

## Producer's Gain & Consumer's Dilemma

Dr. Vineeta Agrawal

The recent controversy related to Cadbury and a social media influencer has sparked a row over the practices related to product advertising and consumers' health. A social media influencer who makes fitness and nutrition-related video claimed that 'Bourn Vita' a health drink brand marketed under the parent brand Cadbury is not healthy as claimed by the company. The product is marketed as a healthy supplement for kids but contains a lot of sugar and other unhealthy content. Although the YouTube video was deleted after the controversy till then there were twelve million views of the video. The company said that it was compelled to take legal action as the video was spreading panic among the public regarding the company and its product. The YouTuber has been accused of defaming the company and the company also said that every ingredient mentioned on the product meets the guidelines of the Indian government. The sugar content is also well below the permissible limit set by the government.

In the year 2021, In an internal document circulated among its executives, The world's largest food company, nestle acknowledged that more than 60% of its mainstream food and drinks products do not meet a "recognized definition of health" and that "some of our categories and products will never be 'healthy no matter how much we renovate'".

There is no doubt that Ultra-processed foods such as sweetened breakfast cereals, packaged baked goods, and sweetened beverages are designed to be hyper-palatable. Manufacturers achieve this by adding sweeteners such as cane sugar, inverted syrup, and high fructose corn syrup. It is proven that added intake of salt, sugar, and fat contents has harmful effects on health. The regulatory bodies absolve themselves by prescribing certain labels and making the marking mandatory as a warning to consumers. The manufacturers also safeguard themselves by saying that, consumers have been duly informed before making any choice regarding the purchase with proper labels and ingredients, calorie count, etc.

Commercial production of food items comes under the basic industry's need for survival. Populations across the globe are highly dependent on commercial food systems for daily nourishment. As in many cases the companies, themselves are acknowledging the harmful impact on consumers' health in view of the current health pandemic, there can be more standardized regulatory and control systems in place, when it comes to feeding the masses. This

issue also puts an onus on the government bodies such as the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) which decides the permissible limit for ingredients in food products. Also, the Advertising Council needs to ensure that unhealthy products cannot be marketed as healthy alternatives.

Obesity trends are clearly upward over the world. As per a report published by WHO, In the US, the percentage of people who are overweight is near 40% for men and around 30% for women. Developing countries are also facing the same issues regarding manmade diseases resulting from an unhealthy lifestyle. The most populous country in the world India is already the capital of the World when it comes to heart disease and Diabetes.

By understanding responsibility for population health as a shared responsibility, we can reassess the moral role of the food industry from a forward-looking perspective on responsibility and ask what food companies can and should do to promote health.



#### About Author

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Dr. Vineeta Agrawal holds Doctorate and MBA Degree in Finance. She is working as an Associate Professor at Lexicon Management Institute of Leadership and Excellence, Pune. She has rich experience in Academia for more than fifteen years. Her area of teaching interests are Accounting and Finance. She is also the examiner for Ph.D. thesis evaluation and viva. She has coordinated national and international conferences and faculty development programs. She has published research papers in various journals of repute including Scopus. She keeps writing about academic issues on multiple platforms like LinkedIn and Medium.