use

of a skateboard, vehicle and the mountain as tables. The advertisement moved on to an image of the product and “They say all you need is a table; we say all you need a bucket” was narrated. The advertisement concluded with the fast food restaurant’s slogan.

The advertising appeals used in Advertisement D:

The *emotional* advertising appeal was utilised in the advertisement. *Adventure, fun, happiness* and *pleasure* were the four sub-appeals implemented. The sense of adventure was depicted through the types of settings that were selected such as a skatepark, racetrack and Table Mountain, which are settings that are synonymous with adventure. In addition, fun was an element that was depicted through the participation in adventurous activities and the emotion of product-induced pleasure was shown through the consumption of the chicken. Happiness was shown through the smiles on the actors’ faces as they appeared to be excited and happy before and after consuming the advertised product.

The promotional strategies used in Advertisement D:

*Children shown with food* and the use of the fast food restaurant’s *slogan* were the two promotional strategies used. At the beginning of the advertisement, a child was shown taking a piece of chicken from the bucket before the rest of his family. The restaurant’s *slogan* was implemented at the conclusion of the advertisement.

### **Advertisement E: Fast food restaurant**

Description of Advertisement E:

The advertisement encapsulated the evolution of a man from childhood to adulthood. The advertisement first showed the man as an unhappy child, although his parents try to make him smile. The next scene showed the same character as a middle-aged child celebrating his birthday but appearing to be unhappy although the rest of the class were happy. The following scene showed the character as a teenager, taking a team photograph after winning a basketball championship. He appeared unhappy while the rest of the team were joyful. The fourth scene showed the same character in a comedy club with his significant other, where she and the rest of the crowd were laughing and he was not. After attending the comedy show the man’s wife requested a divorce. Later, the man walked into a the fast food restaurant and after taking a bite of chicken, the man shed a tear of joy, while laughing happily. The advertisement ended with the restaurant’s logo and slogan.

The advertising appeals used in Advertisement E:

The *emotional* advertising appeal and the *happiness* sub-appeal were implemented within this advertisement. The man showed immense happiness after consuming the advertised product and it appeared to be the first time the man had shown any sort of happiness despite being in settings where happiness and joyfulness were experienced by those around him.

The promotional strategy used in Advertisement E:

The fast food restaurant's slogan was utilised at the end of the advertisement. Therefore, the use of a *slogan* was the promotional strategy employed in the advertisement.

### **Advertisement F: Soft Drink**

Description of Advertisement F:

The advertisement commenced with two men (one elderly and one middle-aged) sitting on a porch sipping on the advertised beverage. The older man began telling a story about how his relative was nervous before proposing to his wife at a restaurant. The younger man commented, "Not smooth". The older man continued telling the story and stated that his relative dropped the ring, which prompted him to get down on one knee and propose. The younger man then commented, "Smooth". The older man then said, "Still on his knees, she says I do, I do, I do". The men clinked glasses and the soft drink company's slogan, was voiced over. The advertisement moved on to an image of the orange-flavoured beverage with a tropical background.

The advertising appeals used in Advertisement F:

*Emotion* was the advertising appeal used in the advertisement. The older actor appeared to be sharing his story with joy and excitement. Therefore, the sub-appeal implemented in this advertisement was *happiness*. Not only did the older man appear to be happy but the younger man did too (while being engrossed in the story), particularly at the end of the advertisement, when clinking glasses and taking a sip of the advertised beverage.

The promotional strategy used in Advertisement F:

The company's *slogan* was voiced over at the end of the conversation between the two men. Therefore, the promotional strategy used in the advertisement was a *slogan*.

### **Advertisement G: Fast food restaurant advertisement for their burger meal**

#### Description of Advertisement G:

The advertisement started with a depiction of a burger patty that possessed perfect grill marks while on a searing hot grill, surrounded by flames. “Feed your mega hunger with the flame-grilled rib and beef patty burger with our famous hand-cut chips” was voiced over the advertisement. The advertisement progressed with a video of the assembly of a burger where the ingredients were being layered upon each other in slow motion. The ingredients included a double patty, sauce, cheese, tomato and lettuce. The advertisement concluded with an image of the burger meal and fast food restaurant’s slogan.

#### The advertising appeals used in Advertisement G:

A *rational* advertising appeal that focused on the *features* of the product was implemented in this advertisement. Firstly, the burger patty was depicted as a succulent burger with perfect grill marks. Secondly, the camera angle included a 180-degree shot of the burger and its ingredients as it was being assembled.

#### The promotional strategy used in Advertisement G:

The promotional strategy used was the implementation of the fast food restaurant’s *slogan*.

### **Advertisement H: Chocolate bar**

#### Description of Advertisement H:

A child watched his older brother entertain him by rapping him a song in the living room of their home. The brother used the advertised chocolate bar as the microphone. The older brother handed the chocolate bar (microphone) to his younger brother and said, “Your turn bro”. The child took the chocolate bar and followed suit while using the product as a microphone. The next clip showed the child performing in front of a class of pupils, using the chocolate bar as a microphone. The child dropped the chocolate bar at the end of the performance and the advertisement transitioned into a recording studio where the child was depicted as a celebrity honing his craft. The following scene showed the child (now an adult) being handed a microphone (he imagined that it was a chocolate bar) before walking out onto a stage to perform to a large crowd. The advertisement concluded with an image of the chocolate bar and the advertised brands slogan which was written in bold and was voiced over.

The advertising appeals used in Advertisement H:

The *emotional* advertising appeal was used in this advertisement. The first sub-appeal utilised was *fun* as the child (who becomes a rapper) appeared to enjoy rapping to his older brother, friends and later, fans. The second sub-appeal implemented in the advertisement was *happiness* as the child (rapper) smiled each time he was handed the chocolate bar (microphone) to perform.

The promotional strategies used in Advertisement H:

The *children shown with food* strategy was the first promotional strategy utilised as the child was shown using the chocolate bar as a microphone twice. The second promotional strategy used was a *slogan*, as the advertisement concluded with the advertised brands slogan.

### **Advertisement I: Chocolate bar**

Description of Advertisement I:

The advertisement began with a young woman walking up a flight of stairs while carrying a heavy box. She appeared to be tired. She sighed and realised that she was indeed on the correct floor but the destination was at the end of a long corridor. The girl paused and took a huge bite of the chocolate bar and proceeded to close her eyes. She imagined being whisked away into outer space where she appeared to fly across the screen on a magic carpet. The girl opened her eyes and the camera angle depicted her easily pulling the heavy box on a carpet to the room at the end of the corridor. The advertisement concluded with a catchphrase and a short clip of the chocolate bar being broken in half.

The advertising appeals used in Advertisement I:

The *emotional* advertising appeal was adopted for the advertisement. The notion of *fun* was experienced by the main actress as she was whisked away into outer space and appeared to be jovial while dancing on the flying carpet. *Happiness* was the second appeal used as the actress appeared to enjoy the chocolate bar. She also appeared to be happy after reaching her destination based on her epiphany of using the carpet to pull the heavy box across the corridor, which stemmed from taking a bite of the chocolate bar.

The promotional strategies used in Advertisement I:

The catchphrase was displayed in bold and voiced over at the end of the advertisement. Therefore, the promotional strategy used was a *slogan*.

### **Advertisement J: Fast food restaurant advertisement for their filtered coffee and doughnuts**

#### Description of Advertisement J:

The advertisement was a mere 8 seconds long. “Now, here’s a deal to sweeten up your day. Get our delicious home-style doughnut and short filtered coffee for only 20 Rand” was voiced over from the start to the end of the advertisement. At the start of the voice-over, the advertisement consisted of a video that zoomed in on three doughnuts being stacked upon each other while sugar was sprinkled over the top in slow-motion. The second clip showed a coffee being brewed and poured slowly into a cup. Lastly, the advertisement ended with an image of the doughnut and coffee, along with the price in bold, followed by the advertised brands slogan and logo.

#### The advertising appeals used in Advertisement J:

The *rational* advertising appeal was used as the advertisement encapsulated the features of the advertised products (doughnut and coffee) by zooming into the products and utilising the slow-motion effect. Therefore, the sub-appeal used was product *features*.

#### The promotional strategy used in Advertisement J:

The promotional strategy used in the advertisement was the use of the brands *slogan*.

### **Advertisement K: Fast food restaurant advertisement for their new pizza meal**

#### Description of Advertisement K:

Multiple pots and pans were shown on a messy stove at the beginning of the advertisement. In the following scene, the fast food restaurant’s product identification character was shown hopping from one pot to the next inside a cupboard. Whilst doing so, the character stated that the pots and pans needed a rest and that the viewer should rather purchase the fast food restaurant’s new meal. The advertisement depicted two pizzas on a table and showed three people taking a slice of pizza from the pizza boxes. A slow-motion video of a piece being pulled from a pizza followed. The advertisement concluded with an image of the new meal and moved on to an image of the logo and slogan, which was voiced over.

#### The advertising appeals used in Advertisement K:

The *rational* advertising appeal was used in the advertisement as the slow-motion effect showed the stringy cheese pull of the pizza while ingredients such as olives and green peppers were



sprinkled on top. Therefore, the advertisement focused on the *features* of the product, which was the sub-appeal used.

The promotional strategies used in Advertisement K:

The fast food restaurant's *product identification character* was used in this advertisement and was shown jumping from one pot to the next while talking. The second promotional strategy implemented was the use of the fast food restaurant's *slogan*.

### **Advertisement L: Fast food restaurant advertisement for their full chicken and chips meal**

Description of Advertisement L:

The advertisement was very short as it lasted a mere four seconds. The advertisement consisted of an image of the advertised meal: the flame-grilled full chicken and chips. It was depicted with the price and fast food restaurant's logo below.. "Get our full chicken and large chips now, for only 149.90" was voiced over from the beginning to the conclusion of the advertisement.

The advertising appeals used in Advertisement L:

The *rational* advertising appeal was used in the advertisement. Although the advertisement was short in length, it managed to encapsulate the features of the product. The full chicken appeared to be well basted with perfect grill marks and chips well-seasoned. Therefore, product *features* were the sub-appeal employed in the advertisement.

The promotional strategy used in Advertisement L:

There were no promotional strategies identified in the advertisement, which was very brief.

### **Advertisement M: Fast food restaurant advertisement for their cheeseburger meal**

Description of Advertisement M:

The setting of the first scene of the advertisement was a hair salon and the camera panned to a lady who was getting her hair cut. The lady grabbed her phone and texted her boyfriend. Her message was displayed on the screen and the contents of the message were, "Babe, I'm hungry." The next clip of the advertisement showed the woman's boyfriend walking into the store with a package from the advertised fast food restaurant. The lady was visibly happy, thanked her boyfriend and began eating the chips from the package. The advertisement panned to her

boyfriend who took a bite of the burger while waiting for his partner's hair appointment to end. The advertisement concluded with an image of the fast food restaurant's cheeseburger burger meal, followed by a short clip of the company's logo and jingle.

The advertising appeals used in Advertisement M:

The *emotional* advertising appeal was implemented in this advertisement as the woman expressed happiness with a large smile while she had seen her boyfriend walk in with the cheeseburger meal. The boyfriend also appeared to be happy while consuming the burger. Therefore, the sub-appeal used was *happiness*.

The promotional strategy used in Advertisement M:

The advertisement concluded with the fast food restaurant's *jingle*.

#### **Advertisement N: Fast food restaurant advertisement for their new iced coffee**

Description of Advertisement N:

The advertisement began with a woman stopping at a local coffee shop. However, after looking at the menu, she seemed confused as the options appeared to be complex. The woman left the store thereafter. The next scene showed the woman at another coffee store where the queue appeared to be long. The following scene depicted the woman smiling while entering the advertised brands drive-through. The advertisement shifted to a video of the coffee being poured slowly into a cup with ice and then moved to an image of the advertised product while the words "As sweet as chocolate. As smooth as milk. With 100% Arabica beans, finished with a dash of hazelnut. The new Choc Hazelnut Iced Coffee" was voiced over. The advertisement concluded with the fast food restaurant's logo.

The advertising appeals used in Advertisement N:

*Emotional* and *rational* advertising appeals were used in this advertisement as the actress had gone into two coffee shops and experienced disappointment. However, when entering the fast food restaurant's drive through she appeared to be happy. Therefore, the employed sub-appeals were *happiness* and *comparison*. In addition, the product was advertised as a new product. Therefore, the *new product* sub-appeal was used.

The promotional strategy used in Advertisement N:

The advertisement concluded with fast food restaurant's *slogan*.

### **Advertisement O: Assorted cheese**

#### **Description of Advertisement O:**

The advertisement began with an employee (of the advertised company) walking through their cheese development laboratory and stating, “We love finding ways to make our cheese way better, with quality testing and our five-star quality process.” The next scene showed the employee in a family setting, overlooking a large outdoor table where members of a family are seen enjoying a variety of cheeses. The advertisement showed families socialising with one another while clips of laughter and a father dancing with his daughter were included. While this was shown, a voice-over stated that “The real testing happens out here. This cheese is for those who love life when everything falls into place and melts away our cares, adding joy and stretching our imagination”. The advertisement concluded with an image of the company’s logo and the slogan was voiced over.

#### **The advertising appeals used in Advertisement O:**

The *emotional* advertising appeal is used in the advertisement as family members are shown enjoying a variety of cheeses. Therefore, *happiness* was the sub-appeal used in the advertisement. *Fun* was another emotional advertising appeal used as the advertisement showed families enjoying each other’s company, which created a joyful environment. A clip of a father and daughter was also shown as both of them appeared to be enjoying themselves. The *rational* advertising appeal was utilised as the advertisement began in a lab-like setting where the products appeared to go through rigorous processes to ensure that the quality of the product was upheld. Therefore, the *product performance* sub-appeal was implemented.

#### **The promotional strategies used in Advertisement O:**

*Children shown with food* and the use of a *slogan* were the two promotional strategies used in the advertisement. Children were shown enjoying the advertised product while sharing it among family members. In addition, the company’s slogan was voiced over at the conclusion of the advertisement.

### **Advertisement P: Peanut butter**

#### **Description of Advertisement P:**

The advertisement commenced in a garage where five children were shown playing musical instruments. They appeared to have no energy and lacked cohesiveness when playing their

musical instruments, which sounded abysmal. One of the children voiced their frustration by saying, “It’s not working”. Another child mentioned that she had an idea. She ran into the kitchen and the product identification character (an animated animal), stood next to the girl while helping to prepare peanut butter sandwiches for the rest of the children. The girl and the product identification character handed out sandwiches to the band. The camera panned to one of the children who seemed to enjoy the sandwich. The following scene showed the band playing harmoniously and energetically after consuming the advertised product. The advertisement concluded with the advertised company’s slogan.

The advertising appeals used in Advertisement P:

The *emotional* advertising appeal was used in the advertisement. All the children had smiles on their faces when the girl and product identification character brought in peanut butter sandwiches from the kitchen. After being handed a peanut butter sandwich, the camera took a close-up shot of a visibly happy child after he had taken a bite of the sandwich. Therefore, the *happiness* sub-appeal was used. The children also appeared to enjoy playing their instruments after consuming the peanut butter sandwich. Therefore, *fun* was the second sub-appeal used.

The promotional strategies used in Advertisement P:

The first promotional strategy found in the advertisement was the use of a *product identification character*, who was an animated elephant that appeared on the peanut butter packaging. The animated animal danced to the tune of the music and used its trunk as an instrument. The second promotional strategy was *children shown with food* as one of the children was shown making a peanut butter sandwich and another was shown consuming the product. Lastly, the company *slogan* was used at the end of the advertisement.

### **Advertisement Q: Fast food restaurant advertisement for their range of pizzas**

Description of Advertisement Q:

The advertisement was 10 seconds long and showed a range of three fast food restaurant’s pizzas with ingredients such as chicken, basil, chilli and cheese sprinkled over the pizzas. The following scene depicted the three pizzas on a table with the price in bold. The advertisement concluded with a voice-over of the fast food restaurant’s slogan and an image of the logo.

The advertising appeals used in Advertisement Q:

The *rational* advertising appeal was used in the advertisement. The advertisement showed the various pizza toppings included in the three pizza options by zooming into the different pizzas. In addition, the price of the product was highlighted. Therefore, product *features* was the sub-appeal used in the advertisement.

The promotional strategy used in Advertisement Q:

The advertisement concluded with the fast food restaurant's *slogan*,

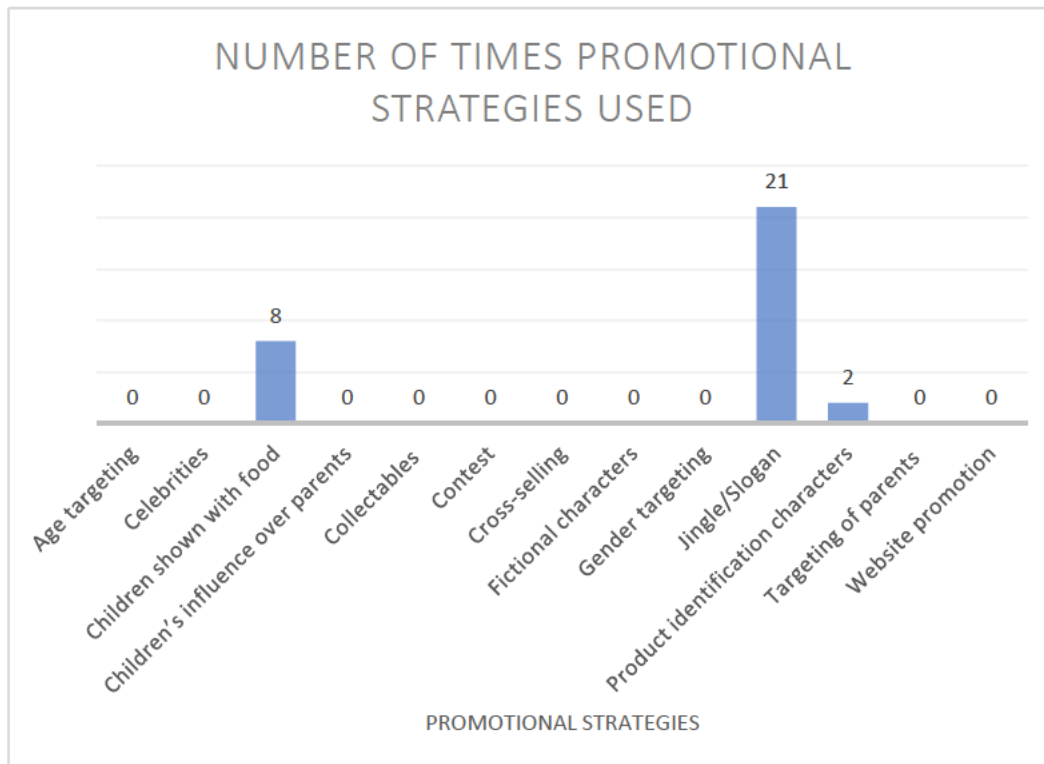
Following the analysis of the individual advertisements, a summary of the overall findings arising from all 17 advertisements is presented below.

#### 4.3.3.1 Summary of findings from the analysed advertisements

This summary includes repeat advertisements as this provides a holistic view of the data and the actual number of advertising appeals and promotional strategies that the audience was exposed to. Table 4.1 shows the number of advertising appeals and sub-appeals identified in the advertisements. Similarly, Figure 4.8 highlights the promotional strategies that were used and the number of times they were used. Therefore, Table 4.1 and Figure 4.8 provide an overview of the findings related to the advertising appeals and promotional strategies used within unhealthy food advertisements. It is worth noting that Advertisements A, G, L and M were repeated twice (and thus aired a total of three times each), while Advertisements C and D were repeated once (and thus aired twice each).

**Table 4.1: Prevalence of the various appeals and sub-appeals**

Appeal	Number of times used	Appeal	Number of times used	Appeal	Number of times used
Emotional	26	Rational	18	Moral	0
Sub-appeal	Number of times used	Sub-appeal	Number of times used	Sub-appeal	Number of times used
Adventure	2	New Product	4		
Fun	7	Product Performance	1		
Happiness	15	Product Features	12		
Pleasure	2	Comparison	1		
Fear	0				



**Figure 4.8: Prevalence of the various promotional strategies**

The following section provides a detailed discussion of this study's findings.

#### **4.4 Discussion of the findings**

This section explains the meaning behind the findings presented in the previous section, which directly relate to the study's research objectives. Therefore, a summative approach is adopted with the goal of providing meaning to the findings by evaluating and interpreting them in relation to the research objectives.

##### **4.4.1 Research objective one: To determine the scope of unhealthy food advertisements during children's viewing hours on television in South Africa**

A total of 627 food and non-food-related advertisements was aired over the 41 hours of recorded television on SABC 1 and M-Net during popular viewing hours for children. This total comprises advertisements for products from a variety of categories and includes repeat advertisements. Of these, 40 (6%) were for food (healthy and unhealthy). Of the 40 food advertisements, 67% were deemed to be for unhealthy foods and 33% for healthy foods. This was calculated by tabulating all food advertisements, including those that were repeated. Therefore, the findings reveal that advertisements for unhealthy foods were aired considerably more than those for healthy foods during children's viewing hours on South African television. This study identified unhealthy foods as those that were

high in fat, sugar and salt; categories of such foods included confectionary items, dairy, fast foods and sugared beverages. The healthy foods category comprised all foods that were not classified as unhealthy. Although these healthy foods may not offer specific health benefits, unhealthy dietary patterns are not encouraged as they are foods that are not high in fat, sugar and salt.

The findings show that a mere 6% of all advertisements were food-related during the 41 hours of recorded television. However, considering the ratios presented in the previous paragraph, the percentages suggest that for every healthy food advertisement, there were 2.08 unhealthy food advertisements. Therefore, it can be said that although food-related advertisements make up a small portion of the total advertisements (inclusive of all product categories), the unhealthy food category dominates the food-related advertisement sphere as unhealthy foods are advertised approximately twice more than healthy foods during popular viewing hours for children on South African television.

Recent international research by Watson, Lau, Wellard, Hughes and Chapman (2017), Whalen *et al.* (2019) and Kelly *et al.* (2019) found that unhealthy foods were advertised at higher rates than healthy foods. Previous South African research showed that there was an upward trend in the number of unhealthy food television advertisements aired during prime-time viewing hours for children (Mchiza *et al.*, 2013). However, a South African study by Maikoo (2016) showed that unhealthy foods (51%) and healthy foods (49%) were flighted at similar frequencies. In addition, a more contemporary South African study by Yamoah *et al.* (2021) found that approximately 60% of food advertisements were considered unhealthy.

There could be several reasons for the discrepancy between the percentage of unhealthy food advertisements reported in this study, compared to previous studies such as Maikoo (2016) and Yamoah *et al.* (2021). Firstly, companies in the food industry may have become more focused on promoting unhealthy food options as they tend to be more profitable (Pinto *et al.*, 2020). Another reason could be that the effectiveness of contemporary marketing strategies used by companies to promote unhealthy foods to children may result in the increased frequency of such advertising (Naderer, 2020). A continuing lack of statutory regulations could also have contributed to the increased proportion of unhealthy food advertisements found in this study. The lack of statutory regulations against unhealthy food advertising could be due to the fact that the fast food industry contributes significantly to economic growth in SA (Schwabe, 2021). The South African fast food industry is forecast to register a 7.9% annual growth rate from 2019 to 2026 (Allied Market Research, 2019). Furthermore, consumer demand for unhealthy food options may play a role, with companies responding by increasing advertisements for such products. The COVID-19 pandemic had a devastating impact on the quick-service restaurant industries in SA (Business Tech, 2022). However, Ornico (2020) indicates that there was a surge in advertising spend during the post-COVID era as quick-service restaurants looked to make up for lost ground as a result of trading restrictions during the pandemic.

Based on the findings of the South African studies identified on the previous page, this study adds to the literature on unhealthy food advertising to children in SA as the findings indicate that there has been an increase in the proportion of advertisements for unhealthy foods (compared to those for healthy foods) during popular viewing hours for children. In conclusion, unhealthy food advertisements were shown much more regularly than healthy food advertisements. As mentioned previously, for every one healthy food shown, 2.08 unhealthy food advertisements are shown.

A discussion of the findings regarding the second research objective of this study follows.

#### **4.4.2 Research objective two: To compare the extent and nature of such advertising on subscription versus free-to-air television in South Africa**

SABC 1 was the free-to-air channel and M-Net (channel 101) was the subscription-based channel selected for this study. On SABC 1, there were 25 unhealthy food advertisements and eight healthy food advertisements. By comparison, five healthy food advertisements and two unhealthy food advertisements were flighted on M-Net. Therefore, on SABC 1, unhealthy foods were shown 3.12 times more than healthy foods. In contrast, healthy foods were shown 2.5 times more than unhealthy foods on M-Net. Repeat advertisements were included when tabulating the totals. Furthermore, it was found that on SABC 1, a daily average of 3.57 unhealthy foods was aired whereas a daily average of 0.28 unhealthy foods was aired on M-Net.

According to Backholer *et al.* (2020), a multi-channel environment allows marketers to target children from different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds whilst making use of persuasive appeals that attract specific audiences. Peitz and Valletti (2008) indicate that advertising income and viewing revenue are the two main sources of income for subscription-based television, whereas media outlets that are free-to-air earn most of their revenue from advertising. Global studies by French *et al.* (2019) and Backholer *et al.* (2020) found that children were exposed to more unhealthy foods on free-to-air television than on subscription-based television. The findings of this study support this.

As stated in the previous chapter, SABC 1 has an audience that comprises middle-to-low-income households, whereas M-Net has a middle-to-high-income audience (Business Tech, 2019). This study's findings show that children were exposed to far more unhealthy foods on free-to-air television (SABC 1) than on subscription-based (M-Net) television. No South African study, to the best of the author's knowledge, has conducted research on the advertising of unhealthy foods via subscription-based channels. Therefore, this study adds a new dimension to the body of knowledge regarding advertising to children on subscription-based television in South Africa.



It can be concluded that South African children are exposed to more advertising for unhealthy foods on free-to-air television than on subscription-based television and that this finding represents a popular trend based on prior research regarding the phenomenon on a global scale. In addition, the findings indicate that middle-to-low-income households view advertisements for unhealthy foods more regularly than middle-to-high-income households in South Africa. Therefore, this could be a contributing factor to the high levels of obesity among middle-to-low-income households, which has a direct impact on children.

A discussion of the advertising appeals and promotional strategies implemented within the unhealthy food advertisements follows in the subsequent sections.

#### **4.4.3 Research objective three: To identify the types of advertising appeals utilised in such advertising**

In this section, the types of advertising appeals and sub-appeals used in unhealthy food advertisements are discussed. It is worth noting that the moral advertising appeal was not used in the unhealthy food advertisements analysed for this study. Therefore, based on Bakir, Palan and Kolbe's (2013) advertising appeals and sub-appeals, only those found within the unhealthy food advertisements are discussed. As indicated previously, the advertising appeals and sub-appeals used in repeat advertisements were included.

##### **4.4.3.1 The emotional advertising appeal**

According to Belch (2003), emotional appeals relate to the consumer's psychological and social need to acquire a product. This study's findings reveal that the emotional advertising appeal was employed 26 times within unhealthy food advertisements, making it the most popular appeal. Belch (2003) stated that children's motivations for unhealthy food purchase decisions are predominantly emotional, and it is evident through this study, based on the fact that emotional advertising appeals are implemented more frequently than rational or moral advertising appeals. Happiness, fun, pleasure and adventure were the emotional advertising sub-appeals used. Fear, an emotional appeal, was not implemented in any unhealthy food advertisements.

##### **a) Happiness**

According to Niedermeier, Albrecht and Jahn (2018), optimism, generosity, trustworthiness, playfulness and happiness are the five emotive characteristics associated with happy advertisements. The aforementioned emotive characteristics were evident in the majority of unhealthy food advertisements that employed the happiness appeal. Happiness was the most used sub-appeal in unhealthy food advertisements, as 15 (58%) emotional advertisements employed the happiness sub-appeal. Most of the advertisements that employed the happiness sub-appeal showed an actor or actress

experiencing happiness before consuming the product, while consuming the product or after consuming the product. As a result, this resembled a sense of positivity towards the product or brand. According to Bakir, Palan and Kolbe (2013), happiness is a major contributing factor to the rise in purchase intent, discovery and shareability. Therefore, the findings of this study indicate that happiness was the most evoked emotion used in unhealthy food advertisements.

#### **b) Fun**

Belch (2003) believes that advertisements that create a joyful environment, coupled with emotions of delight and pleasure, are said to be fun. The fun sub-appeal was implemented seven times (27%) out of a total of 26 emotional food advertisements, making it the second-most-used emotional advertising appeal in this study. Through this study, it is evident that depicting unhealthy food as fun or relating it to fun events was a common tactic used by advertisers when targeting children. All the fun advertisements portrayed cheerful environments with friends and family or included physical activity in the form of sports or performing arts such as dance or music.

#### **c) Pleasure**

Food and beverage advertising typically evokes product-induced pleasure by emphasising the positive feeling associated with the advertisement and product (Bakir, Palan & Kolbe, 2013). The unhealthy food advertisements that evoked the feeling of pleasure in this study did so after the consumption of the advertised product, which signifies a sense of satisfaction that stems from consuming the product. Moreover, the pleasure sub-appeal was used in two (8%) emotional advertisements found in this study. Pleasure is associated with the feeling of satisfaction which stimulates the release of dopamine and can lead to addictive consumption patterns among children (Casais & Pereira, 2021).

#### **d) Adventure**

The sense of adventure in unhealthy food advertisements is generally presented in a thrill-seeking environment with the aim of increasing the viewer's sense of excitement (Kotler *et al.*, 1999). The excitement experienced by children when watching an advertisement where the adventure appeal is used is often translated into the feeling of excitement for the advertised product (Kotler *et al.*, 1999). The adventure appeal was used twice (8%) in the emotional advertisements found in this study. The advertised product was shown in various thrill-seeking settings. According to Naderer (2020), the adventure appeal creates a strong emotional connection to unhealthy foods, particularly when the advertisements target younger audiences.

#### **4.4.3.2 The rational advertising appeal**

Rational appeals highlight the attributes of a product and the advantages or motives for purchasing the desired product (Belch, 2003). Advertisers focus on the rational components of consumers' needs or desires for products that are utilitarian, functional, or practical (Belch, 2003). With reference to this study, a total of 18 uses of the rational advertising appeal were found in unhealthy food advertisements. As stated previously, Bakir, Palan and Kolbe (2013) indicate that the rational appeal is split into four sub-appeals (product features, new products, product performance and comparative advertising appeals). All four sub-appeals were used in the unhealthy food advertisements analysed in the current study.

##### **a) Product features**

Food advertisements highlight features of the product that attract consumers (Institute of Medicine, 2006). This was achieved in the current study through the use of descriptive words, positive behavioural cues from the actors or actresses or by using the slow-motion effect to emphasise the product's features. This study found that the product features sub-appeal was implemented the most as it was used within 12 (67%) unhealthy food advertisements employing the rational appeal.

##### **b) New product**

New products are unique to the company and the appeal is popular among fast-food chains (Dean, Griffith & Calantone, 2016). All the advertisements that used the new product sub-appeal were from the same fast-food chain and were additions to existing product lines. The new product sub-appeal was used within four (22%) of the rational advertisements found in this study. The products were boldly advertised as new products through voiceovers and yellow labels that were shown on the left-hand side of the screen. This can be identified as 'Z pattern advertising' which is based on the premise that audiences view advertising material from left to right (Yoo, Choi & Song, 2022).

##### **c) Product performance**

In this study, the product performance sub-appeal was utilised in one (6%) unhealthy rational advertisement. According to Bakir, Palan and Kolbe (2013), marketers are fond of emphasising the brand's success in advertisements to transfer that image onto the advertised product. The unhealthy food advertisement that used the product performance appeal was carried out by highlighting the five-star quality process that the product went through to ensure that the quality was of the highest standard. Moreover, the product's performance is determined by how the claims and statements made about the product and its processes are executed (Oates *et al.*, 2003).

#### **d) Comparison**

The comparative advertising appeal is used by marketers to portray the advertised brand or product as superior to its competition (Belch, 2003). The comparative sub-appeal was used once (6%) in an unhealthy food advertisement where the rational appeal was employed. The advertisement showed a customer experiencing disappointment at two competitors' stores due to either the complexity of the products on offer or the slow service. However, the advertised brand created a positive customer experience and left the customer delighted. Therefore, the advertisement provided the customer with a reference point while presenting and promoting the brand's positive attributes.

#### **4.4.3.3 The moral advertising appeal**

Kotler *et al.* (1999) believe that moral appeals were designed to stimulate an audience's sense of integrity by linking products to social causes. With reference to this study, the moral appeal was utilised the least (out of the emotional and rational appeals) as none of the advertisements employed this advertising appeal.

#### **4.4.4 Research objective 4: To establish the promotional strategies that are implemented within such advertising**

The promotional strategies used within unhealthy food advertisements are discussed in this section. Promotional strategies were used 31 times in the unhealthy food advertisements found in this study. Page and Brewster (2007) identified 17 promotional strategies: cross-selling (five types), jingle or slogan, children shown with food, collectables, contest, celebrities, fictional characters, product identification characters, targeting of parents rather than children, implying or telling children to persuade parents into purchasing, website promotion, age targeting and gender targeting. However, only three of the 17 promotional strategies were used in the unhealthy food advertisements found in this study. Therefore, these three promotional strategies will be discussed further. The promotional strategies used in repeat advertisements were included.

##### **4.4.4.1 Jingle or slogan**

A jingle refers to a brief song or piece of music that promotes a specific product, whereas a slogan can be described as a short catchphrase used to draw attention to the product or brand's unique characteristics (Institute of Medicine, 2006). With reference to this study, a total of 15 slogans were used in unhealthy food advertisements. Therefore 48% of the promotional strategies used were slogans. Through the use of approximately five words, slogans encapsulate the benefits and reinforce the identity of the brand (Silveira & Galvao, 2020). Slogans play a fundamental role in promoting brand recall and awareness, which may explain why advertisements conclude with slogans (Silveira & Galvao, 2020).

All the unhealthy food advertisements that adopted the slogan strategy in this study, implemented it at the end of the advertisement. In addition, a total of 6 (19%) jingles were found in the unhealthy food advertisements analysed in this study. Jingles are an effective promotional strategy as they play a pivotal role in helping the audience recall the brand due to their catchy nature and the fact that they are typically played at the end of the advertisement (Silveira & Galvao, 2020).

#### **4.4.4.2 Children shown with food**

This promotional strategy was used within 8 (26%) unhealthy food advertisements found in this study. The children within the advertisements appeared to be happy, which may encourage viewers to experience a similar type of happiness that the advertisement portrays through the purchase of the advertised product. According to Page and Brewster (2007), brands create the feeling of a family-orientated environment when children are included in advertisements.

#### **4.4.4.3 Product identification characters**

Product identification characters are essentially brand personalities depicted as characters that portray human characteristics and resonate with children (Page & Brewster, 2007). A total of two (6%) unhealthy food advertisements utilised the product identification strategy. One advertisement was for a fast-food brand and the other was for a confectionary brand that included children in the advertisement.

### **4.5 Conclusion**

This study revealed that 6% of all the advertisements flighted on the selected television channels during the specified viewing hours were food-related. Although only a small percentage of the advertisements were food-related, the findings indicated that 67% of all food-related advertisements were for unhealthy foods. In addition, it was found that 93% of all unhealthy food advertisements were flighted on free-to-air television. The advertising appeals and promotional strategies analysed in this study were identified through a deductive analysis based on previous literature regarding the methods used within unhealthy food advertisements targeting children. The advertising appeals and promotional strategies used within unhealthy food advertisements may influence children to purchase or request unhealthy food products.

The emotional advertising appeal and the jingle or slogan promotional strategy were implemented the most within the unhealthy food advertisements analysed in this study. Therefore, most unhealthy food advertisements appeal to children's emotions whilst adopting slogans or jingles to ignite a sense of familiarity and brand recollection. Similar findings were achieved in studies conducted by Page and Brewster (2007), Bakir, Palan and Kolbe (2013) and Maikoo (2016). It can be concluded that in South

Africa, statutory regulations need to be enacted to regulate the extent of unhealthy food advertising to children, as well as the advertising appeals and promotional strategies used.

The following chapter addresses the limitations, recommendations and conclusion of the study.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

There are four major components of this chapter. The chapter commences with a brief summary of the study in relation to its research questions and objectives. The second component involves a review of the study's limitations, while the third proposes recommendations for future research, as well as for policy and practice. The fourth component includes a discussion of the practical value of the study. Finally, this chapter concludes with an overview of the study.

#### **5.2 Summary of findings in relation to the research objectives**

The first research objective of the study was to determine the scope of unhealthy food advertisements during children's viewing hours on television in South Africa. In relation to this objective, it was found that 627 advertisements were flighted over 41 hours of recorded television on one free-to-air channel (SABC 1) and one subscription-based channel (M-Net). There was a total of 40 food-related advertisements, of which 67% were for unhealthy foods and 33% were for healthy foods. Therefore, the findings indicated that unhealthy foods were advertised far more frequently than healthy foods during children's viewing hours.

In relation to the second objective (i.e. to compare the extent and nature of unhealthy food advertising on subscription versus free-to-air television in South Africa), the findings indicate that a total of 25 unhealthy food advertisements were aired on free-to-air television, whereas a total of two unhealthy food advertisements were aired on subscription-based television. Therefore, this study found that South African children were exposed to more unhealthy food advertisements on free-to-air television than on subscription-based television.

The third research objective focused on identifying the advertising appeals used within unhealthy food advertisements targeted at children. This study's findings indicate that the emotional advertising appeal was used 26 times. Several sub-appeals were employed; however, the happiness sub-appeal was utilised 15 times, making it the most-used sub-appeal.

The fourth research objective focused on identifying the promotional strategies used within unhealthy food advertisements targeted at children. Page and Brewster (2007) identified 17 promotional strategies used in advertisements aimed at children. However, this study identified a mere three promotional strategies in unhealthy food advertisements. These were jingles or slogans, children shown with food

and product identification characters. The jingle or slogan promotional strategy was utilised the most and was employed in 67% of unhealthy advertisements.

### **5.3 Limitations**

The study's limitations are set out below.

#### **5.3.1 Outdated literature**

There is a large volume of outdated information regarding the research phenomenon examined in this study (the advertising of unhealthy foods to children on television). Before the inception of social media and even during its initial stages, television was the primary source of entertainment within households. However, research attention has since then been moving more towards digital advertising media, meaning that there is not very much recent literature focusing on television. In addition, the two studies upon which the conceptual framework was based were published in 2007 and 2013, respectively. Therefore, these studies may be outdated, which could have an impact on the study's outcomes. However, although television may be seen as a traditional advertising medium, it remains a popular form of entertainment as television purchases continue to grow in SA (Stoll, 2021).

#### **5.3.2 Children's television channels were not included**

SABC 1 and M-Net were the two television channels used in this study. Both channels broadcast television shows, series and movies that are aimed at children but do not solely target children. Therefore, it is possible that focusing on dedicated children's television channels may have yielded different results. However, although dedicated channels for children (such as Disney and Nickelodeon, amongst others) do exist, they are only available on subscription-based television. As a major component of this study involved the comparison of free-to-air and subscription-based television, and dedicated children's channels are only available on subscription-based television, the selection of SABC 1 and M-Net was deemed appropriate to enable a fair comparison. Furthermore, recordings took place during popular viewing hours for children.

#### **5.3.3 Number of television hours recorded**

This study involved a 14-day data collection period, during which 41 hours of television were recorded and analysed. This is more than studies such as Folta *et al.* (2006) and Maikoo (2016), in which 31 and 38 hours of television were recorded, respectively. However, Kelly *et al.* (2011) logged 199 hours of television, which resulted in the analysis of many more unhealthy food commercials. Therefore, an extended recording period may have uncovered more unhealthy food advertisements.



## **5.4 Recommendations**

This section offers recommendations for various stakeholders arising out of the study's outcomes. First, recommendations are made for researchers. Thereafter, recommendations are provided for policymakers and practitioners.

### **5.4.1 Recommendations for future research**

#### **5.4.1.1 Investigate why advertising appeals and promotional strategies are effective**

This study identified the types of advertising appeals and promotional strategies used in unhealthy food advertisements. However, it was beyond the scope of the study to try to establish why certain appeals and strategies are mostly used by marketers and considered attractive to the child audience. This aspect is important to investigate and will add to the existing literature regarding the research phenomenon, as the primary focus would involve determining children's ability to process persuasive advertising. Researchers could point out the appeals and promotional strategies to children and ask why those appeals and strategies are enticing. This could be carried out through questionnaires, interviews or focus groups and will ultimately reveal the types of advertisements that are most attractive to children. Such research can be compared against other studies as scholars such as Rozendaal, Oprea and Buijzen (2016) indicate that children's cognitive ability continuously evolves.

#### **5.4.1.2 Exploration of various advertising media**

Unhealthy food advertisements are displayed on many media outlets; however, this study focused exclusively on television advertisements. Therefore, future research can establish the extent of social media advertising to children in South Africa. Popular advertising media include print, radio, television and digital advertising. According to Lioutas and Tzimitra-Kalogianni (2014), print and radio advertising are not viewed as popular media outlets designed to reach the child audience. Therefore, these forms of media are not recommended when looking to explore the notion of advertising to children. According to Grell (2018), social media is a form of digital advertising that continues to grow in popularity among children, which is a key reason business invests heavily in digital advertising.

#### **5.4.1.3 Analysis from the parent's perspective**

When undertaking similar research, another angle that researchers could consider is the parent's point of view. Researchers could gather feedback from parents based on how their children respond to unhealthy food advertisements shown on television. In addition, researchers could benefit from gauging parents' views and attitudes towards food advertising and how it may affect their children.

#### **5.4.1.4 Analysis from the child's perspective**

Children were not included in this study as the researcher focused on gathering data directly from the flighted television advertisements. Another reason that children were not included in this study was due to ethical concerns. Nonetheless, future research could focus on collecting data centred on uncovering the impact of advertising appeals and promotional strategies on children. This can be accomplished by screening advertisements to stratified focus groups and conducting an analysis of the appeals and strategies that children identify in the advertisements. The use of age-specific focus groups will be beneficial as Allen and Kelly's (2015) research demonstrates that children's perceptions of advertisements vary depending on the child's developmental stage.

#### **5.4.1.5 Investigation of fast-food advertising to children**

This study found that fast-foods were advertised far more frequently than other unhealthy food categories. Therefore, by focusing on a specific unhealthy food category such as fast-food, researchers may seek to dissect the fast-food advertising niche. Focusing on the most-advertised unhealthy fast foods could highlight persuasive advertising techniques used by marketers, which could aid in the establishment of statutory regulations against fast-food advertising to children. Limiting fast-food advertising to children could lead to a domino effect across other unhealthy food categories as fast-foods dominates unhealthy food advertising slots.

#### **5.4.2 Recommendations for policy and practice**

This study's findings indicate that 93% of all unhealthy foods were aired on free-to-air television. This could assist policymakers or marketers by providing a starting point in terms of restricting unhealthy food advertising on free-to-air television. In addition, the statistics indicate that the number of children exposed to free-to-air television compared to subscription-based television is significantly higher (SABC Sales, 2020). Thus, it is imperative for legislators to implement statutory regulations on unhealthy food, as there are currently no regulatory measures in place. It is worth noting that DStv (a subscription television provider) has taken steps to reduce children's exposure to advertisements by introducing child-friendly television channels that are advertisement-free (MyBroadband, 2022).

Marketers can reduce the inviting nature of unhealthy food advertising by limiting the application of persuasive elements (such as advertising appeals and promotional strategies) in advertisements aimed at the child audience. Marketers should enforce self-regulatory measures where limiting such advertising is collectively agreed upon due to the unethical nature of producing potentially harmful advertising content in the form of unhealthy food advertisements.

## **5.5 Contributions and practical value**

The practicality of a study refers to whether the study's findings are useful in reality (Sekeran & Bougie, 2016). This research can be applied in reality as this study's primary contribution lies in assisting marketing professionals and policymakers in strengthening or enforcing regulatory measures regarding unhealthy food advertising on South African television, particularly during popular viewing hours for children.

Previous research indicates that excessive exposure to unhealthy foods among children may trigger health concerns such as obesity, cardiovascular disease and diabetes (Bhadoria *et al.*, 2015). Television is merely one of the media sources that food brands use as a vehicle to promote unhealthy food products. This research found that unhealthy foods were advertised at a significantly higher rate than healthy foods. Moreover, fast foods were the most advertised unhealthy food category.

This study involved the analysis of television advertisements on a free-to-air channel (SABC 1) and a subscription-based channel (M-Net). Based on this study's findings, SABC 1 produced substantially more flightings of unhealthy food advertisements during children's viewing hours than M-Net. Therefore, by exploring both free-to-air and subscription-based TV, this study adds a new dimension to the body of knowledge regarding advertising to children as no other South African study has conducted research on the advertising of unhealthy foods via subscription-based channels, to the best knowledge of the researcher.

Through this study, it was evident that marketers implement many advertising appeals and promotional strategies in unhealthy food advertisements with the goal of attracting specific target markets, such as children. Bakir, Palan, and Kolbe (2013) identify three primary advertising appeals in food advertisements, while Page and Brewster (2007) pinpoint 17 promotional strategies implemented within unhealthy food advertisements aimed at children. The advertisements in the sample were analysed according to the aforementioned frameworks, which have not previously been used in related South African research. Their use in this study therefore adds a new dimension to the existing body of knowledge. The advertising appeals and promotional strategies found in this study could be used as a basis to help strengthen advertising literacy among parents and youth. This can be achieved by identifying and understanding the appeals and strategies utilised.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

This study successfully gathered and captured the necessary data to accomplish the research objectives. The literature presented in the second chapter provided a clear understanding of the current research on unhealthy food advertising and its link to childhood obesity. The literature further indicated that

television advertisements are effective in targeting children and that children's understanding of advertisements continues to evolve.

A mixed methods research approach was selected to perform a deductive content analysis of television advertisements to determine the extent to which South African children are exposed to unhealthy food advertisements on free-to-air and subscription-based channels. Another aim of this study was to identify the various advertising appeals and promotional strategies used by advertisers in an effort to appeal to children. The television advertisements were recorded during popular viewing hours for children and a total of 41 hours of television were analysed.

This study found that unhealthy foods were advertised considerably more than healthy foods, which corresponds with previous South African research regarding the phenomenon. To the best of the author's knowledge, no South African study has found that children were exposed to far more unhealthy foods on free-to-air television than on subscription-based television, making this a crucial finding. The emotional advertising appeal and the jingle or slogan promotional strategy were found to be the most popular persuasive tactics used by marketers.

Based on the findings, this study adds to the existing research regarding the phenomenon and serves as a rationale for the implementation of statutory regulations regarding unhealthy food advertising on South African television.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Data capturing sheet

Date	Time	Channel	Brand	Category
<b>Brief description of the advertisement</b>				

Food Categories	Food Sub-Categories	✓	Appeal	Sub-Appeal	✓	Promotional Strategies	✓
Healthy			Emotional			Cross-selling	
	Fruit and Vegetables			Adventure		Jingle/Slogan	
	Meat, poultry and seafood			Fun		Children shown with food	
	Whole grains (high fibre/low fat)			Happiness		Collectables	
	Dairy (low fat milk, yoghurt, cheese etc.)			Pleasure		Contest	
	Low-sugar/high-fibre breakfast cereals			Fear		Celebrities	
	Other		Rational			Fictional characters	
				New product		Product identification characters	
Unhealthy				Performance		Targeting of parents	
	High-sugar/low-fibre cereals			Features		Children influencing parents	
	Fast food			Comparison		Website promotion	
	Confectionary (candy, chocolates, snacks)		Moral			Gender targeting	
	Sugared beverages					Age targeting	
	HFSS frozen foods		Other			Other	
	Dairy (full fat milk, yoghurt, cheese etc.)						
	Other						

Aspects of the advertisement that support the allocated advertising appeal/s and sub-appeal/s	Aspects of the advertisement that support the allocated promotional strategy/strategies

## Appendix C: Ethical clearance



05 June 2023

Tasvir Neeraj Bissoon (217072622)  
School Of Man Info Tech & Gov  
Westville Campus

Dear TN Bissoon,

System ID Number: 00016655

**Project title:** Unhealthy food advertising to South African children through television: A content analysis

**Degree:** Masters

### Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received by the School on 18 March 2022 in connection with the above, was not reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **EXEMPT APPROVAL** by the School. As this was done in error, HSSREC had a look at the application and now granting it **EXPEDITED FULL APPROVAL**.

**Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.**

This approval is valid until 05 June 2024.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,

Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

### Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: [hssrec@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:hssrec@ukzn.ac.za) Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

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