

Influence of Media Outlook and Advertising on Dietary Behaviours of Female Students

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Article History

Received: 10 November 2025

Revised: 1 December 2025

Accepted: 2 December 2025

Published: 3 December 2025

Keywords

Dietary behaviours

Media outlook

Social media influence

Abstract

The study focused on Influence of Media Outlook and Advertising on Dietary Behaviors of Female Students in Nwafor Orizu College of Education. The researcher formulated five research purposes and five corresponding research questions. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The area of the study was Nwafor Orizu College of Education Nsugbe, Anambra State. The population of the study was comprising of 1901 female Students of the institution. The sampling technique used was multistage random sampling techniques and a sample size of 200 respondents was selected for this study. Instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The data collected were analyzed using statistical mean and standard deviation. The results indicate that Media Outlook and Advertising significantly influence the dietary behaviors of female students, with a strong emphasis on promoting healthy food choices. The findings also identified the need for nutrition and media literacy education and critical thinking skills to help female students navigate the complex media landscape and make informed dietary choices as one of the strategies towards improving the media influence on dietary behavior. This Study contributes to the existing literature on the impact of media on dietary behaviors and highlights the importance of promoting healthy food habits via media influence among female students in NOCEN.

How to cite: Emeka, E. C. (2025). Influence of Media Outlook and Advertising on Dietary Behaviours of Female Students. *Teaching, Learning, and Development*, 3(2), 198–205. doi: 10.62672/telad.v3i2.132

1. Introduction

The media have been found to influence the dietary behaviors and choices of individuals across all ages. Media comprised printed and motion platforms such as newspapers, magazines, radio, television and billboards, while modern social media covered interactive digital outlets including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Snapchat, Google, WhatsApp and blogs. Individuals' lifestyles were strongly shaped by the types of messages and digital exposures they consumed, particularly with ICT-driven platforms reshaping communication, behaviour, knowledge access and perception among learners and users (Manafa et al., 2022; Ohamobi et al., 2020; Osegbue et al., 2025; Ohamobi & Osegbue, 2025). The social media outlook and representation as well as advertisements placed by manufacturers and marketers influence the life habits and choice of people; food and nutrition aspect included.

According to Marijn-Stok et al (2018), dietary behavior refers to the actions and choices individual make regarding their food consumption, including what, when and how much they eat. This behavior is influenced by a variety of factors such as personal preferences, social norms, economic conditions, cultural practices and environmental influence. Stok further explains that understanding dietary behavior is essential for developing effective nutrition and addressing diet-related health issues. Dietary habits refer to the long-term dietary patterns and habits that an individual forms and maintains in their daily life. Dietary behavior is an essential and ongoing activity in daily life which involves internal, external and conscious activities related to eating.

Every nutrition group in the life cycle has notable dietary behaviors which marks them out from the others. Fen student ages 16-24 years are in their late tensor early adulthood. These young adults experience a potentially vulnerable and easily influenced or adaptable transitional period known as the "Emerging Adulthood" years. During this development stage, female students may develop nutritional habits that may have long-lasting effects on their health. They exercise freedom and independence in decision making and have as well detached from the family giving room to unrestricted food decisions.

The dietary behaviours of female students are influence by factors such as culture, family, economic status, peer influence, media outlook, advertising and body composition. Key among these factors are media outlook and advertising of food items. According to global telecom and entertainment and media outlook media outlook

refers to the projected trends and future developments in the media industry, encompassing various segments such as entertainment, telecommunications and advertising. Media outlook is a term used to describe the overall tone and direction of the media over an issue media can be in the form of prints, television, radio and online new (internet). There are lots of researches which suggest that media, particularly social media can have a significant impact on female students dietary behaviours in specific ways such as: body image issues, eating disorders, misinformation etc

The social media often portrays idealized body image that can lead to body dissatisfaction among young adults. This can result in unhealthy dietary behaviours such as restrictive eating, binge eating or the development of eating disorder Kelly (2015) Mental Health problem according to Chou et al (2024), The constant companion with others on social media platforms can accelerate feelings of Inadequacy and how self-esteem, contributing to mental health issues like anxiety and depression which can influence nutrition. Studies have shown a correlation between high social media usage and increased symptoms of depression and anxiety among young adults. Time spent on social media can disrupt regular eating patterns, leading to poor nutrition choice. For instance, exposure to food advertising on social media can increase cravings for unhealthy foods, which engagement in social media activities during mealtime can distract individual from mindful eating practices

Young adults are often exposed to nutrition misinformation on social media, which can lead to the adoption of food diets or extreme eating practices that are not scientifically supported and potentially harmful to health. Apart from the view of outlook of the media on a particular food items and healthier tips, dietary habits and choice (dietary behaviours) may also be influenced by mode of advertisements of food items and health tips as a result of social media's effectiveness in the dissemination of food and health information, Social media advertising has the ability to impact individual health, regardless of whether the information provided is accurate or inaccurate.

Media outlook relies heavily on social influence strategies, harnessing the economic value of social networks and social aspiration to persuade people to buy using artificial intelligences advertisements can be created, executed, evaluated and refined within hours, thereby enabling more profound levels of persuasion than ever before. Social media is a digital technology that facilitates the sharing of text and multimedia through virtual networks and communities (Dollar, 2023). Social media are computer-based technology that focuses on communication, community-based inputs, interactions, content-sharing and collaboration

Packaging and advertisement have helped to present and market unhealthy food to the populace in a rather easy way. Dietary behaviour has been influenced by misleading and often contra dietary message from the food industry, media and the government. These unrealistic messages have led to the adoption of diet that are highly processed overly salty, high in sugar and low in nutrient (Chandon, 2013). The resultant effect of which is an epidemic chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease and cancer. Similarly, Campbell et al (2016) states that maintaining a healthy diet has already been shown effective in preventing illnesses such as early-stage of heart disease and diabetes and even cancer. Numerous studies underscore the influential role of media and advertising in shaping dietary behaviors among young adults. For instance, A study by Larson (2019) found that exposure to food advertising was associated with increased consumption of unhealthy foods among college students. Similarly research by Kelly (2015) highlighted the influence of social media platforms on the dietary habits of young adults, with frequent user showing a propensity for consuming highly processed foods.

According to Ruby and Rozin (2019) food selection in the past was influenced by lesser factor such as availability, seasonality and the likes. However, in recent times bigger factors including media outlook, advertising, peer influence etc play major roles making food selection an uphill task. Social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok have become major source of information for female students on what they should eat and how they should look. Some common message promoting dietary, body image ideal and specific diets such as the keto and low-carb diets. The complex behaviours of college student are influenced by a complex interplay of factors, among which media outlook and advertising plays increasingly significant roles. With the proliferation of digital media and the omnipresence of food advertisement, understanding their impact on student's dietary choices has become a pressing concern. Nwafor Orizu College of Education Nsugbe, Anambra East Local Government Area of Anambra State, a state-owned tertiary institution where students enroll and acquire the NCE or Bachelor's certificates serves as a suitable study area for investigating these influences within the higher Education landscape in the region.

Furthermore, the media's portrayal of food eating behaviour can contribute to the normalization of certain dietary patterns regardless of their nutrition values. As college students strive to fit in with societal norms and peer groups, students may be more susceptible to the influence which may greatly influence their eating habit. This research project aims to investigate and identify this influence by employing a comprehensive approach. Through surveys, interview and content analysis, the study seeks to uncover the ways in which media and advertising can influence the dietary habits of student at Nwafor Orizu College of Education Nsugbe students.

Despite the increasing awareness of the importance of healthy dietary behaviours, many young adults, particularly female college students, continues to exhibit poor eating habits and consumers diet with poor nutritional quality. One significant contributing factor to this phenomenon maybe the pervasive influence of media outlook and advertising. The social media have become an information hub bearing both factual and non-factual information. There is also the advertiser who in a bid to market their products commit lies and deception. These information and advertorials may have an influence on the dietary habits of female students at Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe. Therefore, the problem to be addressed in this study is the influence of media outlook and advertising on the dietary behaviours of female student at Nwafor Orizu College of Education Nsugbe with a focus on media consumption and nutrition knowledge, identifying and understanding these factors is crucial for developing targeted interventions and educational strategies to promote healthier eating habits and improve the overall nutritional well-being of female college students.

1.1. Objectives

- a. Ascertain the influence of media outlook on students' perception of body image in Nwafor Orizu College of Education Nsugbe (NOCEN)
- b. Ascertain the influence of media outlook on students' perception of healthy diet in NOCEN
- c. Ascertain the influence of media outlook on the dietary behaviours of female student in NOCEN
- d. Ascertain the influence of advertising on the dietary behaviours of female student in NOCEN
- e. Suggest strategies towards improving students' dietary behaviours through media presentation and advertising

1.2. Research Questions

- a. What are the influence of media outlook on student's perception of body image in NOCEN
- b. How can media outlook influence perception of healthy diets on female student in NOCEN
- c. What are influence of media outlook on the dietary behaviour of female student in NOCEN
- d. How have advertising influence the dietary behaviours of female student in NOCEN
- e. What are the strategies toward improving students' dietary behaviour through media presentation and advertising.

2. Method

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which involved collecting data to describe the characteristics and current status of the population in a systematic manner, as noted by Osegbu, Ifeakor and Enemuo (2014). The research was conducted at Nwafor Orizu College of Education Nsugbe, located in Anambra East Local Government Area of Anambra State, about 30 kilometers northwest of Onitsha. The population of the study comprised of all the female Students in Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe as represented in Table 1.

Table 1. Population of the Study

DEPARTMENT	DEGREE	NCE
SASS		
POL	178	35
ECONS	57	25
GEO	2	4
CRS	36	20
SOS	163	19
HISTORY	24	15
MUSIC	7	5
<i>SUB-TOTAL</i>	<i>467</i>	<i>123</i>
SCHOOL OF LANG.		
ENGLISH	111	25
IGBO	30	20
FRENCH	32	19
<i>SUB-TOTAL</i>	<i>173</i>	<i>64</i>
SCHOOL OF SCI.		
MATHS	34	19
PHYSICS	18	7

DEPARTMENT	DEGREE	NCE
BIOLOGY	255	95
CHEMISTRY	79	45
HKPE	64	6
INTER. SCIENCE	20	20
COMPUTER	69	25
<i>SUB-TOTAL</i>	<i>539</i>	<i>217</i>
SCHOOL OF VOCATIONAL TECH		
BUSINESS EDU	122	23
AGRIC EDUCATION	25	9
FINE ART	17	9
HOME ECONOMICS	19	7
<i>SUB-TOTAL</i>	<i>183</i>	<i>48</i>
SCHOOL OF GENERAL STUDIES		
G & C	45	23
<i>SUB-TOTAL</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>23</i>
SCHOOL OF EARLY		
PED	32	9
ECCE	22	11
<i>SUB-TOTAL</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>GRAND-TOTAL</i>	<i>1,406</i>	<i>495</i>

There are four programs offered in NOCEN but I only make use of the regular students with the total population of 1,901 female students (NOCEN, 2024). The Sample Comprises of 200 female students from different departments in Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe (Table 2). The Sample size was drawn using multistage random sampling techniques.

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents According to Schools, and Department

S/N	Name of School	Department	No of Respondents
1	School of Languages	English	80
		Igbo	20
		French	20
2	School of General Studies	Guidance and Counseling	20
3	School of Vocational and Technical Education	Business Education	35
		Agric	10
		Home Economics	15
	Total		200

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Research Question 1 What Are the Influence of Media Outlook on Students' Perception of Body Image in NOCEN?

Table 3. Mean Rating on Influence of Media Outlook on Students' Perception of Body Image in NOCEN N: 200

S/N	Influence of Media Outlook on Students' Perception of Body Image in NOCEN	SA	A	D	SD	$\sum FX$	X	Remark
1	Social media have made students to be conscious of their body figure.	80	90	20	10	200	3.2	Accepted
2	Through social media, students can now identify and improve on an unpopular body image.	320	270	40	10	640	3.1	Accepted
3	Students now have the knowledge on how to improve their body image through social media.	90	70	10	30	200	2.8	Accepted
4	Social media have helped to reduce the incident of body shaming.	360	210	20	30	620	3.1	Accepted
5	Social media have helped reduce inferiority complex attached to body image.	75	60	25	40	200	2.9	Accepted
		300	180	50	40	570		
		84	71	29	16	200		
		336	213	58	16	623		
		70	82	18	30	200		
		280	246	36	30	592		

From Table 3, items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 with mean scores 3.2, 3.1, 2.8, 3.1 and 2.9 were above the decision rule of 2.50 and were accepted. This implies that all the items on the table are influence of media outlook on student's perception of body image in NOCEN

3.2. Research Question 2: How Can Media Outlook Influence Perception of Healthy Diets on Female Students' in NOCEN?

Table 4. Mean Rating of Influence of Media Outlook on Students Perception on Healthy Diets N: 200

S/N	Influence of Media Outlook on Students' Perception on Healthy Diets	SA	A	D	SD	ΣFX	X	Remark
6	Through blogs, students' can learn about "healthy" and "unhealthy" foods	94	78	22	6	200	3.3	Accepted
7	Teachings about healthy diets and lifestyle on different social media handle can inculcate some knowledge of foods into students.	376	234	44	6	660	3.0	Accepted
8	Catchy advertisements make students to grade and accept foods.	76	81	24	19	200	3.0	Accepted
9	Media outlet promotes healthy eating habit with the help of social media influencers.	304	243	48	19	614	2.7	Accepted
10	Through advertisements students can build a dietary pattern in order to achieve a body size or figure.	82	70	18	30	200	3.1	Accepted
		328	210	36	30	604		
		61	74	26	39	200		
		244	222	52	39	557		
		84	71	29	16	200		
		336	213	58	16	623		

From Table 4 above, items 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 with mean scores of 3.3, 3.0, 3.0, 2.7 and 3.1 were above the decision rule of 2.50 and were accepted. This implies that all the items on the table are influence of media outlook on students' perception on healthy diets.

3.3. Research Question 3 What Are Influence of Media Outlook on the Dietary Behaviour of Female Student in NOCEN?

Table 5. Mean Rating on Influence of Media Outlook on the Dietary Behaviours of Female Students' in NOCEN N: 200

S/N	Influence of Media Outlook on the Dietary Behaviours of Female Students' in NOCEN	SA	A	D	SD	ΣFX	X	Remark
11	Social media can control the diet of female students.	75	70	27	28	200	2.9	Accepted
12	Bloggers and influencers help students to make dietary choices.	300	210	54	28	592	3.1	Accepted
13	Social media views is a strong force that plays a role in the determination of dietary habits among female NOCEN students.	83	79	17	21	200	3.0	Accepted
14	Media influence can make female students to follow a specific type of diet.	332	237	34	21	624	3.1	Accepted
15	Female students can develop negative dietary behaviours such as binge eating as a result of social media influence	90	80	20	10	200	3.0	Accepted
		320	240	40	10	610		
		86	83	14	17	200		
		344	249	28	17	638		
		70	80	30	20	200		
		280	240	60	20	600		

From Table 5, items 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 with mean scores of 2.9, 3.1, 3.0, 3.1 and 3.0 were above the decision rule of 2.50 and were accepted. This implies that all the items on the table are the influence of media outlook on the dietary behaviours of female students in NOCEN.

3.4. Research Question 4 How Have Advertising Influence the Dietary Behaviours of Female Student in NOCEN?

Table 6. Influence of Advertising on the Dietary Behaviours of Female Students in NOCEN N: 200

S/N	Influence of Advertising on the Dietary Behaviours of Female Students' in NOCEN.	SA	A	D	SD	ΣFX	X	Remark
16	Advertising alters buying appeal for female students.	82	70	30	18	200	3.0	Accepted
17	Advertising can make students make dietary choices irrespective of nutritional quality.	328	210	60	18	616	2.8	Accepted
18	Through catchy advertisements companies can present bad product to look very good and attractive.	75	60	25	40	200	3.2	Accepted
19	Advertisement have increased the consumption of junk foods and empty calories food amongst female students in NOCEN.	300	180	50	40	570	3.1	Accepted
		91	85	15	9	200		
		360	255	30	9	658		
		87	74	26	13	200		
		348	222	52	13	635		

From Table 6, items 16, 17, 18 and 19 with mean score of 3.0, 2.8, 3.2 and 3.1 were above the decision rule of 2.5 and were accepted. This implies that all the items on the table are the influence of advertising on dietary behaviour of female students' in the study area.

3.5. Research Question 5: What Are the Strategies Toward Improving Students Dietary Behaviour Through Media Presentation and Advertising

Table 7. Mean Rating on the Strategies Towards Improving Students Dietary Behaviour Through Media Presentation and Advertising N: 200

S/N	The Strategies Towards Improving Students' Dietary Behaviour Through Media Presentation and Advertising	SA	A	D	SD	ΣFX	X	Remark
20	Incorporate nutrition education into media Content, such as T.V. shows, movies and blogs.	82	69	24	25	200	3.0	Accepted
21	Feature upright role models and influencers in promoting healthy eating habits.	328	207	48	25	608	3.4	Accepted
22	Positive advertisement and media content should be used to encourage students decision about diets and nutrition.	100	85	10	5	200	3.2	Accepted
23	Collaborating with social media influencers, bloggers or content creators to educate on healthy eating habits and lifestyle.	400	255	20	5	680	2.9	Accepted
24	Developing advertising campaigns that help to incorporate engaging elements such as rewards or challenges to encourage healthy eating habit.	80	93	20	7	200	3.1	Accepted
		320	278	40	7	646		
		75	70	27	28	200		
		300	210	54	28	592		
		84	73	16	27	200		
		336	219	32	27	614		

From Table 7 above item 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24 with mean score of 3.0, 3.4, 3.2, 2.9 and 3.1 were above the decision rule of 2.50 and were accepted. This implies that all the items on the table are strategies towards improving students dietary behaviour through media presentation and advertising.

3.6. Discussion

From the analysis above using mean and standard deviation method of data analysis, the following findings were made. On testing question one, the researcher discovered that the calculated mean (\bar{X}) value is more than the upper limit of acceptance 2.50, going by the decision rule; we agree that media outlook has a significant influence on students' perception of body image. The above decision is in line with finding of Hemberge (2012), who noted that social media fosters an environment where food choices are linked to beauty standards. On the other hand, from the second question we discovered that the calculated mean (\bar{X}) value is more than the upper limit of acceptance 2.50 going by the decision rule; we agree that media outlook has a significant influence on students' perception of healthy diets.

The finding agrees with the finding of Nasir et al (2021), who stated that food marketing through media significantly affects adolescents' food preferences, especially towards high-calorie, low-nutrient foods. The researcher also concluded from the analysis of the third question that media outlook has a significant influence on the dietary behaviours of female students in NOCEN. This decision is based on the outcome of the calculated mean which is above the upper limit of acceptance 2.50. This decision aligns with the findings of Cavicchi et al (2018), who state that media serves as a "powerful environmental factor shaping food choices," especially for young women who are more susceptible to body image portrayals and diet-related messages.

From the analysis of the fourth question that advertising have influence the dietary behaviours of female student in NOCEN. This decision is based on the on the outcome of the calculated mean above the acceptance mean of 2.5. Manjur (2015), who opined that public health campaigns promoting healthy eating can counterbalance the impact of unhealthy food advertisements. This suggests that awareness campaigns in Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe, could improve students' dietary behaviours by promoting healthier choices. The researcher also concluded from the analysis of the fifth question that some strategies such as knowledgeable media presentation and positive advertisement can be employed to improve student dietary behaviour. This confirms Tobey and Manore (2014) research, which identified that media exposure contributes to body dissatisfaction, leading to unhealthy dietary behaviours such as skipping meals or following restrictive diets.

4. Conclusion

The study's findings reinforce the idea that media and advertising play a crucial role in shaping dietary behaviours among female students in Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe. The promotion of unhealthy food products contributes to poor eating habits, while body image pressures influence dieting behaviors. However, health-conscious advertisements can serve as a countermeasure by promoting balanced diets. For improved dietary habits among students, media literacy programs and regulated advertising policies should be considered. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made to promote healthy dietary habits and positive body image among female students:

- a. Educational authorities and curriculum developers should incorporate media literacy into the curriculum to empower students to critically evaluate media messages and advertisements and also provide nutrition education and promote healthy eating habits through school programs and policies.
- b. Regulatory Agencies such as Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC) should monitor and limit media exposure to promote healthy media habits and promoting a safe and secure online environment, fostering digital inclusion, and developing policies for responsible digital engagement.
- c. Media Practitioners and Advertisers should use diverse and realistic representations in media messages and advertisements to promote positive body image.

Policy makers should develop regulations to limit unhealthy food advertising and promote healthy media habits and also promote nutrition education and healthy eating habits through school programs and policies.

Author Contributions

The author confirms sole responsibility for the following: study conception and design, data collection, analysis and interpretation of results, and manuscript preparation.

Funding

No funding support was received.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Declaration on AI Use

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) or AI-assisted tools were used in the preparation of this manuscript. AI were used only to improve readability and language under strict human oversight; no content, ideas, analyses, or conclusions were generated by AI.

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