


Commercial Opportunity for Healthy Snacks for Children's Parties in Metropolitan Lima

Oportunidad comercial de bocaditos saludables para fiestas infantiles en Lima metropolitana

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ABSTRACT

Childhood obesity is an escalating nutritional issue nationwide, largely due to the availability and proximity of foods high in fats and sugars, such as those typically offered at children's parties. There is a need to improve children's eating habits, as well as to have healthy options in the market aimed at children's parties. The objective of the research aimed to understand the commercial opportunity for healthy snacks at children's parties, focusing on consumption characteristics, distribution channels, and the significance of the value proposition. A virtual survey consisting of 21 questions was administered via Google Forms to 97 parents of children under 12 years old from districts with a higher percentage of families with socioeconomic levels A and B. 100% of parents expressed willingness to purchase healthy snacks for children's parties. 95% selected social media and websites as their preferred distribution channels. 95.9% preferred home delivery services. 90.7% valued eco-friendly packaging. The average price parents were willing to pay for healthy snacks was S/ 565.77, with a mode value of S/ 500. Preferred payment methods included credit cards and bank transfers. These results highlight a significant business opportunity that aligns with current trends in online purchasing, delivery convenience, and environmental awareness.

Keywords: Food, healthy, snacks, children's parties, nutrition, eco-friendly.

RESUMEN

La obesidad infantil es uno de los problemas nutricionales en aumento a nivel nacional, relacionado con la disponibilidad y proximidad de alimentos altos en grasas y azúcares como los que se encuentran en fiestas infantiles. Existe la necesidad de mejorar hábitos alimentarios en niñas y niños, así como de disponer con opciones saludables en el mercado dirigidas a fiestas infantiles. El objetivo de la investigación fue conocer la oportunidad comercial para bocaditos saludables en fiestas infantiles, considerando características de



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consumo, canales de distribución e importancia de la propuesta de valor. La muestra fue de 97 padres con hijos menores de 12 años, pertenecientes a distritos con mayor porcentaje de familias con niveles socioeconómicos A y B, a quienes se les aplicó una encuesta de 21 preguntas de manera virtual a través de Google Forms. El 100 % de padres indicó que estaría dispuesto a comprar bocaditos saludables para fiestas infantiles, eligiendo el 95 % como canal de distribución principal las redes sociales y página web, un 95,9% prefirieron servicio delivery y 90,7 % valora el uso de empaques ecoamigables. El promedio que pagarían por bocaditos saludables es S/ 565,77 y el valor para la moda fue S/ 500. Los medios de pago de preferencia fueron transferencia y tarjeta de crédito. Los resultados revelan una importante oportunidad comercial relacionada al interés de los encuestados en contar con opciones de bocaditos saludables en fiestas infantiles siguiendo las tendencias actuales de compra por transferencia, canales de distribución online y cuidado del medio ambiente.

Palabras clave: Alimentación, saludable, bocaditos, fiestas infantiles, nutrición, ecoamigable.

INTRODUCTION

Childhood obesity, a precursor to numerous non-communicable diseases in adults and children, remains a pressing global health concern. By 2022, 9.2% of children under five in South America were overweight, compared to the global rate of 5.6%. In Peru, overweight and obesity among children reached 9.4% in this age group (UNICEF, 2023). Likewise in Peru, in 2018, 16 % of children between 6 and 13 years old presented obesity and 22.4 % were overweight, with even more alarming rates in Lima, where 20.6% of children aged 6 to 13 were obese, and 24% were overweight (UNICEF Peru, 2023). What is concerning is that these figures are on the rise, and this situation is linked to the widespread availability and easy access to high-fat, high-sugar foods (Rivera, 2013), such as those found at children's parties, and the influence of parental behavior and consumption patterns (Coca, 2019).

Processed food companies invest heavily in advertising, particularly during programming aimed at children and adolescents, who then influence their parents to purchase the products they desire (Ministry of Health of Peru (MINSA),

2012). This desire is clearly exemplified in birthday celebrations, where there is an abundance of ultra-processed products that are high in sugars, saturated fats and sodium, triggering health problems such as being overweight. The government and society have closely monitored the composition of these nutrients due to the severe consequences their excessive consumption causes for this population. As a result, Peru implemented the Law on the Promotion of Healthy Eating for Children and Adolescents in 2017 and the Manual of Advertising Warnings (octagon system) in 2018.

On the other hand, it is recognized that parents, especially mothers, are increasingly aware of the importance of providing healthy nutrition to their children. According to the survey *Vida Saludable ¿Yo? (A Healthy Life, Me?)*, conducted by Datum Internacional (2017), living a healthy life for 68% of Peruvians is associated with eating healthy. While there is growing concern about leading healthier lifestyles, improving children's eating habits, and implementing informational

policies like octagons, it is important to question whether there are sufficient alternatives to address this situation. This is particularly relevant during birthday celebrations, where many children and their parents gather and interact.

Given the need to improve children's eating habits and the lack of healthy alternatives on the market for children's parties—as well as the limited research in this sector—this study aims to explore the commercial opportunity for healthy snacks at children's parties. It considers consumption characteristics, preferred distribution channels, and the importance of added value propositions for parents with children in their early years in Metropolitan Lima.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A pilot survey was conducted with 10 participants from the defined target segment, yielding a 90% likelihood of purchasing healthy snacks. A confidence level of 90% and a margin of error of 5% were used for the sample size calculation. As a result, a total sample of 97 parents from Metropolitan Lima was determined for the survey. The survey technique used for data collection was a questionnaire validated by expert judgment and administered virtually via Google Forms.

The questionnaire consisted of 21 questions and targeted parents with children in their early childhood stage, defined as up to 12 years of age. It was distributed through close contacts and social media platforms associated with child nutrition communities, primarily reaching the Metropolitan Lima areas relevant to the study. The questions addressed the sociodemographic characteristics of parents

and children, consumption habits, preferred distribution channels, and the significance of the value-added proposition for healthy snacks at children's parties. A list of snacks, including their names and ingredients, was presented. These were designed according to the technical parameters of the "Law on the Promotion of Healthy Eating for Children and Adolescents". The questionnaire also explored parents' purchasing decisions. The collected data were recorded in Excel and processed using SPSS statistical software, version 21.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The survey, as part of the market research, provides data that can help define the sector for the commercialization of healthy snacks for children's parties.

According to the data collected, the 14 districts where the respondents reside belong to Zone 6 (Jesús María, Lince, Pueblo Libre, Magdalena, San Miguel), Zone 7 (Miraflores, San Isidro, San Borja, Surco, La Molina), and Zone 8 (Surquillo, Barranco, Chorrillos, San Juan de Miraflores) of urban metropolitan Lima. These zones house the largest percentage of families in socioeconomic levels A and B (APEIM – Asociación Peruana de Empresas de Inteligencia de Mercado (Peruvian Association of Market Intelligence Companies, 2024), with the study primarily representing families from Surco, Chorrillos, La Molina, Magdalena del Mar, Miraflores, and San Borja. At the national level, 41.4% of households have at least one child under 12 (INEI, 2024). However, for socioeconomic levels A and B in Zones 6, 7, and 8 of Metropolitan Lima—where most respondents reside—the population under 12 years old is 27.9% (APEIM, 2019).



Figure 1. Districts of residence of surveyed parents with children under 12 years old

It is noteworthy that many of these districts, considered part of modern and affluent Lima, host a significant number of bio-markets and health stores that offer nutritious food options, particularly in areas like Miraflores, Surco, Barranco, and La Molina (Wu, 2021; Higuchi *et al.*, 2023). This makes the segment attractive, as these areas are in regular contact with health-beneficial ingredients and food products, which could increase awareness and interest in purchasing healthy snacks for children.

Table 1.
Age range of surveyed parents

	n	%
Under 30 years	71	11.3
30 to 40 years	15	73.2
Over 40 years	11	15.5
Total	97	100

In Table 1, it is evident that the age range of parents with children in their early years is predominantly between 30 and 40 years. This helps to target the market

segment and profile potential customers. According to Reyes *et al.* (2014), in Lima, organic food buyers are typically between 25 and 45 years old. While healthy products are not necessarily the same as organic products, the concepts are related, and it can be inferred that there is a significant interest in nutrition and dietary care within this age group.

Table 2.
Number of children under 12 years old

	n	%
One child	59	60.8
Two children	31	32
Three or more	7	7.2
Total	97	100

While all respondents have children under 12 years old, 61% have one child, and 32% have two children in this age group. These figures align with the declining fertility rate in Peru, which has dropped over the last five years. The fertility rate decreased from 2.5 children per woman in 2015-2016 to 2.1 children per woman by

2021, reaching as low as 1.8 in urban areas such as those represented in this survey and 1.6 among women with higher education (INEI, 2021).

Table 3.

Purchasing characteristics of healthy snacks for children's parties

	n	%
Interest in purchasing healthy snacks		
Yes	97	100
No	0	0
Distribution channels for healthy snacks		
Eco-friendly fairs	20	21
Social media and websites	92	95
Event organizer	35	36
School entrances or exits	24	25
Delivery method		
Pick-up in store	4	4.1
Delivery	93	95.9
Preference for eco-friendly packaging		
Yes	88	90.7
No	9	9.3
Preferred payment method		
Cash	28	29
Deposit on account	28	29
Credit cards	68	70
Transfer	68	70

All respondents indicated that they would purchase healthy snacks, particularly for their children's birthday parties. This aligns with the growing concern among parents regarding their children's nutrition, as reflected in a study conducted in Chile through the Observatorio Nutricional survey, where 97% of parents considered it very or quite important for their children to have a healthy diet (Universidad Finis Terrae, 2022).

When asked where they would prefer to decide and purchase healthy snacks, nearly all respondents selected social media and websites as their primary distribution channels, followed by event organizers as the second option. Furthermore, the vast majority of respondents preferred delivery services. An interesting finding from the survey is that 90% of parents value eco-friendly packaging for presenting snacks. This reflects the current increase in environmental awareness, with this being a key factor driving consumers to purchase eco-friendly products (Espinoza *et al.*, 2022). Additionally, parents expressed a willingness to pay more for products from a company committed to sustainability (Universidad Finis Terrae, 2022).

The preferred payment methods among respondents in the selected customer segment are bank transfers and credit card payments. This preference can be attributed to innovations in retail payment methods and a growing tendency towards non-cash, remote transactions (Banco Central de Reserva (BCR), 2022).

When asked how much they would pay for healthy snacks—considering a proposal consisting of three savoury snacks, three sweet snacks, and a cake—the most frequently mentioned amount was S/ 500, representing a fixed budget allocated to snacks for their child's party, regardless of the number of guests. The mean was S/ 565.77. This evaluation shows that the amount is close to the average price offered by competitors for similar packages, which is S/ 620.66. In a study by Campaña *et al.* (2019), when parents were asked how much they typically spend on food for their child's birthday party, 38.2% reported spending between S/ 2,000 and S/ 2,500, and 21.4% reported spending between S/ 500 and S/ 1,000. These figures differ from

Table 4.

Amount to Pay for Healthy Snacks for Children's Parties

	Mode	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Amount (in soles)	500	565.77	515.4	100	3000

the findings of this survey, likely because this study provided specific details about the names and ingredients of the healthy snack proposal, offering greater clarity about what is included.

provided by online distribution channels such as social media and websites, coupled with delivery services. Additionally, the use of eco-friendly packaging aligns with current consumer trends.

CONCLUSIONS

The results reveal a significant commercial opportunity tied to the interest of surveyed parents in Zones 6, 7, and 8 of Metropolitan Lima, which primarily house families in socioeconomic levels A and B. These parents expressed a strong demand for healthy snack options for children's parties, taking advantage of the convenience

Regardless of the number of guests, respondents prefer to allocate a fixed budget for healthy snacks for children's parties. This budget is comparable to what similar companies in the market currently offer. Parents also primarily prefer using credit cards and bank transfers for payment, highlighting the importance of accommodating non-cash, digital transactions.

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