



Abstract

Online Parental Views of Baby Food Pouches [†]

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Abstract: Globally, the value sales of baby food pouches increased by 28% in December 2013–2014. Although baby food pouches are an increasingly popular choice for parents, a number of health agencies have raised concerns about their possible long-term health effects. The wealth of online parenting forums provides easily accessed opportunities for parents to discuss a wide range of topics on food and nutrition, including the use of baby food pouches. This study aimed to describe parental perceptions of the use of baby food pouches during complementary feeding (i.e., the transition from an entirely milk-based diet to solid foods) using a netnographic analysis of discussions on publicly available forums. Netnography is an innovative methodology which uses internet-based communications on social networking sites as a data source to understand a community. In this study, the community was parents of young children. Six parenting forums were identified through a Google search using defined selection criteria. Discussion threads relating to baby food pouches were collected and imported into NVivo 12 for thematic analysis via inductive reasoning. Perceptions of baby food pouches fell within two broad categories—benefits and concerns. The most commonly reported themes related to benefits were: convenience, health, baby enjoyment, variety, and cost; and those related to concerns were: health, cost, lack of dietary exposure, dependence, and waste. Many parents reported both benefits and concerns. To conclude, the convenience of baby food pouches was the primary benefit reported, although the parents also had concerns, particularly regarding health effects. Research is still needed to determine whether baby food pouches provide a net benefit or harm to infant health. Once this has been determined, communication to parents to either encourage or discourage their use is likely to be more effective if it takes into account the benefits and concerns reported here by parents.

Keywords: qualitative research; netnography; infant food pouches; complementary feeding; infants



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