



Determining Motives Of Mothers Who Purchase Healthy Snacks For **Their Children: A Phenomenological Study**

Eda Yaşa Özeltürkay^{1*}, Sezen Bozyiğit², Murat Gulmez³

^{1*} Assist. Prof. Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Cag University

² Assist. Prof. Faculty of International Trade and Management, Mersin University

³ Assist. Prof. Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Cag University

*E-mail: edayasa@cag.edu.tr

Abstract

Children mostly prefer eating snacks rather than eating healthier ones, although their mothers try to prevent them from wrong nutrition habits. Nowadays, depending on the consumption patterns of people obesity, overweight problems, and lots of illnesses start to occur at younger ages. In today's competitive marketplace, a few of the companies are trying to understand what the motivational factors are and how mothers decide to purchase healthy snacks for their children. For this research, the phenomenological interviews were completed with 20 mothers by snowball sampling. Open ended questions were asked to identify their profiles, thoughts and behaviors. The purpose of this phenomenological study is to interview with conscious mothers who purchase functional and healthier snacks for their children. The results showed similarity to the results in the previous studies: educated and high income level people are more precisely keen on healthier snack eating habits for their family members. They pay attention to the importance of the nutrition a lot especially after they become mothers.

Keywords: Healthy Snacks, Mothers' Purchasing Patterns, Phenomenological Study, Turkey

Introduction

Nowadays, childhood obesity and overweight problems have been spreading out too quickly around the world. The reasons are essentially based on the sedentary lifestyles, unhealthy eating habits, spending a lot of time in front of televisions and computers and watching unhealthy food commercials on TV. The lifestyles and unhealthy habits of people today cause numerous health problems such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancers besides obesity. Fifty percent of the children who are between three and ten years old and overweight will be more likely to have health problems in the future. Additionally, 70-80 percent of the teenagers who are overweight today have risks of being overweight in the later years, as well (Ozata, 2009). Therefore, childhood is accepted as a critical period to gain healthy eating habits. To cope with obesity problems of the children, the governments take precautions today and try to promote eating healthy snacks for children. Besides governments' efforts, parents -especially mothers- who carry out food shopping should also control their children's eating habits. Mothers should lead their children to eat healthier snacks rather than harmful food. Aksoylu (2013) claimed that the range of snack market is expanding so quickly. This indicates that the consumers are getting more conscious regarding healthy eating habits. Therefore, the aim of this study is to identify the motives of Turkish mothers who purchase healthy convenience snacks for their children. This study contains two parts. The first part has the literature review on the issues of healthier foods and their importance, governments' precautions, and family's role. Then the second part has the methodology and results.

Literature Review

Healthier Foods and Their Importance

Children throughout the world are currently consuming tastier and highly palatable foods (fat-rich, sodium, and refined carbohydrates) and fewer healthy foods (whole grains, fruits, and vegetables) than recommended (Kuntz, Fiates and Teixeira, 2012). It is not surprising that the children are leaning towards tasty, industrial snacks rather than healthier and natural foods. In one of the previous studies accomplished by Hsieh (2004), respondents identified the *healthy snack foods* as fruits and vegetables and foods with higher level of fat and sugar in their ingredients than normal foods were defined as *unhealthy snack foods*. The result of this study also indicates that the important factors influencing snack preferences are environment, availability, work pressure, having health problems, social activities, and the consumers' beliefs and habits (Hsieh, 2004). In their study, Pomeranz and Miller (2015), underlined the effectiveness of portion sizes in the USA and the government's enormous power to directly change the food environment as a regulator, purchaser, and supplier of food to encourage healthier food consumption especially by children. Snacking is more prevalent in society compared to thirty years ago and the types of foods consumed as snacks may be contributing to the current obesity epidemic (Cole, 2004). People should change their eating habits to protect themselves from diseases like obesity stemming from bad diets. People should prefer consuming healthier foods instead of junk foods. Definitions of healthy convenience snack foods are shown in Table 1 (adopted from Ilkay, 2013).

Table 1 - Healthy Convenience Snack Definitions

•No trans fats or partially hydrogenated oils
•Contains no more than 35% of its total calories from fat
•Contains no more than 10% of its calories from saturated fat
•Contains no more than 175 calories per serving
•Contains at least 55 of DV or more at least one: Vit A., Vit C., iron, calcium and fiber
•Grain based snacks (such as crackers, cereal bars, granola bars, etc.) should have a whole grain appear as the first or second ingredient. Examples of whole grains include whole wheat, oats, rye, popcorn and rice. They should also have at least 3 grams of fiber
•Fruit and vegetable based snacks have whole food ingredients with no artificial flavors
•Contains no more than 10 grams of sugar, unless the snack has 100% fruit
•Contains less than 360 grams of sodium

As it is shown on Table 1, the examples of healthier convenience foods are identified such as rice cakes, real fruit pulps, dried fruit, baked vegetable chips, carrot sticks, apple slices, certain granola bars, low sodium pretzels, plain popcorn etc. Despite the fact that many product departments offer a range of pre-cut produce, from baby carrots to fresh melons and pineapple, very few of these healthy options are specifically targeted at children (Baker, 2014).

A complex array of factors operating at individual, social and political levels influences food selection and eating patterns (Hsieh, 2004). Brown and et al. (2008), refers that as a means to understand the increase in childhood obesity, researchers have turned their attention to the child's home environment and have highlighted the role of parental feeding practices. For about five years, some conscious people especially mothers tend to consume healthier foods to prevent their children from lots of disasters. Two-thirds of moms monitor their children's diets very closely, 60% of families practice some form of healthy eating strategies. The same report showed also more than one third of mothers are making a strong effort to rise their children's consumption of calcium, vitamins, minerals, whole grains, proteins, vitamin C and vitamin D (Sloan, 2012).

Governments' Precautions

Childhood obesity is now becoming a public health concern for governments. Nearly 35 million obese children under five years of age are living in low-middle income countries (LMIC) (Chacon, Letona and Barnoya, 2013). The prevalence of childhood overweight and obesity, as measured by international child-specific BMI cut-points is increasing worldwide and prevalence rates between 25% and 30% are now common in countries like the USA, the UK, and Australia. For the USA, it is estimated that natural and organic food industry was developed by 103% between the years 2010 and 2015 (Ilkay, 2013). The UK government has

presented their concerns by developing projects regarding obesity problems. One of these projects is related to define and inform the population about what is healthier and sustainable for their bodies. The number of overweight and obese men, women and children is currently increasing and 61% of the adults in England are listed as overweight or obese. The reasons are mostly related with a low consumption of fruit and vegetables and a high consumption of energy-dense foods and drinks, in combination with a low activity level (Hess, et al. 2015). Childhood overweight and obesity problems are associated with much co-morbidity such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, hypertension, musculoskeletal problems and obstructive sleep apnea and etc. (Mehta, et al. 2010). Several food trend reports indicate that consumer interest rates in purchasing healthier food are increasing; however, the prices the healthier products are higher.

According to the report of Food Marketing Institute in USA, eight in ten Americans are making some or a lot of efforts to eat healthier (Ilkay,2013). The number of obese people has in fact tripled over the last 20 years and the most overweight and obese people have been living in Europe; over 130 million obese people and 400 million people are overweight. Since the number of working women increasing, lots of single-person households have appeared and a lack of abilities and experiences with preparing meals at home promoted the demand for convenience in meal preparation (Olsen, et al. 2011). Turkey's obesity and overweight problems are not much different than the other countries' problems. In a research conducted by Turkish Ministry of Health (2011), it was indicated that the frequency of obese children (0-5 age of living) is approximately 8.5% and for the age between 6 and 18 is approximately 8% (www.thsk.saglik.gov.tr). Some dieticians in Turkey claim that white sugar and flour are more hazardous than cigarette and alcohol for the society (www.haberturk.com/polemik/haber/942947-turkiyede-obezite-alarmi).

The Role of Families

The habits of parents play a big role for protecting children's health. Unhealthy snacks are mostly brought to houses by parents for their own consumption purposes. Some of the parents use unhealthy snacks as a reward for the desired behavior of their children. Therefore, the children perceive unhealthy snacks as beneficial nutrition. Related studies show that there is a positive correlation between availability and accessibility of fruits and vegetables at home and children's consumption (Cole, 2004). The involvement level of mothers in grocery shopping is high and mothers are more conscious about what ingredients are used to manufacture in food products. Women in general are responsible for ninety-three percent of all food purchases (Ilkay, 2013). Similarly, Weijzen, Graaf and Dijksterhuis (2009) expressed that women with high education levels have strong habitual healthy snacks more, and they have a strong self-control that increases the healthy intention and behaviour. Although Wardle and et al. (2002) found that the mothers of the obese children are less effective in their food preferences, McGowan and et al. (2013) proved that changes in food preferences of children are parallel to their parents' food preferences. All of these studies indicate the role of parents on food preferences is very important on their children's eating habits. Parents are more likely to apply an external control over a child's eating practice when the parent has concerns about the child's development (Ogden, et al. 2006). Parents may also encourage children to reduce their intake of foods that are lower in nutritional value and to increase their consumption of healthier food options (Salvy et al., 2011). In his study, Cole (2004) resulted that parents

should firstly change their nutrition patterns to influence their children's attitudes and it would be more effective than controlling their children's nutrition habits. As mothers are more responsible for snack shopping, mothers' choices and their consumption patterns are vital. İlkay (2013) discussed in the study as the respondents generally consume generic snacks comparing to total population of the country, the participants preferred healthy snacks routinely and they examine snacks' sugar content to understand whether it is healthy. Parallel to İlkay's study, Baker (2014) found that children's preferences are influenced by the food with attractive packages.

Research Methodology

The purpose and importance of the study and the methodology process (including sampling, methods, reliability and validity of the study) are clarified in this section.

Purpose and Importance of the Study

Today's wrong nutrition habits cause lots of physical and mental health problems especially obesity. One of the major problem-solving methods of these problems are to change the habits of nutrition. Changing these habits is more difficult in adulthood, therefore healthy nutrition habits should be gained at early ages. Especially children are more prone to having these habits (Ozmetin, 2006). As long as current and healthy eating habits are acquired at young ages, many steps in being healthy individuals in the future will be taken. Healthy nutrition habits in childhood and adolescence have essential roles in preventing certain diseases in advanced ages, and these situations will also influence the eating habits of the future parents permanently and positively (Balkış, 2011). Snacks are priority foods in childhood for each child. Even if some mothers purchase these snacks and related foods to prevent their children's naughty behaviors or reward them at grocery stores or some places like that. These unhealthy snacks create lots of health problems for children. Some mothers and fathers who are aware of that fact have shifted to "functional or organic foods" as snacks that have some positive effects on health besides meeting the needs of feeding as a result of the increased consumers' consciousness (Aksoylu, 2013).

Over the last decade, consumers' health consciousness has become an important factor for the functional food sectors (Azzurro and Paola, 2009). Therefore, this study's aim is to investigate the profiles of the mothers who purchase healthy snacks for their children. There are limited studies in Turkey related to this issue. However, there are many studies carried out by foreign researchers (Hsieh, 2004; Cole, 2004; Weijzen, Graaf and Dijksterhuis, 2009; İlkay, 2013; Baker, 2014, etc.). Nowadays, Danone Firm (2015) created a song and a campaign for "healthy and milky snacks" for television commercials and in the campaign, it is explained that instead of unhealthy snacks such as jelly, chips, etc. you can trust this brand's milky snacks for mental and physical developments of your children. The results of this study are indicating the mothers' profiles, why they choose, where they obtain and how they trust companies with the related questions. Hopefully, the results are helpful and guideful for both producers and consumers. This study also identified the target profile of the consumers' preferences for the companies that produce and sell related foods. Companies can prepare their marketing plans by considering these important criteria for mothers while selecting the

healthier snacks, where they obtain and which channels are important and effective for them (word-of-mouth marketing-womm, websites, advertisings, etc.).

Sampling and Method of the Study

According to the report of Turkey's Nutrition and Health Researches (2010), food and beverage shoppings are carried out approximately 40% by men and 60% by women. Paralelling to this report, Gulcan and Akpınar (2011) resulted that the status of women in the mother's function is more effective on purchasing decisions of food and food related products. In the study of Sabuncu (2013) and Kılıç, Duman & Bektaş (2014) claimed that especially women with children are much fond of purchasing organic foods. These studies also stated that mothers have more responsibilities and roles in purchasing healthier food comparing to fathers. İlkay (2013) stated in his research that despite the recognition of women's purchasing power, a majority of food companies are failing to understand how to market and get in touch with them. Therefore, the sampling of the study involves the mothers who reside in Istanbul and buy healthy snacks for their children. Istanbul is the biggest and most crowded city in Turkey. The main reasons were to gather the data from Istanbul is directly related to the huge number of organics weekly or daily markets (souks) and the fairs of organic foods and functional food are done here, in Istanbul and additionally, citizens living in Istanbul are luckier and have more opportunities for accessing to healthier snacks and food comparing to other cities, the sampling size is limited with the mothers who live in this city.

For this research, snowball sampling technique was used to gather data. This technique is mostly used in cases where it is difficult to create a sampling framework. This sampling method, which is used in cases when creating the sampling environment is difficult, is used where firstly a basic group of respondents is formed randomly and then, based on the advice or information obtained from the nuclear respondents interviewed, the new units accessed (Nakip, 2006). The major aim of the qualitative researches is not related to generalizing statistics from the selected sampling frame, so in these types of researches, sampling techniques can be used differently (Topkaya, 2006). There is no precise information on the current sampling size for qualitative researches (Yıldırım and Simsek, 2013), the researchers decided on the sampling size with some criteria, for instance until the concepts and processes of the questions start to repeating more, the researcher can decide on the sampling qualification. According to Morse (1994), he suggested that six interviews are enough especially for phenomenological qualitative researches, in reasoned theory (used for comparing new situations to old ones), interview numbers should be between 30 and 50, and the sampling size should be between 100 and 200 for the qualitative ethnologic researches. As this is a phenomenologic study and after completing 20 interviews, the answers became repeated so much that the authors decided to fix the size to 20 interviews.

Comparing quantitative research that emphasizes prediction, control and measurement with qualitative research that emphasizes discovery, description and meaning (Laverty, 2003): In more recent times, however, there has been a move to include not only the traditional quantitative methods needed to provide such objectivity, but also a more humanistic approach

and hence this is particularly important when researching topics that involve human interaction or experience (Greene, 2009). It can be noticed that the usage of qualitative research methodologies including ethnography, grounded theory and hermeneutic phenomenology are increased day by day (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). These methods are often applied when the subject of research is sparsely represented in the research literature or has been poorly examined in the past. These types of researches are also not looking for proving causal relationships, but instead use such methods as in-depth interviews to discover people's feelings and experiences from their own perspectives (Greene, 2009). Phenomenology is defined as the study of conscious phenomena or simply an analysis of the way in which things or experiences represent themselves to individuals (Ilkay, 2013). Therefore, this phenomenological study was completed with in-depth interviews through open-ended questions using a semi-structured technique. A phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their true life experiences of a concept or a phenomenon. Phenomenologist, focus on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon (Creswell, 2006). Open ended questions allow respondents to present more information, which can help researcher's better access the respondent's true feelings on an issue (Ilkay, 2013).

The questions in the interview form were structured based on the literacy and essentially adopted from the interview sheet from Ilkay (2013) and some questions were added by the authors. The added questions were occurred from pre-test of the study. Three motivated mothers, who were purchasing healthy snacks for their children, were interviewed as pre-testing the sheet then, based on their feedbacks; the final version of the questions was designed.

Interview Questions:

1. Please describe healthy food in your perspective.
2. How do you understand whether the snacks are harmful or not for your children?
3. Do you allow your children to participate in your decisions for purchasing food? Why (not)?
4. Are you feeding healthfully? If your answer is yes, please indicate the certain time of starting.
5. What are the factors that lead you to purchase healthier snacks?
6. What kind of food do you purchase as healthier snacks for your children?
7. What are the brands for healthy snacks that you permanently purchase?
8. How did you discover these brands or the places that these brands are sold?

The interviews were conducted between February 5, 2015 and April 28, 2015, at the respondents' homes or workplaces, whenever they had time. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and the researchers recorded respondents' voices with their permissions and took notes during the interviews.

Validity and Reliability of the Study

There have been some differences for research's reliability and validity scores between qualitative researches and quantitative researches. There are two basic criteria for qualitative researches. One of them is related to accessing the accurate information that may be needed (i.e. validity) and the second one is related to defining the research process and the data detailed clearly and providing possibilities to be assessed by other researchers (i.e. reliability) for meeting their most important expectations (Yildirim and Simsek, 2013). The same source indicates (Yildirim and Simsek, 2013) the differences between internal and external validity. As it is stated, internal validity is related to the researchers' conclusions within study with a clear expression and presenting evidences related to the implications of other people's success when it is necessary.

In qualitative studies, statistical generalization can not be discussed but analytic generalization can be done (Baser, 2010). For the concept of reliability, internal reliability is related to the researcher's approaches to the research and defining clearly her/his controls doing at various levels of the research, however, the external reliability is related to the results gathered by the researcher and it is depending on the data and it indicates that researchers' assumptions will not affect the results of the study (Yıldırım ve Simsek, 2013). In the research, *the sampling size, the sampling technique, who were selected as respondents and why, which questions were asked by the interviewers, and the frequencies of the answers of these questions* are shown in the tables (Table 2 to 10). Additionally, some statements of the respondents were listed as their related questions' responses. Briefly, the process of the research and the information related to the data are explained frankly. To ensure the validity and reliability, consistency of the responses was used.

Results

The results of the study are shown in the following tables. Sample characteristics of the participants are provided in Table 2 and the following tables include the answers of the eight questions.

Table 2 - Sample characteristics of the participants

No.	Age	Number of children	Age of children	Sex of children	Education of mothers	Occupations of mothers	Monthly income
1	39	1	10	Son	Undergraduate	Housewife	4,801-6,900 TL
2	37	1	6	Daughter	Undergraduate	Lawyer	6,901-9,000 TL
3	30	1	3,5	Daughter	Undergraduate	Housewife	6,901-9,000 TL
4	40	2	12-9	Daughter-Son	Master Degree	Entrepreneur	6,901-9,000 TL
5	34	1	9	Son	Undergraduate	Sales operations	9,001 TL and above
6	45	1	12	Son	Undergraduate	Tourism	9,001 TL and above
7	40	1	2,5	Daughter	Undergraduate	Teacher	6,901-9,000 TL
8	44	1	9	Son	Undergraduate	Chemist	6,901-9,000 TL
9	39	1	3	Son	Undergraduate	Fashion designer	9,001 TL and above
10	34	2	4,5-9	Daughter-Son	Undergraduate	Author	9,001 TL and above
11	40	2	10-5	Daughter-Son	Undergraduate	Advertiser	6,901-9,000 TL
12	40	1	6	Daughter	Undergraduate	Businessperson	9,001 TL and above
13	32	1	3	Daughter	Undergraduate	Antique dealer	6,901-9,000 TL
14	39	1	6	Son	Undergraduate	Housewife	4,801-6,900 TL
15	41	2	5-5	Daughter-Son	Undergraduate	Selfemployed	9,001 TL and above
16	37	1	5	Son	Undergraduate	Selfemployed	9,001 TL and above
17	29	1	1,5	Son	Undergraduate	Teacher	4,801-6,900 TL
18	48	2	8-9	Son	Higher Vocational School	Housewife	6,901-9,000 TL
19	40	2	11-13	Son-Daughter	High School	Housewife	6,901-9,000 TL
20	39	1	8,5	Daughter	Undergraduate	Textile Engineer	6,901-9,000 TL

According to Table 2, the basic demographic features are listed and it shows that the most of the participants (16) belong to the age interval of 35-45. 14 of the mothers who participated in the survey are married with one child, the rest of the participants are married with two children. Fourteen of the 26 children are male and 12 of them are female. The interval of children's ages is between one and thirteen. The number of the participants' mothers who have four-year university degrees is seventeen. Regarding to occupation, only four of the mothers are housewives and the rest of the participants have different occupations. Monthly income levels of the majority of the participants are TL 6,901 and more.

Table 3- Answers for the first interview question

Question	Answers	Frequency
Please describe healthy food in your perspective.	Foods without harmful substances, chemicals and additives in its ingredients	13
	Non-genetically modified foods	4
	Foods produced by traditional methods	4
	Food without packages	3
	Less processed food	2
	Food consumed in its own season	2
	Food purchased from a reliable source	2
	Sugar-free food	2
	Food that is with known ingredients	1

Table 3 reflects the responders' answers to the first question. Most of the respondents described the term "healthy food" as the food that does not contain harmful substances, chemicals and additives in its ingredients. Some of the views of the respondents are given below:

"The food is produced without the use of chemicals, pesticides and non-genetically modified organisms" (Participant 2).

"Naturally produced, unprocessed food" (Participant 3).

"Food that is pure and natural produced by traditional methods and do not contain harmful substances such as protectives" (Participant 8).

"Food is produced by using traditional methods and are bought from reliable sources" (Participant 11).

Table 4- Answers for the second interview question

Question	Answers	Frequency
How do you understand whether the snacks are harmful or not for your children?	Prefer organic products	8
	Searching the producer	5
	Purchased from reliable places	4
	Reading their labels	3
	Purchasing products without packages	3
	Ask a specialist/authority on this issue	1
	Purchase fruits and vegetables in their seasons	1
	Not purchase ready foods	1

According to Table 4, eight of the participants pay attention to purchasing organic foods. Five of them claimed that they are searching the firms and the producers. Four of the remaining participants said that they prefer purchasing these kinds of foods from reliable places, markets, etc. Three of them declared that they read the labels of the foods to understand whether the foods are healthy snacks for their children or not. Some examples of the respondents are shown below with their sentences:

“I do not know whether it is enough just to read the labels, I am not satisfied with just this, so I obtain both information and confirmation from specialists and authorized people” (Participant 1).

“I’m trying to search the producer. I read the labels, I am also trying not to purchase ready foods” (Participant 5).

“I can not understand whether it is healthy or not for my children, therefore, I prefer organic labelled foods” (Participant 6).

“I pay attention to their warnings on the packages ‘free from additives’ and prefer organic foods” (Participants 13).

Table 5 - Answers for the third interview question

Question	Answers	Frequency
Do you allow your children to participate in your decisions for purchasing food?	Yes	17
	No	2
	Sometimes	1
Why (not)?	To bring up conscious children	6
	To make them informed about the foods	5
	To teach them the differences between healthy and unhealthy foods	4
	For developing their selection capabilities	1
	To let them eat what they like cheerfully	1
	Let him know that his preference is important for us	1

As it is seen in Table 5, most of the participants (17) allow their children to participate in their food purchasing decisions. A couple of them sometimes allow them; however, the remaining participants do not allow this.

The participants who allow their children for these decisions are approximately similar to each other. They underlined that, firstly, the mothers decide which shelves and food groups are suitable for healthy consumption and then they provide rights to their children to choose any of the foods they like except unhealthy jelly, chips, etc. Six participants claimed that they would like to bring up conscious children, additionally, five of them said that they would like to educate their children about food selection processes, and four of them expressed that they are trying to raise their children as people who know the differences between healthy and unhealthy foods.

“I decide on the shelves first, then let him choose whatever he wishes to consume cheerfully” (Participant 3).

“They can choose freely within limits. In marketplace if she or he wants some unhealthy foods such as jelly, chips, etc, I refuse to purchase, but in organic souks, I allow them to choose which fruits or vegetables, they prefer to eat. I do this to let them recognize the differences between healthy and unhealthy foods” (Participant, 10).

“Yes, we always do food shopping together. By this way, she can be more conscious and she can make her decisions by herself” (Participant, 12).

“His selections are not suitable to consume healthy foods; therefore I do not give permission to him for decision processes” (Respondent, 14).

Table 6- Answers for the fourth interview question

Question	Answers	Frequency
Are you eating healthfully?	Yes	15
	Partially	5
If your answer is Yes, please indicate the certain time of starting?	Since the child was born	10
	Since the time that people around myself are discussing about this	4
	Since the pregnancy of myself	3
	Since my own childhood	3
	Since the time my child started to add foods	1

Results shown in Table 6 state that whether the respondents are feeding healthier or not and how long? According to this table, 15 of the respondents said “Yes” they are feeding themselves with healthy foods. Five of the respondents claimed that they are partially trying to feed themselves healthfully but actually without desired levels. Half the respondents expressed that they started with their children’s birth to consume food healthier. Four of them stated that they started to consume healthier foods since the time their friends or other people around them started to discuss about these issues. Three of them claimed that they started within the time of their pregnancies. However, most of the respondents stated that they started with the time of being mothers, three of the respondents expressed that they have been consuming healthier foods since their childhood. Some examples from interviews are provided below:

“I am used to consuming healthier foods since my childhood, however I am not so assertive but pay attention to this issue”, (Participant 4).

“I am feeding organically since my pregnancy started” (Participant 7).

“Since my son’s birth, approximately 9 years” (Participant 8).

“Since the time when I started to be conscious on this issue, I used to go to my grandmother’s farmplace in the summer times, so I know the differences of healthier foods. There are lots of life coaches, doctors, blogger mothers and etc. around me. I discovered this six or seven years ago, and I am so serious about this issue” (Participant 9).

Table 7 - The fifth question from the interview and its answer's distribution

Question	Answers	Frequency
What are the factors that lead you to purchase healthier snacks?	To be healthier	10
	For my children	5
	Fearing from having any related cancers	3
	To live longer	3
	I am afraid of what I read and listened to so far	2
	To feel better	1
	Not to get many pounds	1

The various reasons why the respondents purchase healthier snacks are determined in Table 7. However, half the respondents indicated that they prefer healthier snacks for being healthier. The results are classified in terms of the respondents' main answers, frankly. Five of the respondents claimed that they prefer healthy snacks for their children; three of them said that they are afraid of the diseasters such as cancers and three of them also indicated that they prefer to live longer. Some of the expressions of respondents are listed below:

“Especially, for raising my daughter healthier.” (Participant 2).

“I would like to live longer and healthier” (Participant 18).

“Cancer cases around us increasing day by day that is more effective on my decision” (Participant 19).

“My readings and listenings lead me to eat healthier, first I read the book “Paleolithicdiet” byAhmet Aydın (A Turkish author) then I changed every snacks and food” (Participant 13).

Table8 - Thesixth question in the interview and its answer's distribution

Question	Answers	Frequency
What kind of food do you purchase as healthier snacks for your children?	Driednuts	14
	Fruits	11
	Driedfruits	5
	Home-made cookies, organic cookies	5
	Yoghurt	1
	Organic milk	1
	Fruit pulp sheets	1

The responses to question six are aligned according toTable 8. Mothers especially prefer fruits or fruit related snacks for their children. Answers are classified as: 14 of them stated driednuts, and 11 of them claimed fruits, and the remainingssaidthey consider driedfruits, home made cookies, yoghurt, organic milk as healthy snacks for their children. Some examples from the interviews are indicated below:

“As healthier snacks, I prefer driednuts for my children especially the ones that are uncultivated, raw and, if it is possible, I prefer peeling their hulls myself” (Participant 5).

“I purchase driednuts” (Participant 16).

“Driednuts, and driedfruits, and also fruits” (Participant 17).

“Driednuts and white mulberry, apricots, grapes, and apple dries” (Participant 20).

Table 9 - Question seven and its answer's distribution

Question	Answers	Frequency
What are the brands for healthy snacks that you permanently purchase?	Generic foods, organic markets, local souks, reliable dryfoods, and related firms, etc.	11
	Mrs. Ipek's farmplace -www.ipek-hanim.com	6
	Malatya Market -malatyapazar.com	3
	City Form	3
	Tadim Driedfruit	3
	Ada Organics- adaorganik.com	2
	Orvital-orvital.com.tr	2
	Ali Siro Bread -alishiro.com	2
	Green Valley Organic Foods	1
	HalkEkmek(People Bread)	1
	Three Apple Natural Agriculture - ucelmadogaltarim.com	1
	Elite Naturel-elitenatural.com	1
Ataturk Forest Farmplace(AOC)	1	

Table 9 indicates the results of question 7 that asked “*What are the brands for healthy snacks that you permanently purchase?*” Their replies were grouped and many of them (11) claimed that they prefer generic foods and snacks for their children. They purchase at organic markets, local souks, and reliable driedfruit or at normal stores. These respondents did not mention any brand or company names; however, some of them gave the names first as recorded in Table 9 above. Six of the respondents stated that they purchase from Mrs. Ipek's Farmplace foods, and in equal numbers of three, they prefer Malatya Market, City Form, and Tadim Driedfruit, and numbers of two, they prefer Ada Organics, Orvital and AliShiro Bread companies. They have chances to offer online. Many of them have websites and they send their products to all around the country. For instance, Mrs Ipek's Farmplace has been selling natural foods through her websites to all over Turkey for approximately ten years.

“I prefer Tadim Driedfruit comparing to other brands because there are very few fusty ones in its packages” (Participant 3).

Mrs Ipek's Farmplace and also I are in an effort to struggle driedfruits in their locality so they are fresher and healthier” (Participant 5).

“Mrs Ipek's Farmplace, Green Valley, Ada Organics, AOC, People Breads (whole wheat), Ali Siro Breads, local souks”, (Participant 3).

“For driedfruits, I prefer Tadim Driedfruit and Malatya Bazaar, especially for fruits I try to purchase from local souks and/or organic stores that I really trust” (Participant, 10).

Table 10- Question 8 and its answer's frequencies

Question	Answers	Frequency
How did you discover these brands or the places where these brands are sold?	Recommendations from family, friends, or other relatives	9
	Internet searching	7
	I have seen them in organic food markets or bazaars (souks)	5
	Authoritarian or specialized people's advices such as doctors, etc.	3

According to Table 10, a lot of the respondents expressed that they get recommendations from their relatives, friends or family members to make a decision on health foods for their children. Seven of the respondents claimed that they searched and found these foods by using internet sources; however, five of them stated that they prefer purchasing these foods from open markets such as bazaars (souks) where they see and touch the products. Some of the answers obtained from the interview are chosen to display below:

"I discover these brands with the advice of my doctor and mothers whom I trust very much" (Participant 10).

"I first saw it in the marketplace, I realized that it was written "organic" on the package, and then I read the labels so I decided to purchase it" (Participant 13).

"I heard the place (MrsIpek'sFarmplace) from one of my best friends and I searched & read from various blogs and the Internet, then I finally decided to purchase" (Participant 15).

"I saw these foods in Ferikoy, Istanbul organic food souk", (Participant 18).

Conclusion & Discussion

In the past and today, children almost always would like to consume unhealthy snacks. Children pay attention more to this kind of food due to their colourful and funny packages. Not just children, adults also consume and prefer these snacks that contain a lot of saturated and transfats. However; they are threatening their health throughout their lives. The obesity is accepted as one of the major illnesses today and gives rise to high blood pressure and heart and vein problems more than before. For that reason, consumers should start eating healthier at their younger ages so they will gain these eating habits. Today's adults were the children of yesterdays. If the mothers are responsible for this issue, they will raise their children. Therefore; mothers should pay attention to retaining these habits for themselves and family members.

This study is designed to figure out the mothers who routinely purchase healthy snacks for their family and children. The results showed firstly the demographic characteristics profiles of the mothers as respondents. According to the results, many of these mothers are between 35 and 45 years old, have one or two children, graduated with a bachelor degree, are working and high income level women. This shows that mostly conscious mothers are well educated and are aware of morbidities that can happen to their children. Marketers have to develop new strategies to communicate with conscious mothers better and try to understand their attitudes towards healthy snacks purchasing. Similarly, according to the study of Balkis (2011) who

indicated that increasing the education level of the consumers will change the nutrition habits of them and so the demand of healthy food and snacks will increase, accordingly.

Most of the respondents define “*healthy food*” as food that does not contain chemical substances or additives inside them and they decide whether the snack is healthy or not by searching for the producers, purchasing these foods only from places that they trust and, examining the labels carefully, and hereby they feel themselves in guarantee. One another point which is important in this study is the respondents mentioned only the chemicals and additives rather than fats, calories and sugar. This result supported the idea that the mothers are afraid of the illnesses caused by chemicals or other stuff instead of obesity. Based on this information gathered by this research, the producers or sellers of natural and organic foods and healthy snacks produce and market their products by highlighting the analysis report with public and design their marketing plans especially focusing on these details.

In the study, most of the mothers stated that they gave permissions to their children for purchasing decisions on snacks for raising their children as conscious individuals. Therefore, these children will be aware of the ingredients of the food whether they are healthy or not. As it is seen, the family’s role is really important in developing a child’s consumption patterns. Similarly, Ward, Wackman, and Wartella (1977) expressed that during the purchasing process, the communication with their family is vital and this communication brings reliable knowledge. Therefore, they have a chance to improve their consumption patterns in a right way. Yan and Xu (2010) found that when there is good communication between the child and family about purchasing green products and recycled products, the youngsters would be influenced by their parents’ ideas and thoughts much more. Therefore, establishing communication between a child and especially a mother will contribute child’s learning processes on right snack consumption and behaviors. In addition to that, when a child is convinced that the snack is healthy, it will influence his/her habits in his/her childhood and adulthood positively.

The results demonstrated that the mothers are trying to eat more healthfully. The starting time question classified the responses and most of them said that the period started with their children’s birth times (half respondents indicated the certain time is after their children’s birth) except seven mothers. At this point, a link can be established between the times of pregnancy and the date of birth and healthful feeding. Perhaps, mothers, who have the responsibility of carrying a living body in their body, tend to pay more attention to themselves and also to their diets from the time of their pre-pregnancy terms. The producers or firms who are marketing healthy food can highlight their marketing and promotion strategies especially emphasizing the importance of nutrition in pregnancy and their impacts.

According to the interview results, the major factors that lead mothers to consume healthier foods and snacks in order to keep their family members, especially their children, from disasters such as fear of cancers, nutrition of children, and their willingness to be healthier, etc. From this point of view, governments can underline these facts more empathetically in public service announcements. Mothers mentioned healthy snacks as dried nuts, dried fruits, fruits, vegetables, organic cookies. Mothers generally prefer these snacks due to their previous researches.

This study’s results are similar to the results of Ilkay’s (2013) on generic snack consumption patterns. In this study, mothers mostly purchase food without any well known brands.

According to their speeches, being trustworthy is more important than being a well known brand. The remaining part of the respondents indicated that they purchase healthysnacks directly from the Internet channels and or from the retailers. Mostly the references are important for them in their decision making processes. They are influenced by their relatives, friends etc. and/or e-blogs, e-forums.

The unhealthy nutrition habits are growing with the ages of the people. Therefore, these habits should be gained in childhood and some preventive efforts should be made for adulthood and childhood to raise healthier generations (Balkis, 2011). Although this phenomenological study covered limited size, the consequences can be beneficial to many parties (government, consumers, producers, sellers, etc.). First, the importance of healthy nutrition and the fact that mothers must be concerned about their children's consumption of healthy snacks should be emphasized in public service announcements, especially provided by governments, or in the trainings covering these issues. Second, the companies that produce or sell healthy snacks can determine their target groups, their potential characteristics, how they can communicate with them and also with which channels they can reach their target groups.

This study has some limitations as any other research does. The first limitation of the study is being a phenomenological study. Other researchers examined the issue with different techniques such as surveys. So the authors are planning for further researches studying with larger sampling units. Time and cost are the second basic limitations of this study. Although Istanbul is the largest and the most crowded city in Turkey, the study could be prepared from different regions or countries to comparing. The third limitation is that this study's sampling contained only mothers, in the further researches besides mothers; fathers also can be examined as respondents and or all together. Moreover, researchers can also search as a next study the schools' impacts, especially kindergarten education and their snack day care rather than household.

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