



**THE HONG KONG UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING**

Obesity, Responsiveness to Food Marketing, and Taste Perception Before and After Bariatric Surgery

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Date: 15th Mar 2024 (Friday)

Time: 10:00 am – 11:30 am

Venue: Room 4047, Lee Shau Kee Business Building, HKUST

Abstract:

Although food marketing is often accused of increasing population obesity, the relationship between individual responsiveness to marketing and obesity has yet to be established: Are people with obesity more responsive to food marketing and, if so, is it a stable trait or can it be reversed by bariatric surgery? In our research (part of it is published, another part is in review), we studied the responses to common marketing tactics in a group of women with obesity before, 3 months, and 12 months after bariatric surgery, as well as in two control groups (lean women, and women with obesity who were not seeking any treatment). People with obesity were initially more responsive to food marketing, but bariatric surgery reduced their responsiveness down to the level of lean people. We propose that this decreased responsiveness to marketing (i.e., external influences on food choices) may be due to increased internal preferences (or decreased indifference) for various food options after surgery. Our findings provide novel insights into the role of marketing in obesity, and suggest that developing sensory and hedonic discrimination can be a pathway to decreasing the influence of marketing on food choices.