The Impact of Social Media Advertisement on Children Consuming Behavior: Case of yogurt products in Morocco

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Summary:

Social media is represent a selection of platforms used by advertisements targeting all kinds of consumers. In 2019 “TotallyAwesome” showed that, 90% of children between the ages of 4 and 12 use social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. Considering that, children are considered as the primary target group by companies in the given communication. In 2017, the American Psychological Association report shows that spending time on social media by children has an impact on their consuming behavior toward products and brands.

This paper aims to study the influence of social media advertisement on children consuming behavior toward dairy products, more specifically yogurt in Morocco. We will focus on the time spent on Social media, the visual advertisement, the sound advertisement and their influence on the children’s daily yogurt consumption for a sample of 528 kids. The results showed that the time spent on Social Media has a positive impact on the children’s yogurt consumption. Also, children seem to be more influenced by sound advertising more than the visual one. Compared to the advertisement on TV, the advertisement in Social Media has more impacts on children's consumption behavior.

Keywords: Social Media advertisement; Children consumption; Yogurt consumption, Moroccan context.
L’impact de la publicité dans les médias sociaux sur le comportement de l’enfant consommateur : Cas du produit yaourt au Maroc

Résumé :

Les médias sociaux sont un champ propice pour la publicité et le ciblage de tout genre de consommateurs. L’organisation “TotallyAwesome” avait montré en 2019, que 90% des enfants âgés entre 4 et 12 ans utilisent les médias sociaux comme Facebook, Instagram et YouTube. En 2017, un rapport de l’association américaine de la psychologie a montré dans que le temps passé sur les réseaux sociaux par les enfants influence leur comportement de consommation vis- à- vis des produits et des marques.

Cette recherche a pour objectif d’explorer l’influence des médias sociaux sur le comportement de consommation des enfants marocains envers les produits “yaourt”. Nous allons nous concentrer sur le temps passé sur les médias sociaux, la publicité visuelle et celle auditive et voir quel est leur impact sur la consommation journalière des yaourts chez un échantillon de 528 enfants.

Les résultats obtenus montrent que le temps passé sur les médias sociaux a un impact positif sur la consommation journalière du yaourt chez les enfants. Aussi, les enfants se sont avérés très sensibles à la publicité auditive qu’à celle visuelle. En comparaison avec la publicité télévisée, la publicité sur les médias sociaux a un impact plus important sur le comportement de consommation des enfants.

Mots clés: La publicité sur les médias sociaux; l’enfant consommateur; la consommation des yaourts, Le contexte marocain.
Introduction:

The dairy industry in Morocco has been developed since the independence of the country. In fact, this industry comprises 82 factories across Morocco. From Tangier to Lagouira, approximately 80% of the production takes place in the north of the country (Ghrab, Loukkos, Tadla, Doukkala, Chaouia, Souss Massa, Saiss, etc) as displayed in the following map:

![Fig 1. Dairy Companies’ location (Fimalait, 2017, p.8)](image)

*Note that the following map focuses only on the regions where the factories are present

In 2016, Morocco produced 2.6 Billion Liters of milk. Nevertheless, the average growth of production is still considered weak and did not exceed 5% in 2017 (Benlakhal, 2017). However, the self-sufficiency rate jumped from 88% in 2008 to 96% in 2017 (Fimalait, 2017).

The Dairy market in Morocco, is a competitive market and consist of 11 firms. But only two of them lead the market, namely “Danone” and “Jaouda”, wich hold 80% of the market share.
Danone faced a boycott during 2018 and had a lot of difficulties to keep its market share. Among many solutions, to get out of this crisis, Danone oriented its commercial policy to Social media. Danone had counted on this kind of commercial communication to regain its clients’ trust and to start a new customer relationship. This strategic orientation was copied by other competitors and Social media became in Morocco the new battle ground for the dairy producers.

The choice of the use of Social media by those companies has multiple reasons. In fact, there are 22.57 million internet users in Morocco and 86% of them use the internet every day (Hootsuite, 2020). The social media users reached 17 million which represent 47% of total population and each Moroccan spends an average of two hours and half per day using Social media (Hootsuite, 2020). Furthermore, statistics show that WhatsApp (81%), Facebook (76%) and YouTube (60%) are respectively, the most used platforms by Moroccans (Hootsuite, 2020).

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Dairy companies consider milk as a lead product because it doesn’t generate much profit for the companies as derived products do, such cheese and yogurts. The Yogurt is the main product for dairy Companies, because it includes a good profit margin. This product is targeting kids and families in general. As such, the use of Social media for targeting kids is a strategic way to reach this category of consumers. This strategic choice pushes us to think about the efficiency of this marketing action.

In this research we are going to tackle the following question: Do the social media advertisement, affect the children’s daily yogurt consumption in Morocco?

In order to approach this question, we will, first represent the conceptual framework of our study, by representing a literature review of the different concepts related to our research topic. After that, we will present our research model and justify the methodology adopted. We will continue by presenting our finding followed by a discussion of the managerial implications. At the end, we will present the research perspectives and limitations and a conclusion.

1. **Conceptual Framework**

Social media represent an Internet environment where the companies promote their products and services. Social network marketing is the use of social networks by companies for brand building, enhancing brand loyalty and for sharing their advertising campaigns (Lemish, 2007). Marketers then become able to target a large audience group that is characterized by homogeneity, interactivity and by sharing contents (Sramova, 2014).

The children’s consumption behavior related to media was studied by a few authors (Sramova, 2013, Dzupina, 2014). In fact, Social Media is a way to spread advertisement messages, because it allowed companies to use text, video and images to promote their goods and services. The purpose of this kind of media is the interactions generated between consumers and products, users (Tan et al., 2018; Folkvord et al., 2019).

Social media are an attractive platform for food industries to promote their products. Research shows that social media are popular platforms for advertisers to target young audiences with food marketing (Šramová, 2014; Tan et al., 2018; Folkvord et al., 2019). That’s because it has become a huge part of children’s daily media consumption, as for many children it has even become a substitute for watching television programs (Ofcom, 2017).

Johnson (2003) explained the fact that the rapid growth in the number of television stations and online venues has also led advertisers to market directly to children. In fact, children are early adopters of newer technologies, that is why media marketing and advertising campaigns using both television and newer media are more efficient into children’s consuming behavior (Roberts & al, 2010). According to Calvert (2008), children have the ability to understand a commercial message in an advertisement. Furthermore, as reported by the American Psychological Association
In 2014, children under the age of eight are accepting advertisements as “truthful, accurate and unbiased”. According to those research studies, we will assume that:

H1: The time spent on social media by children has a positive impact on their daily yogurt consumption.

H2: The time children spend watching TV has a positive impact on their daily yogurt consumption.

If the children believes in advertisements content, it is less likely that they will defend themselves to its persuasive appeals. Folkvord & al (2019) proved that food cues in media messages can lead to consumption behavior via simple and direct cue-reactivity mechanisms. On this basis, we assume that:

H3: Visual advertising has a positive impact on the children’s daily yogurt consumption.

H4: Sound advertising affect positively the children’s yogurt daily consumption.

In order to study our assumptions, we elaborate a research model proposition as follow:

Fig.3: The proposed research model

To boost our research model, we added two control variables. Namely, “Children dictate what to eat” and “Children’ Age”. We find it interesting to know the impact of those two variables on the other model variables, especially on the “time spent on social media” and its influence on kids’ meal choices “Dictate what to eat”. If those relationships are indeed significant, it will represent a good added value to our research study.
3. Material and Methods

In order to assess our conceptual model, we conducted an exploratory study among 232 parents (Mothers or Fathers) who have children aged between 4 years and 11 years old, and who consume yogurts. The parents provided us with data concerning a total of 528 kids.

The study was conducted inside the Agadir stores of the two major hypermarket chains in Morocco, Marjane & AswakAsalam. The participants were selected randomly at the yogurts aisle and we avoided asking kids directly, because their judgment is compromised by their age and state of mind and because they are easy to manipulate. The data was collected face to face using a questionnaire intended for parents. The questionnaire included not only questions about the kids’ yogurt consumption and the preferred bands, but also questions about the kids' frequency of the use of technology (Phones & Tablets), Social media and watching TV’ channels. The data were collected at the end of 2019.

To estimate our model, we used a linear structural relationship method (LISREL) based on maximum of likelihood. The data analysis was performed using SPSS v26 and AMOS v23.

4. Results and discussion

The results show that the average kids’ age composing our sample is 7.6 years old; 64% of the kids are sensitive to the yogurts companies’ ads and 65% don’t change the channel during the yogurts Ads. Also, 84.5% of kids are attracted by visual advertising, against 8.6% attracted by sound advertising and only 7% are attracted by text advertising. Additionally, 96% of the kids were able to recognize “Danone” as brand f, against 84% who recognize “Jaouda” and 55% for “Jibal”. We discovered also that 77% of kids, dictate what they want to eat to their parents.

Subsequently, the variables we used to study the causality connections, were measured using 5 points Likert ordinal scales and binomial values (Yes/No). Furthermore, to test the external validity of the model, we conducted a multiple regression based on linear structural relationship (LISREL) by maximum of likelihood. We used the indicators of: CMIN/DF (The minimum discrepancy); GFI (Goodness of Fit Index); RMR (The root mean square residual); TLI (Tucker Lewis index); CFI (Comparative Fit index) and RMSEA (Root mean square error of approximation). The tests we relied upon are presented in the following table 1:
Table 1. Model’ validity indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indices</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fit Indices</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GFI</td>
<td>0.950</td>
<td>&gt; 0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMSEA</td>
<td>0.080</td>
<td>&lt; 0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMR</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>Lowest value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Baseline Comparison Indices</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFI</td>
<td>0.954</td>
<td>&gt; 0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLI</td>
<td>0.861</td>
<td>&gt; 0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discrepancy Index</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMIN/DF</td>
<td>4.193</td>
<td>1&lt;CMIN/DF&lt;5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the previous table, we can see that our model is well adjusted, because all indices are significant according to Arbuckle (2007). The error estimation (RMSEA) does not exceed 9% and the residual is about 3%, which is acceptable. The Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) shows that our results are not affected by the size of the sample for a value of 0.861 and the GFI exceeds 90% proving an excellent model fit.

Additionally, we note that in order to enhance our model fit quality and to improve our statistical analysis, we introduced some control variables (Kids’ Age and Time spent in watching TV). In summary, we present our estimation results through the following table:

Table 2. Significant estimated variables’ relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables Relationship</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>C.R.</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHILDREN’ AGE INFLUENCE:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time spent on SM</td>
<td>-0.028</td>
<td>0.039</td>
<td>-0.731</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time spent watching TV</td>
<td>-0.028</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>-3.445</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Advertising</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>2.109</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound Advertising</td>
<td>-0.028</td>
<td>0.164</td>
<td>-2.019</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictate what to eat</td>
<td>0.066</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>6.069</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily yogurt Consumption</td>
<td>-0.092</td>
<td>0.020</td>
<td>-4.645</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SOCIAL MEDIA ADS’ INFLUENCE ON YOGURT CONSUMPTION:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily yogurt Consumption</td>
<td>-0.332</td>
<td>0.164</td>
<td>-2.019</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily yogurt Consumption</td>
<td>-0.075</td>
<td>0.323</td>
<td>-2.382</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictate what to eat</td>
<td>0.115</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>4.579</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictate what to eat</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>3.710</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***: Significant at 1%; **: Significant at 5%; SM: Social Media

The estimated relationships between variables composing our model shows significant results. In fact, we were able to test the influence of children’ age on entertainment activities and consumption behavior. Results show that when the child is growing up, he or she starts spending more time on social media but less on TV. Also, the child’s daily yogurt consumption decreases
when the child grows up. We observed that the age has a significant impact on the effect of advertising on the child. In fact, the older the child is, the more he becomes attracted by the visual advertising. On the contrary, the older the child is, the less he becomes attracted to sound advertising.

However, we noticed that the time spent by children on social media has a big significant positive impact on the daily yogurt consumption. Our results prove that yogurt consumption is affected positively by time spent on social media and sound advertising. Consequently, we accept hypotheses H1 and H4. Furthermore, the visual advertising and the time spent on TV has a negative impact on children’ yogurt consumption. Based on that, we can reject the hypotheses H2 and H3.

Additionally, the results show that watching TV has a negative impact on yogurt consumption. This can be explained by the fact that, the Moroccan kids watch foreign TV channels more than national ones. Consequently, yogurt companies can’t reach them. This situation makes the use of social media more suitable for targeting kids.

In summary, can say that our results confirm Tan & al (2018) and Folkvord & al (2019) findings, which established that social media advertisement positively affects children consuming behavior. However, the most important result we have reached is the fact that the more child spends time on social media, he or she starts to dictate what he or she wants to eat to his parents. This impact of social media on the child consuming behavior, is bigger than that of watching TV. This result proves with no doubt the role of social media advertisement and its capacity to modify or change the children’s consuming behavior.

Speaking from a managerial perspective, our results confirm that yogurts companies’ managers should adopt a good social media advertisement strategy, because it’s a good way to target children and to stimulate their yogurt consumption. Managers should take into consideration that sound advertisement has a bigger effect on children than the visual one. Social media advertisement strategy should focus on sound advertisement more than any other form of advertisement, because it has a positive impact on yogurt consumption. Furthermore, the strength of social media advertisement is its capacity to push the child to dictate what product or food he or she wants to consume. This effect makes the child a suggestive power inside the family.
Conclusion and perspectives:

Through this research, we tried to study the impact of social media advertisement on children consuming behavior in the Moroccan context. One of the main objectives of our research was to determine the existence of a direct relationship between social media advertisement and the Moroccan children’s consuming behavior toward yogurts products. We also were able to prove that social media advertisement has a big effect on the child, pushing him or her to decide and dictate to his or her parents what to eat.

Furthermore, our research study allowed us to test the effect of children’ age on their entertainment orientations. In fact, we observed that when a child is growing, he or she spends more time on social media than watching TV. This result proves the importance of using social media, rather than TV to target this category of consumers.

Although, our research study has led to relatively good results, it has some limitations. Indeed, considering the nature of our questionnaire, the parents’ answers could have been biased due to forgetfulness or state of mind.

By highlighting the above-mentioned limitations, we can raise potential research venues. Indeed, we can try to compare between the social media communication strategic used by the different dairy companies. We can also optimize our current research model by incorporating other factors (emergency of purchase or out of stock situation for the desired yogurt brand as examples) or other variables like the kind of social media used which can indeed influence the child consuming behavior. Finally, it would also be interesting to conduct a study taking into account specific circumstances (the impact of social media during confinement on children consuming behavior) to verify if the relationships validated in our model are indeed maintained or not.
Bibliography:
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