

BUSINESS PROJECT

Dissertation

***The use of Pester power by companies in food marketing
& its impact on children's health.***



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Abstract

This study is about Pester Power, a social trend **affecting the majority of parents in Ireland**. Children have become a prime target for Marketers. The research will focus on **food marketing**. Indeed, this sector can prompt a lot of consequences on **children's health**.

I chose this subject because I am preparing a Bachelor of Business in Marketing. It is very important for me to understand **the strategy of brands**. More precisely, I am looking for a block release training from September 2016 to August 2017 in France in the food-processing industry.

The main question that will guide the proposed study is: **"The use of Pester Power by companies in food marketing and its impact on children's health"**. To answer this question, I read some analysis and studies about Pester Power, Children Eating Habits, Food Marketing, Children's Obesity, Children's Health and Parents' Purchase Behavior, exhibited in the **Literature Review**.

Marketing affects children's life, particularly their physical health. **In Ireland, 1 out of 4 children is overweight or obese** and this country is on course to **become the most obese country in Europe**.

Parents need to learn how to say "no" to their children and **brands have to reinforce their healthy eating messages**.

I interviewed **parents** by myself to know their opinion about Pester Power and the role of brands (and their ads) in food marketing. Moreover, I also interviewed a **professional** in Food Marketing. I used **qualitative** and **quantitative methods** to interview them.

Introduction

“Mam I want this. Dad I want this.” I remember me when I was young... **Less than 50% of Irish parents tend to resist giving in to their children’s pester power**, highlighting the substantial impact children have on their parents’ purchase decisions.

Brands take advantages of this fact. Indeed, some marketers **promote junk food** by using TV adverts for example. Conversely, other brands are trying **to reinforce healthy eating messages** to reduce **children’s obesity** in Ireland.

This is a serious problem in the country; parents and brands have to work together to overcome the pester power and children’s obesity.

According to a French newspaper, Le Figaro, **almost 20% of world population will be obese** in 2025. For the first time in its history, humanity has more obese than malnourished people. Obesity increases risk of stroke, diabetes, hormonal abnormality and other pathologies. It costs approximately two thousands billion to the global economy each year...

Nowadays, over **a third of Irish parents** claim that their **children influence them when buying food**. Indeed, it is difficult to say “no” to them. Pester power is a **relevant social trend today**. It is the **ability** that children have to make their **parents buy** something, by **asking** for it **many times until they get it**.

I want to understand **how pester power works**. This research study will be focused on **food marketing**, because pester power can have an **impact on children’s health**. We can speak about “**the junk food generation**”. Partly because of food marketing, 1 out of 4 children is overweight or obese in Ireland.

With this research, we will see **how food companies use pester power** and **its impact on children’s health**. Thanks to this understanding, it will be easier **to find solutions to keep children healthy**.

Literature Review

1/ How does the Pester Power work?

a) Pester power: Brand Home Group, 2016.

Kids are the **consumers of tomorrow**, which makes them the market share of the future. Thanks to their parents, children have already **huge spending power** despite their young age. We can speak of “Pester Power” or “The Nag Factor”. It all boils down to this: children have the power to persuade their parents (→**KIDINFLUENCE**) to buy them something they do not really need. There are two laws:

1) **Law of PERSEVERANCE**: quitters never become winners. Indeed, the children repeatedly and incessantly nag their parents until they get the product they want. Research has shown that **after nine nagging sessions, parents eventually give in**.

2) **Law of NECESSITY**: In this case, children use **real arguments** such as why a certain product would be good for them or what negative aspects would come from not purchasing something.

b) Kids have serious ‘pester power’ on family food purchases, Ireland, May 2013. (thejournal.ie)

The influence of children on their parents’ purchasing decisions is strongest when it comes to **buying food**. The decision most open to being swayed by what the juniors want is the choice of **breakfast cereal**. After that, their influence is most felt in the choice of **snacks, treats, yoghurt and cheese**.

c) Marketing to Young families, Ireland, December 2012. (MINTEL)

In Ireland, children continue to exert an influence on their parents across a number of differing market segments and undoubtedly contribute to parental desire to purchase **products they feel their family will like**. However, children’s influence over purchase decisions is counterbalanced by parents exerting their **authority** to instill **core values** and **discipline** in their children. Less than 50% of Irish parents resist pester power from their children.

Children spend too much time on **the Internet**. Over 40% of Irish **parents limit their children’s access** to the Internet due to having concerns about the content of material their child is exposed to and worrying about their child’s welfare. This has implications for advertising aimed at children, with marketers needing to ensure their message is reaching their target markets.

Over two thirds of Irish consumers purchase items that they know their families will like. **Women** are the key gender for marketers to **target for family purchases**.

Over a third of Irish consumers are influenced by their children when buying food items.

2/ How are brands targeting children?

a) Pester power: the problem with marketing to children, Ireland, May 2008. (Consumer Association of Ireland)

Food marketing to children: Food marketing **affects children's food preferences, purchasing behavior and consumption.** Children are thought to be more **vulnerable** to influence by marketing than adults. Just as children enjoy the TV programmes they watch, they also engage with food marketing.

As well as **TV**, food is advertised to children in **magazines** and on **billboards**. Internet is also used to promote food products. Sometimes, **celebrities** and **cartoon characters** can be used in food promotion. Moreover, promotion to children occurs on food packaging itself. It can **feature games, competition** and **images attractive** to children. Some marketers aim **to harness pester power** so that children will nag their parents to buy certain products. Some children's food products are targeted at **parents**, but foods themselves can be aimed at children, where the food mimics a toy or a toy comes with the food product.

The researchers found that foods marketed to children are generally high in **fat, sugar** and **salt**. Effectively, ads for confectionery, breakfast cereals, snack, soft drinks and fast foods are most frequently shown. The UK Food Standards Agency identified an increase in the promotion of fast foods in the last 10 years.

The studies show that Irish children and teenagers have **far from the best diets**.

Obesity is an increasing problem. There is a **link between television viewing, diet and obesity**. The more TV children watch, the less they potentially engage in physical activity, contributing to obesity.

For some parents, junk food can be used as a **treat** or **reward** and restricted on other occasions. However, children do not just choose these foods based on taste. Marketing adds to the likelihood that children will purchase these foods or coerce their parents to buy them. We can think that marketing makes the forbidden even more desirable.

You can see in the following picture some examples of companies that try to target children.

HOW COMPANIES TARGET CHILDREN

Competitions

Kellogg's recently ran a promotion to enter a daily draw for the chance to be a zookeeper for a day. To enter you must text the code on promotional packs. Everyone who enters and provides a mobile phone number will receive an 'amazing animal fact' by SMS and the chance to download an animal ringtone.

Free stuff

Danone Danisimo, a yogurt drink aimed at children, gave away free letters of the alphabet magnets and urged children to 'collect them all'.

Food is fun

Were you told not to play with your food? Well some products are now designed with this exact theme in mind, such as Kellogg's Fruit Winders, Coco Pops Straws, Golden Vale Cheestrings, and Dairylea Dunkers.

Characters and idols

Spaghetti shapes are an old favourite. Children can eat Barbie and the Teletubbies, spaghetti shaped of course.

Target the parents

Food marketing can contain messages for both parents and children. Marketing can undermine the parent who aims to provide the best diet for their child. For example, Nutella is advertised as a great addition to breakfast for children. It's full of hazelnuts and milk. They fail to mention it's also high in fat and sugar.

Event sponsorship and merchandising

Well known brands, such as Coca Cola, have sponsored school sports events with free products for all involved. The marketing tactic aims that teens link happy memories with their product.

Outside of debates on nutrition and obesity, there are **ethical issues** to consider: should children be protected from such targeted marketing? The best interests of the child should be a primary consideration. Unfortunately, there are not at the heart of food marketing children. The importance of good nutrition to the growth and development of children cannot be overstated.

b) Pester power. (Brandhome)

Television and **the Internet** are the **most effective channels to catch the eye of children**. That is because children eat up and more hours of screen-time. They stare at their TV for hours on end and the Internet has become part of their daily routine.

One of the biggest Pester Power successes has probably been the "Flippo" hype. Smiths crisps (now Lays) became incredibly successful by putting **little plastic discs with Looney Tunes characters**, in each bag, which made every kid 'flip out' (pun intended) trying **to collect them all**. Another example is the **gadgets** that can be found inside almost every box of cereal. Sometimes the whole family is being targeted. Danone is aimed at adults and children alike. If you're a grown-up, Actimel is good for your resilience. If you are a kid, Actimel will transform you into a really powerful superhero.

c) How Marketers target kids. (Media Smarts)

The Internet is an extremely desirable medium for marketers wanting to target children:

- It's part of youth culture.
- Kids are often online alone, without parental supervision.
- Sophisticated technologies make it easy to collect information from young people for marketing research, and to target individual children with personalized advertising.

d) Marketing obesity? Junk food, advertising and kids, January 2011, by Rhonda Jolly. (INTERNET, GOOGLE)

More disposable income is now available to many families. Consequently, **parents appear more willing to buy goods** for their children than in the past. They desire to provide **the best for them**. However, with the Pester Power, parents are forced to choose between being "the bad guy" by saying no to junk food or giving in to incessant demands. **Parents feel stressed**.

Children's understanding of advertising:

- ✓ Up to four years: advertisements seen as entertainment
- ✓ Ages six to seven years: believe advertisements provide information
- ✓ Ages seven to eight years: cannot distinguish between information and intent to persuade
- ✓ Ages ten to twelve years: can understand motives and aims of advertising, but most unable to explain sales techniques.

Parents can counter advertising strategies. They have to get their children to understand this: **the main goal of advertising is to make them buy things** (often things they do not need and did not know they wanted until they have seen advertisements).

Half of all advertising time on children's television is devoted to food advertising. Food advertisements make extensive use of taste appeal to sell products; they also associate the products with fun, include the appeal of contests and, at times, stress the 'newness' of products. Many advertisements associate physical activity with the products and highlight the health benefits to be gained from their consumption. It is often stressed that the products contain "essential nutrients".

There is evidence that advertising unhealthy foods to children influences not only which brands they choose, but the overall balance of their diet, encouraging them to eat energy-dense salty, sugary or fatty foods in place of those which are more nutritious and wholesome.

It is not simply advertising on **television** that affects children's choices of unhealthy foods; many things contribute: **packaging of products, celebrity endorsements and the color and shape of foods, free games and downloads on children's websites are being sponsored by food companies**.

3/ Obesity's reasons & solutions.

a) Children's Eating Habits, Ireland, March 2014, by Sophie DORBIE. (MINTEL)

According to this study, **parents determine largely their children's eating habits**. Indeed, the establishment of good dietary habits for children depends primarily on **the household**. Supermarkets and restaurants should look to **reinforce healthy eating messages** to gain the trust and loyalty of parents. For example, they can do this by:

- The removal of junk food from checkouts
- Offering discounts on fresh produce lines
- The expansion of healthy options on children's menus.

Around a quarter of Irish children are classified as overweight or obese in 2013. How can they explain this figure?

- **Physical inactivity**
- **Unbalanced diets** (too much fat, sugar and salt & not enough fresh fruit and vegetables)

Children from semi and unskilled households are more likely overweight and obese than those from professional and skilled households. Girls are identified as leading more sedentary lifestyles than boys.

Since 2013, the Republic of Ireland has **prohibited the advertising of junk food during children's programming**.

Four in Ten Irish parents claim that advertising has an influence on what groceries their children want. Only a quarter of Irish parents think that their children do not influence their weekly shopping.

Some families do not prepare healthy dinners for their children for three reasons:

- Time
- Money
- Lack of cooking skills.

b) Attitudes To Food, Ireland, August 2013, by Sophie DORBIE. (MINTEL)

Consumers are aware of the need for a **healthy diet**: around six out of ten Irish consumers know what they should and should not eat to keep healthy, thus providing opportunities for **companies operating in the health food market**. Consumers are actively trying to reduce salt levels, thus creating **opportunities for brands** to develop reduced salt varieties of popular products.

c) Children 'targeted' by junk food ads, Ireland, April 2011. (IRISH EXAMINER)

Parents must exercise control over what their child is eating and also **put pressure on food companies** who promote junk food. An obese or overweight child is more likely to be an obese adult who will lead to increased risk of heart attack and stroke as well as diabetes.

d) Let's take on Childhood Obesity, Ireland, 2015. (SAFEFOOD)

Specialists recommend at least **60 minutes of physical activity for school aged children per day**. However, 4 out of 5 children in The Republic of Ireland and 3 out of 4 children in Northern Ireland not meeting the guideline.

34% of preschool children have a **TV in their bedroom**. The average amount of time they spend watching TV daily is: **2.2 hours**. Parents should replace screen time with active games.

1 in 4 children is overweight or obese in Ireland. Obese children are likely to become obese adults. It is difficult for parents to recognize that their child's weight is not healthy.

Many children do not meet the dietary recommendations for fruits and vegetables, fat or sugar.

The consequences can be huge:

- ⊗ **SHORT TERM EFFECTS:** Problems with bone health- Breathing difficulties- Social issues
- ⊗ **LONG TERM EFFECTS:** Cancer- Heart disease- Diabetes.

e) The removal of impulse lanes threatens confectionery, June 2014. (MINTEL)

The standard practice of placing sweet treats at checkouts in grocery stores has come under fire from the government for **encouraging unhealthy eating habits** and **contributing to the UK's obesity crisis**. Two thirds of adults are overweight or obese in Ireland. **Lidl** was the first supermarket to **banish sweets and chocolates from its checkouts** in January 2014 to curb unhealthy impulse purchasing, with **Tesco** following suit in May 2014. Lidl and Tesco boost their reputation for being a **responsible company**. Also, they put pressure on other supermarkets to ban unhealthy food from their tills **to support healthier lifestyles**.

f) Ireland set to be the most obese country in Europe, WHO says, Ireland, May 2015. (THE IRISH TIMES)

By 2030, Europe will face an **obesity crisis of "enormous proportions"**. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), Ireland is on course to become the most obese country in Europe.

Policies to reverse this trend are urgently needed. **Governments** must do more to restrict unhealthy food marketing and make healthy food more affordable.

Research Methods

1/ Research Question & Objectives

“The use of Pester Power by companies in food marketing and its impact on children’s health” is the research question for this study.

Further to this proposal, several objectives arise:

- **How does the Pester Power work?** In this part, we have tried to understand how kids convince their parents. → *See Part 1 of the Literature Review.*
- **How are companies targeting children? How are brands trying to reinforce healthy eating messages?** In this second part, we can understand how companies use Pester power in food marketing. Which tools are they using? → *See Part 2 of the Literature Review.*
- **How to reduce childhood obesity?** Thirdly, we researched why children are overweight or obese in Ireland and what are the solutions to reduce this problem. → *See Part 3 of the Literature Review.*

2/ Research Philosophy

This research is based on the **Positivism** Philosophy.

Indeed, the positivism approach is normally adopted by researchers that prefer to seek facts or causes of social or business phenomena using logical reasoning such as precision and objectivity as methods of investigation. Pester Power is a social trend and this research tries to find the reasons for that and its impacts.

3/ Research Approach

This study is both **Inductive** and **Deductive**. Indeed, **Qualitative** and Quantitative researches have been done.

4/ Research Strategy

I used **Descriptive Research** by doing a survey for 30 parents (→ **See Appendice 1**) and **Exploratory Research** by doing In Depth Interview (→ **See Appendices 2 and 3**).

5/ Data collection Method

A) Primary researches:

1. For parents

The idea was to interview **parents** because they buy food for their children.

The **sampling** is this one:

About the target population, the interviewed parents are **male or female**. They have at least **one child** and they have to be **at least eighteen years old**. The study is made in **Ireland**, so the participants live in this country.

Multiple-choice Questionnaire for 30 parents (Quantitative)

For my primary researches, I interviewed parents in three places: in **TESCO**, in front of **FALLON AND BYRNE** and in **THE STREET**, in **Dublin City Centre**.

My first idea was to interview 30 parents in three different shops, to **compare their eating habits**: TESCO, DUNNES and FALLON & BYRNE. I asked to my supervisor to write for me a letter to prove to the managers I am studying in Dublin Business School writing a thesis for the Research Module and I need to carry out primary research on supermarket customers. → **See Appendix 4.**

With TESCO, it was ok and I could interview **ten parents within the store**. Concerning FALLON AND BYRNE, I have been allowed to do my work **in front of the shop**. Unfortunately, managers in DUNNES did not want me to interview their customers. Indeed, they told me they have to ask first the head office. As a result, I chose to interview **ten parents in the street**.

How I built this questionnaire? → **See Appendix 1.**

I prepared **ten questions for parents**, to know their behavior faced with Pester Power. I wanted to know different things:

- Their behavior faced with Pester Power.
- If they can resist to Pester Power.
- How marketers target their children, according to parents.
- Discover if the health of their children was affected.

I chose to do my questionnaire on **Word** and to interview people **face to face**. This advantage of **Multiple-choice questionnaire** is that it is quick for consumers to answer. They are more prone to give time.

However, there were some **refusals**. Sometimes, people told me that they do not have children, they do not have time or they do not speak English.

In Depth Interview for two parents (Qualitative)

After interviewing thirty parents, I decided to interview face to face **two other parents to have more precisions**. I did my work with my Business Project Teacher, Aisling, who has four children, and with a Mother's friend, Kathleen, who has three children. With this method, parents answer **spontaneously**, it is not a multiple-choice questionnaire.

How I built my questionnaire? → See Appendice 2.

I prepared **eleven questions**. They are approximately the same as in the first questionnaire but three questions have been added.

2. For professional

Questionnaire for 1 professional in food marketing (Qualitative)

Finally, I wanted to interview one person working in **food marketing** to know **how the company uses Pester Power**. Does it try to help parents to overcome Pester Power and to reinforce healthy eating messages or to promote junk food?

I asked my teachers to help me find the ideal person. Emma Olohan, my Marketing Lecturer, gave me the contact: **Mark Muller, National Executive Account at Muller Dairy**. I sent him five questions by email.

How I built my questionnaire? → See Appendice 3.

I asked him **five questions** about Pester Power, their main target and their different tools to target. Finally, I asked for his opinion to reduce childhood obesity.

B) Secondary researches:

I used the same articles as those I chose in my Research Proposal, but I removed some. I researched different sources based on several topics:

- Pester Power
- Food Marketing
- Children Obesity
- Children's Health
- Parents' Purchase Behavior

Mintel helped me a lot and a few **websites** and **studies** that I found on the Internet. I tried to choose the most recent articles as possible (**→ See the Bibliography at the end of the study**). I also wanted to show some examples of different food companies to illustrate theories.

➔ I changed a lot of things comparing my first choices explained in my Research Proposal, concerning my Methodology.

First of all, I did **three questionnaires/interviews**. My first idea was to do only one and to interview parents thanks to **electronic format**. It facilitates the analysis, but the result would not have been as precise as they are now thanks to face to face interviews.

Secondly, my study is **stronger** with the **opinion** of a **professional in food marketing**.

Data Analysis

1/ Analysis of the Literature Review

Around a **quarter of Irish children are classified as overweight or obese**. Ireland is on course to become the most obese country in Europe.

Parents determine largely their children's eating habits. Indeed, it depends on the household. However, the influence of children on their parents' purchasing decisions is strongest when it comes to buying food. **Parents have difficulties to resist to Pester Power**.

Thanks to their parents, children already have huge spending power, despite their young age. **Food marketing affects children's consumption** and children are thought to be more vulnerable to influence by marketing than parents. Food marketed to children is generally high in fat, sugar and salt. Marketers can use TV advertising, a special packaging, or Internet to target children.

To support healthier lifestyles, some brands like Lidl and Tesco, have **removed junk food at checkouts**.

Many children do not meet the dietary recommendations for fruits and vegetables, fat or sugar. Because of the physical inactivity, unbalanced diets and advertising, the problem of childhood obesity remains and it is increasingly worrying.

2/ Analysis of my primary researches

a) Analysis of the questionnaire for 30 parents

I conducted a questionnaire for 30 parents, face to face, with ten questions, in Dublin City Centre. I interviewed Tesco's consumers, Fallon and Byrne's consumers and parents in the street.

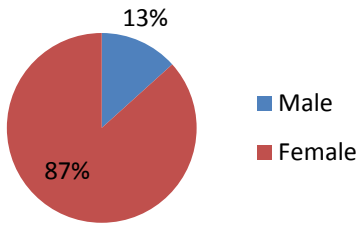
→ **See Appendice 1.**

13% are fathers and 87% are mothers. Indeed, in the majority of Irish families, it is the **mother** who does the grocery shopping.

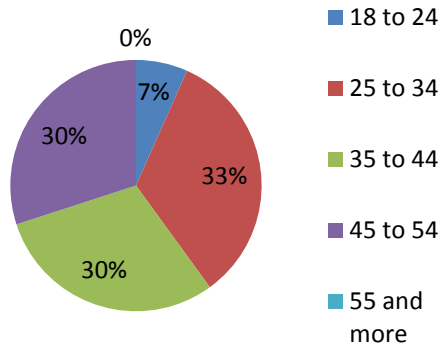
I did not interview parents who are more than 55 years old. **The main goal is to know the parents' views about the Pester Power and the current advertising**. "Old" parents are more likely to have children who are more than 18 years old and they are not the target.

The 30 interviewed parents have **54 children** in all. The average is **1.8 children per parent**. I did not find parents who have more than three children. The majority has one or two children.

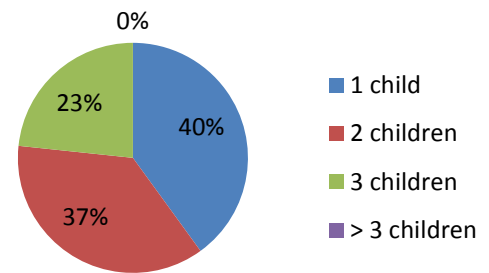
Gender



Age

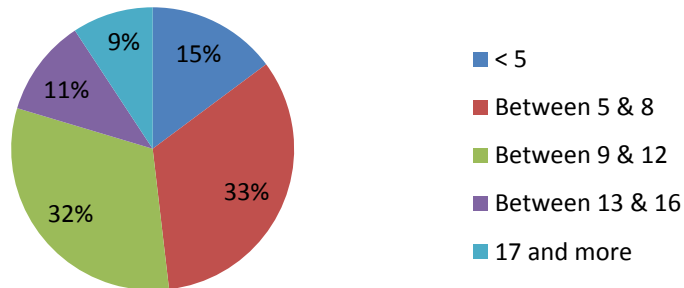


Number of children per parent



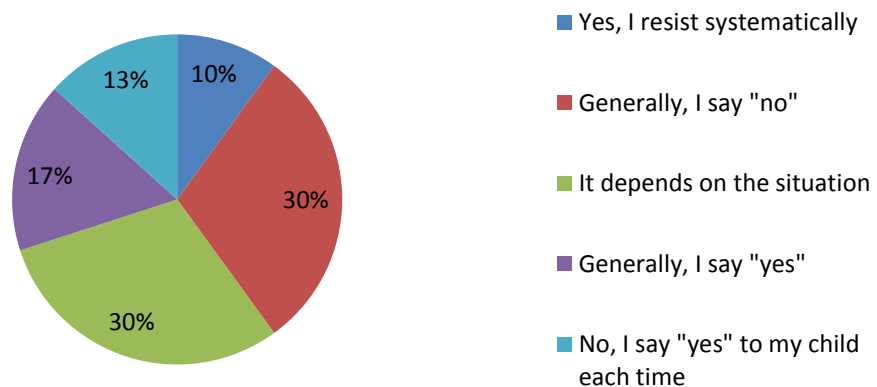
80% of interviewed parents have children who are **less than twelve years**. It is good because it is this age group which asks the most things to their parents.

Children's age

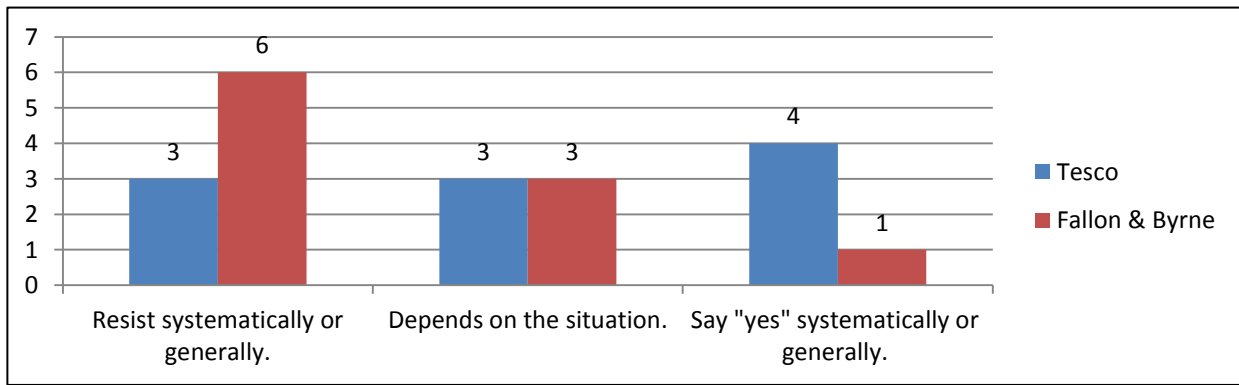


We can see that **it is difficult for parents to say "no" to their children**. 30% of parents admit that they say "yes" to their children when they ask to buy junk food. However, 10% resist systematically.

Can you resist and say "no" to your child?



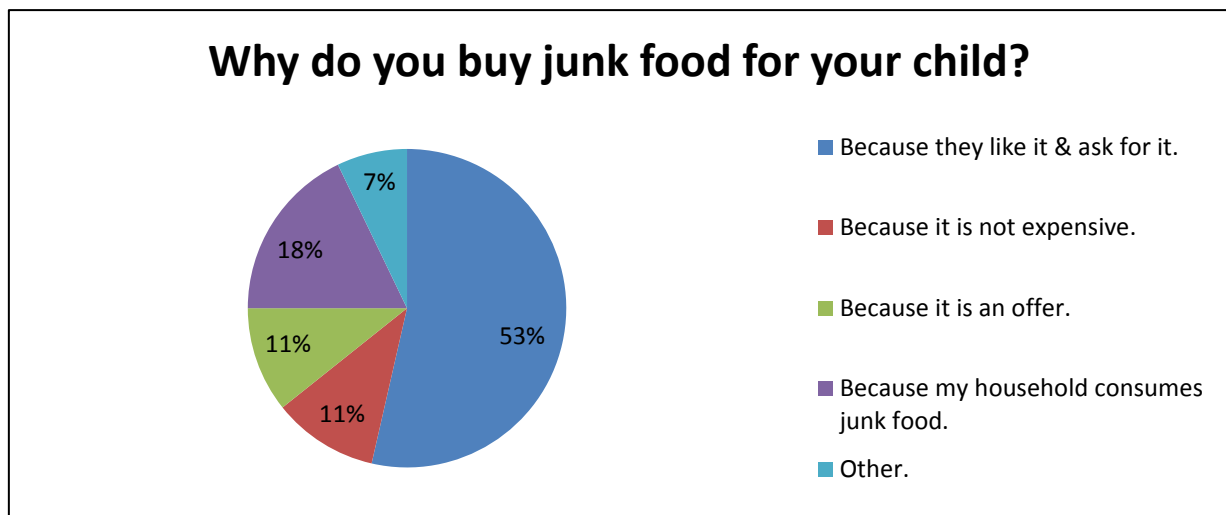
If we compare Tesco and Fallon and Byrne, the Health Food Shop, we can see some differences between consumers' behavior. Indeed, **parents who buy food in Fallon & Byrne are more likely to say "no" to their children when they ask for junk food**.



53% of interviewed parents buy junk food to **please their children**. 18% recognize that is because of their household's eating habits. Some do it when there are offers or because junk food is not expensive.

In "Other", one person said to me that it is **easier to buy junk food**; you **do not have to cook**. Another said to me that it is because of the **localization**, sometimes, you **do not have choice** and you have to buy snack.

In front of Fallon & Byrne, two consumers told me "I do not buy junk food for my child."



Only one person in the street told me that his child is not influenced by ads.

The large majority thinks children are influenced the most by **TV advertising**. **People** can also influence children, at school, for instance. Nobody believes that Magazines and Radio influenced the most children.

Finally, one person thinks that **Billboard** is the best way to influence children because they ask for junk food when they see it during shopping.

How is your child influenced?



One person thinks that his/her child is not influenced by ads.

Almost three quarters of parents believe that **ads affect the health of their children**, including every consumer in FALLON AND BYRNE that I interviewed.

Do these ads affect the health of your child?



b) Analysis of the questionnaire for 2 parents

I conducted a questionnaire **for two Irish parents**, with eleven questions, face to face. On the contrary to the questionnaire for the 30 parents, I did not propose multiple answers.

→ **See Appendice 2.**

✓ *Aisling, my Business Project teacher (35-45 years old)*

Aisling has **four children**: 7, 10, 11 and 12 years old.

She admits to **resist sometimes** when her children ask to buy junk food. It is difficult in some cases to say “no”. Generally, she buys junk food for them when **they deserve it**: it is a reward. She thinks that her children are influenced by ads, more precisely, because of **TV advertising** (fun ads) and because of **word of mouth** (peer-to-peer). Aisling believes that these ads affect the health of her children. Generally, she buys her food in **Supervalu**.

For Aisling, 1 in 4 children is overweight or obese in Ireland because **they eat too much sugar**. For her, the solutions to reduce childhood obesity are:

- Reduce advertising for children
- Increase tax sugar

✓ *Katelyn, a mother's friend (45-55 years old)*

Katelyn has **three children**: 10, 15 and 17 years old.

She recognizes that **she does not really resist** to her children when they ask to buy junk food. She wants **to please them**. Indeed, she buys it because **they like it**. She thinks that her children are very influenced by ads. For her, marketing attracts them and her children **watch TV too much**, they are too often in front of the screen. However, Katelyn does not think that ads affect the health of her three children. Most of the time, she buys food in **Dunnes**.

For Katelyn, children are overweight or obese because they **do not eat enough vegetables**. They eat too much fast food and starchy food. Also, she thinks that children **snack too much between meals**. They **need balanced meals**.

When I asked if she had solutions to reduce childhood obesity, she gave me several ideas:

- Eat healthy food
- Practice sport
- Eat three meals per day
- Limit sweets, soft drinks and fat.

To finish, Katelyn thinks that brands **try to reinforce their healthy eating messages**. For example, thanks to BAI (Broadcasting Authority of Ireland), there are **rules on food advertising to children**, such as: "They should not encourage an unhealthy lifestyle or unhealthy eating or drinking habits such as immoderate consumption, excessive or compulsive eating". (→ *BAI Children's Commercial Communications Code, 2013*).

c) *Analysis of the electronic interview from a professional in food marketing*

I interviewed **Mark Allen, National Account Executive at Muller Dairy**. A big part of the Muller family is Muller UK & Ireland. The company is specialized in **Yogurts and Desserts**. I asked five questions.

→ *See Appendice 3.*

The first question I asked was how Muller Dairy uses the Pester Power to sell its products. However, Mark answered me that "**Pester Power is not an aspect we look at when selling are products**". Indeed, they use strong promotional mechanics, **packaging** and unique products to appeal to all the categories they trade in. Ultimately, **they try to target the parents to sell products**.

My second question was to understand who they are precisely targeting.

Mark told me that, as a company, they break the category into four clear areas:

- 1) **ADULT** (Everyday Yogurts): this is the largest of the categories and is clearly targeted at Adults. **They do this by looking at trends in the market** as in Health & Wellbeing, Treats, etc.
- 2) **DRINKS**: in this category, they have probiotic drinks. Mark admits that this category is in decline. It has been replaced by the health sector, again targeted at Adults. However, **there has been an increase in drinks targeted towards kids**.
- 3) **KIDS**: this sector **is increasing in volume and Market Share**. The product is branded to be appealing to children, with **cartoon packaging and links with Disney**. Ultimately however, Muller Company **targets parents as they are spending the money**. This is done by promotion and deals on products.
- 4) **DESSERTS**: this area is very much targeted towards adults.

Then, I wanted to know which tools the company uses to catch children's eyes.

Mark explained to me that they use **a lot of researches to look at trends in the market**. To catch a child's eye, Muller uses **packaging**, but this can also be related to the parent.

Finally, I asked him which actions can be taken to reduce childhood obesity in Ireland.

As Aisling and Katelyn, Mark thinks **sugar is the biggest problem**. Indeed, he declared this sentence to me: "We are reducing sugar in all products. Sugar is a big talking point at the moment and is one of the contributing factors in obesity".

Conclusion

“The use of Pester Power by companies in food marketing and its impact on children’s health”.

Thanks to the primary and secondary researches of this study, it is possible to answer this topic.

In Ireland, Pester Power is definitely present in the majority of **households**. Parents have difficulties **to resist to children’s whims**.

This topic is based on **Food Marketing**. Indeed, it is in this area that children use the most Pester Power. We have tried to find out if the brands **reinforce healthy eating messages** or not.

Marketing aims to influence consumer behaviour. Food marketing aims to influence the food we choose to eat. Children are more **vulnerable** to influence by marketing than adults. According to that, kids represent an important demographic to marketers because, in addition to their own purchasing power, they influence their parents’ buying decisions (about 70% of moms consider kids’ preferences when making purchase decisions). **They are the adult consumers of the future**.

Many studies and observations have been made about how Marketing affects all areas of a child’s life. Firstly, these include their **physical health**. Children can be reached through many channels, but **Television** and **the Internet** are the most effective ones. Brands use also **packaging** to appeal children. However, food companies target a lot of **parents** because it is them who buy for their children.

Some companies, like Tesco and Lidl, have **removed junk food from checkouts**. Muller, the Yoghurts and Desserts Company, **reduces sugar** in its products.

But it is not enough. Too many brands continue to promote junk food. Government has to pursue its struggle. **Broadcasting Authority of Ireland** takes some measures to control advertising towards kids. For example, *“Ads for fast food must include the message: should be eaten in moderation as part of a balanced diet”*.

According to the World Health Organisation, Ireland is on course to become the most obese country in Europe. There are too many children who are overweight or obese. **To reverse the trend, parents, Government and food companies have to make efforts**.

Children’s eating habits are usually determined by their parents. **The establishment of good dietary habits is primarily formed in the home**. In order to gain the loyalty and the trust of parents, brands and supermarkets should look to reinforce healthy eating messages.

Parents have to be more **severe**, concerning junk food. School has to increase the **sport’s practice** for children. Finally, brands have to **reduce their junk food’s advertising**.

As we studied in this study, **Pester Power has a big impact on children’s health**. However, we do not have to forget: pester power is not junk food. Indeed, some food products marketed to children cannot be truly classified as junk food. **Is it acceptable if healthier food is marketed to children?** It seems positive if marketing can increase children’s consumption of better food. Nevertheless, in the

same way that marketing unhealthy food can create Pester Power, so can the marketing of healthy food... The problem is that **these products can be considerably more expensive** than equivalent non-marketed generic or own brand food. For example, Golden Vale Cheestrings are just “real cheese”. They are targeted at children as they hold fun qualities and can be torn apart before eating. But, compared to a regular block of cheese, they are more expensive (over one and a half times).

Regardless of the health value, **Pester Power can place extra pressure on the cash-strapped**, time-poor parent to compromise their tight budget because of the short-lived ease of guilt relieved by buying the product...

To finish this study, we can open the subject toward **ethics’ questions**. As I studied in marketing classes, it is unethical to advertise to children. Brands have to target parents. The problem is that most marketers do not follow this. To advertise to children is unethical but it is still legal...

Appendices

1) Questionnaire for 30 Parents (→ page 25)

2) Interview for 2 Parents (→ page 26)

3) Interview for 1 Professional in Food Marketing (→ page 27)

4) Research Letter from my Supervisor (→ page 28)

QUESTIONNAIRE

*I am Andrea, a student in Dublin Business School, and I am writing a thesis on the **Pester Power**(=the ability that children have to make their parents buy something, by asking for it many times until they get it). I need to interview Irish parents because they buy food for their children. I would like to know parents' views about the use of pester power by companies in food marketing & its impact on children's health.*

1) How many children do you have?

<input type="checkbox"/> 0	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> >3
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2) How old is/are he/she/they?

<input type="checkbox"/> <5	<input type="checkbox"/> Between 5 & 8	<input type="checkbox"/> Between 9 & 12	<input type="checkbox"/> Between 13 & 16	<input type="checkbox"/> >17
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3) Can you resist and say "no" to your child/children when he/she/they ask to buy junk food?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I resist systematically.	<input type="checkbox"/> Generally, I say "no".	<input type="checkbox"/> It depends on the situation.	<input type="checkbox"/> Generally, I say "yes".	<input type="checkbox"/> No, I say "yes" to my child(ren) each time.
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4) Why do you buy junk food for your child/children?

<input type="checkbox"/> Because they like it.	<input type="checkbox"/> Because it is not expensive.	<input type="checkbox"/> Because it is on offer.	<input type="checkbox"/> Because my household consumes junk food.	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:
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5) Do you think that your child/children is/are influenced by ads?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
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6) According to you, How is/are he/they influenced?

<input type="checkbox"/> TV advertising	<input type="checkbox"/> Billboard	<input type="checkbox"/> Internet	<input type="checkbox"/> Magazines	<input type="checkbox"/> Radio	<input type="checkbox"/> People
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7) Do these ads affect the health of your child? (1= Not affected at all ; 5= Very affected)

<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
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8) How often are you coming to this shop?

<input type="checkbox"/> Every day.	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 times per week.	<input type="checkbox"/> Once a week.	<input type="checkbox"/> Two or three times per month.	<input type="checkbox"/> Very occasionally.
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9) What is your gender?

<input type="checkbox"/> Male	<input type="checkbox"/> Female
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10) What is your age?

<input type="checkbox"/> 18 to 24	<input type="checkbox"/> 25 to 34	<input type="checkbox"/> 35 to 44	<input type="checkbox"/> 45-54	<input type="checkbox"/> >55
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THANK YOU VERY MUCH !!!

Interview for 2 parents

- 1) How many children do you have? How old are they?
- 2) Can you resist and say “no” to your children when they ask to buy junk food?
- 3) Why do you buy junk food for your child/children?
- 4) Do you think that your children are influenced by ads?
- 5) According to you, how are they influenced?
- 6) Do these ads affect the health of your child?
- 7) Generally, in which shop do you buy your food?
- 8) In Ireland, 1 in 4 children is overweight or obese. According to you, why?
- 9) Have you got solutions to reduce childhood obesity?
- 10) For you, are the majority of food brands helping parents to overcome Pester Power and childhood obesity? Why? (Promote junk food or reinforce healthy eating messages?)
- 11) Your gender/ your age?

THANK YOU!!

INTERVIEW PROFESSIONAL IN FOOD MARKETING

- 1) What is your job title? In which company are you working?

- 2) How do you use the Pester Power to sell your products?

- 3) Who are you targeting? Are you trying to convince more the parents or more the children?

- 4) Which tools do you use to catch children's eyes?

- 5) What actions can you take to reduce childhood obesity?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!! 😊

RESEARCH LETTER

16th March 2016

Dublin Business School
Castle House
73-83 South Great George's Street
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Tel+353-1-4177757

Dear Sir or Madam:

My name is Keelin Lee and I am a Communications Lecturer in Dublin Business School. As part of the Research Module Andrea Bertho, a third year Business student at DBS, is required to carry out primary research on supermarket customers.

On behalf of DBS, I would be very grateful if you would kindly allow Andrea to interview you.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Yours Sincerely,

Keelin Lee B.A.M.A. MSc. HdipEd

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