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Food marketing to children:

The role of the World Health Organization and current priorities

Jo Jewell

WHO Regional Office for Europe, Nutrition, Physical Activity & Obesity

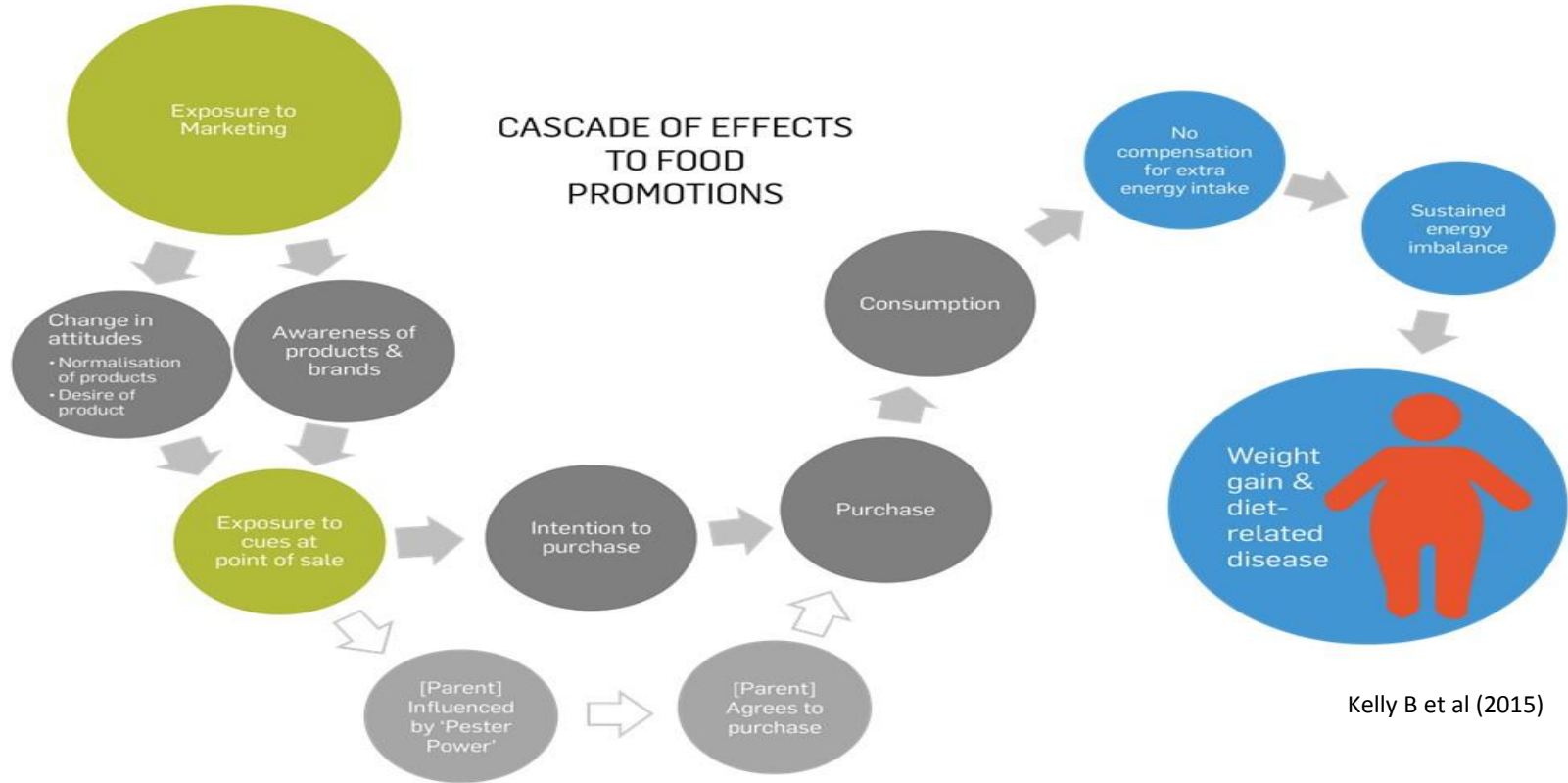


Vision: what do we want to see in terms of changes to the way products are marketed?

- use fiscal policies and marketing controls to full effect to influence demand, access and affordability for tobacco, alcohol and HFSS foods and drinks
- undertake a comprehensive ban on all tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship
- prevent inappropriate and irresponsible advertising and marketing for alcohol that targets children and young people
- adopt strong measures that reduce the overall impact on children of all forms of marketing (including online) of HFSS foods and drinks

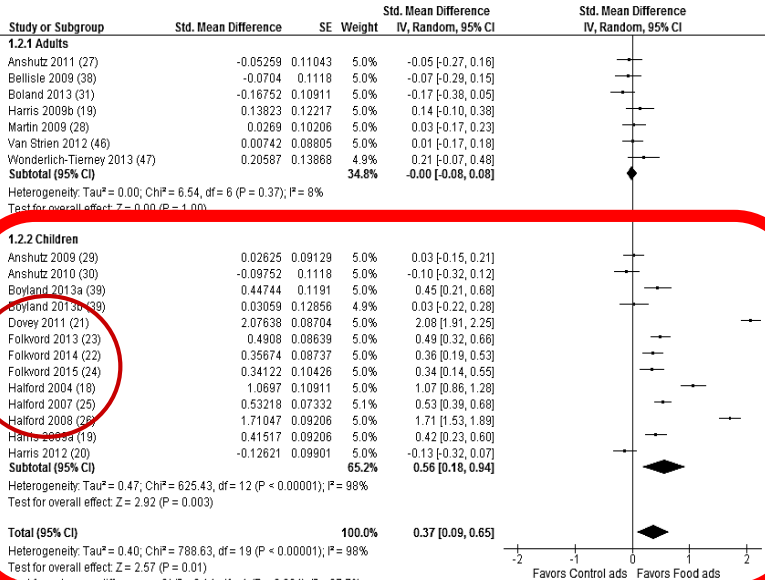


Why act? Effects of marketing promotions...



Kelly B et al (2015)

Why act?



Impact of food advertising on consumption

Evidence indicates that the effectiveness of marketing communications depends on the reach, frequency and impact of the message (thus influencing *exposure*) and the content, design and execution of the marketing message (which influences the *power* of the communication).

Why act? Sustained impact of food marketing on food intake



Study Design

- Children 7-12 years (n=160)
- Single media or multiple media
- 3 days food advertising and 3 days non-food advertising
- Measured snack and lunch intake

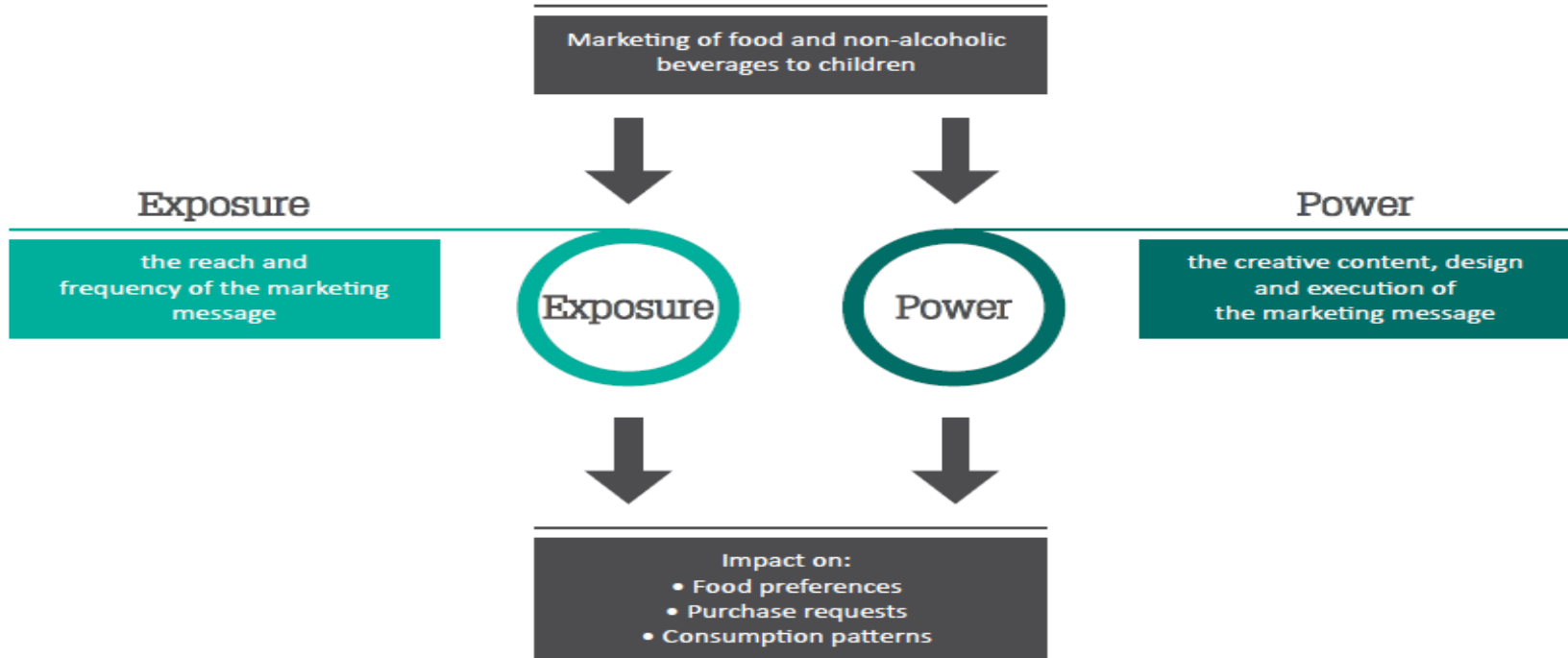


Key findings

- All children in multiple media condition ate more at a snack after food advertising – not compensated for at lunch
- Additional 194kJ consumed on food advertising days
- Increased effect in children with heavier weight status and multiple (versus single) media exposure

Norman, J, Kelly, B, McMahon, AT, Boyland, E, Baur, L, Bauman, A, Chapman, K, King, L, & Hughes, C. *Under review at IJBNPA*

WHO Set of Recommendations



WHO Set of Recommendations

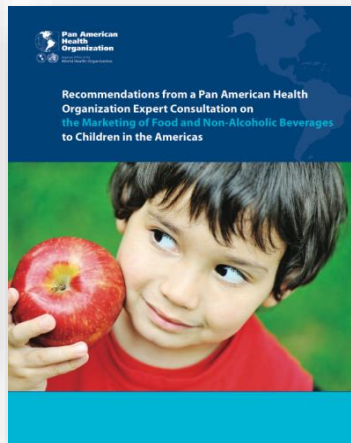
- “Marketing” is defined in the Recommendations as:

any form of commercial communication or message that is designed to, or has the effect of, increasing the recognition, appeal and/or consumption of particular products and services. It comprises anything that acts to advertise or otherwise promote a product or service.

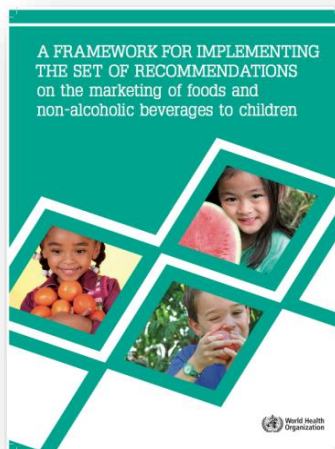
WHO technical support to countries to take action



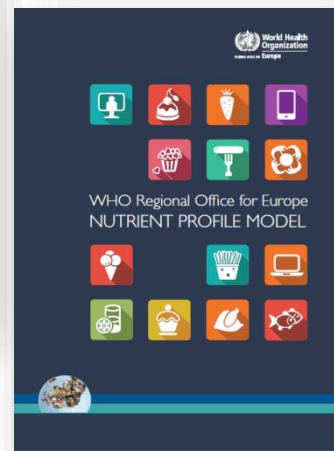
2010



2011



2012



2015



2016

ENDING CHILDHOOD OBESITY



 World Health Organization

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.4

Develop nutrient-profiles to identify unhealthy foods and beverages.

1.5

Establish cooperation between Member States to reduce the impact of cross-border marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages.

“Regulation would provide equal protection to all children regardless of socioeconomic group and ensure equal responsibility by large, regional, multinational and small local producers and retailers.”

Are existing measures “fit for purpose”?

- Some conflicts between:
 - Academic papers and government evaluations
 - Academic papers and industry evaluations

Are existing measures “fit for purpose”?

- Reported impact typically greater for younger children than for adolescents, primarily due to decreases during children’s programming
- However, this decrease is often accompanied by an increase in children’s exposure during programming for mixed audiences popular with children = no reduction overall
- Some studies find 50-70% marketing still non-compliant with WHO and/or OFCOM criteria

Are existing measures “fit for purpose”?

Children’s exposure to food advertising: the impact of statutory restrictions

Rosa Whalen^{1,*}, Joanne Harrold¹, Simon Child², Jason Halford¹, and Emma Boyland¹

The introduction of statutory restrictions:

- Food and beverage advertising decreased **0.9%** from 2008 (**12.8%**) to 2010 (**11.9%**)
- Modest reduction in non-core (**2.2%**) and a negligible increase in core (**0.5%**)
- Fewest healthy F&B advertised on sports (less than **9.4%**)
- Most unhealthy F&B advertised on music TV (**59.4%**)

Therefore frequency and balance of F&B adverts remained rather static

Children’s exposure to food advertising

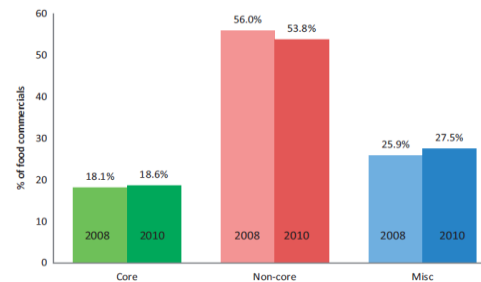


Fig. 1: Average proportion of food commercials for core, non-core and miscellaneous items across baseline (2008) and current (2010) study periods.

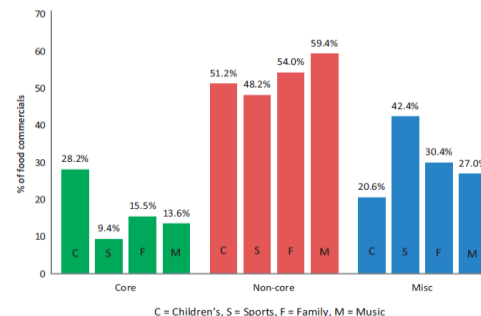


Fig. 2: Mean proportion of core, non-core and miscellaneous food commercials broadcast during 2010 recording period on children's, sports, family and music channels.

Are existing measures “fit for purpose”?

Doi: 10.17645/mac.v4i3.522

Article

Marketing to Youth in the Digital Age: The Promotion of Unhealthy Products and Health Promoting Behaviours on Social Media

Sally Dunlop^{1,2,*}, Becky Freeman^{1,3} and Sandra C. Jones⁴

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Abstract

The near-ubiquitous use of social media among adolescents and young adults creates opportunities for both corporate brands and health promotion agencies to target and engage with young audiences in unprecedented ways. Traditional media is known to have both a positive and negative influence on youth health behaviours, but the impact of social media is less well understood. This paper first summarises current evidence around adolescents' exposure to the promotion and marketing of unhealthy products such as energy dense and nutrient poor food and beverages, alcohol, and tobacco on social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. We explore emerging evidence about the extent of exposure to marketing of these harmful products through social media platforms and potential impacts of exposure on adolescent health. Secondly, we present examples of health-promoting social media campaigns aimed at youth, with the purpose of describing innovative campaigns and highlighting lessons learned for creating effective social media interventions. Finally, we suggest implications for policy and practice, and identify knowledge gaps and opportunities for future research.

Keywords

advertising; alcohol; junk food; social marketing; social media; tobacco; youth

RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Digital Junk: Food and Beverage Marketing on Facebook

Becky Freeman, PhD, Bridget Kelly, PhD, Louise Baur, PhD, Kathy Chapman, MNutrDiet, Simon Chapman, PhD, Tim Gill, PhD, and Lesley King, MPsych

Obesity is a common, serious, and costly health issue.¹ In the United States alone, the medical costs of obesity are estimated to be \$147 billion.² Although the prevalence of overweight and obesity among children and adolescents in countries such as the United States and Australia appears to have plateaued in recent years, rates remain high.³ Obesity rates generally increase with age among adults⁴; however, of urgent concern is the growing prevalence of overweight and obesity among young Australian adults, particularly women. Research has suggested that later generations have higher rates of excess body weight than generations before them. Current obesity-promoting environments likely mean people are now put at greater risk for weight gain in young adulthood.⁴

One of the powerful environmental factors

Objectives. We assessed the amount, reach, and nature of energy-dense, nutrient-poor (EDNP) food and beverage marketing on Facebook.

Methods. We conducted a content analysis of the marketing techniques used by the 27 most popular food and beverage brand Facebook pages in Australia. We coded content across 19 marketing categories; data were collected from the day each page launched (mean = 3.65 years of activity per page).

Results. We analyzed 13 international pages and 14 Australian-based brand pages; 4 brands (Subway, Coca-Cola, Sturpee, Maltesers) had both national and international pages. Pages widely used marketing features unique to social media that increase consumer interaction and engagement. Common techniques were competitions based on user-generated content, interactive games, and apps. Four pages included apps that allowed followers to place an order directly through Facebook. Adolescent and young adult Facebook users appeared most receptive to engaging with this content.

Conclusions. By using the interactive and social aspects of Facebook to market products, EDNP food brands capitalize on users' social networks and magnify the reach and personal relevance of their marketing messages (Am J Public Health. Published online ahead of print October 16, 2014; e1-e9. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2014.302167)

Current Obesity Reports

March 2016, Volume 4, Issue 1, pp 37-45 | [Cite as](#)

New Media but Same Old Tricks: Food Marketing to Children in the Digital Age

Authors Authors and affiliations

Bridget Kelly, Stefanie Vandevijvere, Becky Freeman, Gabrielle Jenkin

Etiology of Obesity (T Gill, Section Editor)

First Online: 10 January 2015

13

37

Citations Shares

Part of the following topical collections:

Topical Collection on Etiology of Obesity

Abstract

'New media' refers to digital technologies, which offer unmatched opportunities for food companies to engage with young people. This paper explores the emergence of food marketing using new media, the potential impact of this marketing on young people, and current and potential policy responses to limit exposure to these promotions. Foremost in any informed policy discussion is the need for robust evidence to demonstrate the need for intervention. In this case, such evidence relates to the extent of children's exposures to commercial food promotions via new media, and the nature of these promotions. Approaches to, and challenges of, collecting and assessing these data are discussed. There is accumulating evidence that food marketing on new media is increasing and influences children's food preferences and choices. The impact of integrated campaigns, which reinforce commercial messages across multiple platforms, and of new media, which engage personally with potential consumers, is likely to be greater than that of traditional marketing.

Keywords

Food Beverage Marketing Digital media New media

This article is part of the Topical Collection on *Etiology of Obesity*

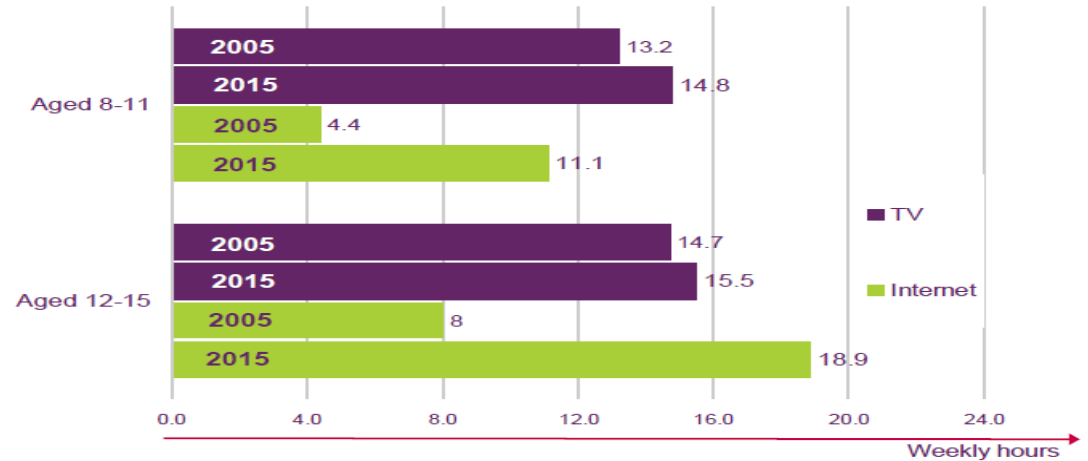
References

Despite recent fluctuations TV viewing still higher than ten years ago

Internet use has increased dramatically

Now using both at same time via multiple devices

Figure 1: Estimated weekly hours of media consumption, at home or elsewhere among users, 8-11s and 12-15s: 2005 and 2015



QP13A-B/ QP25A-B How many hours would you say you spend [using medium] on a typical school day/ on a weekend day?
Responses are taken from the child aged 8-11 or 12-15 rather than the parent.
Base: Children aged 8-15 who use each medium (variable base).

More children are now going online at home, and tablets and mobile phones are now more popular than desktop computers for online access
As shown in Figure 2, more children are able to access the internet at home. In 2005 61% of 8-11s and 67% of 12-15s had the internet at home and 65% of 12-15s and 48% of 8-11s used it. Less than two-thirds of these connections were broadband, and 21% of 8-11s and 28% of 12-15s still had dial-up. In 2015 close to nine in ten 8-11s (91%) and nearly all 12-15s (96%) have internet access at home, either through a fixed broadband connection or through using a mobile network signal⁹.

Children's media consumption



8-11s

39% have their own smartphone, **52%** have their own tablet.

95% watch TV on a TV set, for nearly **14h a week**.

55% watch TV on other devices, mostly on a tablet.

81% play games, for around **10h a week**.

94% go online, for nearly **13½h a week**.

46% of these mostly use a tablet to go online, **22%** a mobile.

81% use YouTube, of which **23%** say funny videos or pranks are their favourite thing to watch, **18%** say music videos.

23% have a social media profile.

The **TV set** or **tablet** are the devices they would miss the most.



12-15s

83% have their own smartphone, **55%** have their own tablet.

91% watch TV on a TV set, for nearly **14½h a week**.

68% watch TV on other devices, mostly a tablet or mobile.

77% play games, for around **12h a week**.

99% go online, for nearly **21h a week**.

49% of these mostly use a tablet to go online, **26%** mostly use a mobile.

90% use YouTube, of which **26%** say music videos are their favourite thing to watch, **23%** say funny videos or pranks.

74% have a social media profile.

Their **mobile phone** is the device they would miss the most.

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Particular challenge of digital marketing

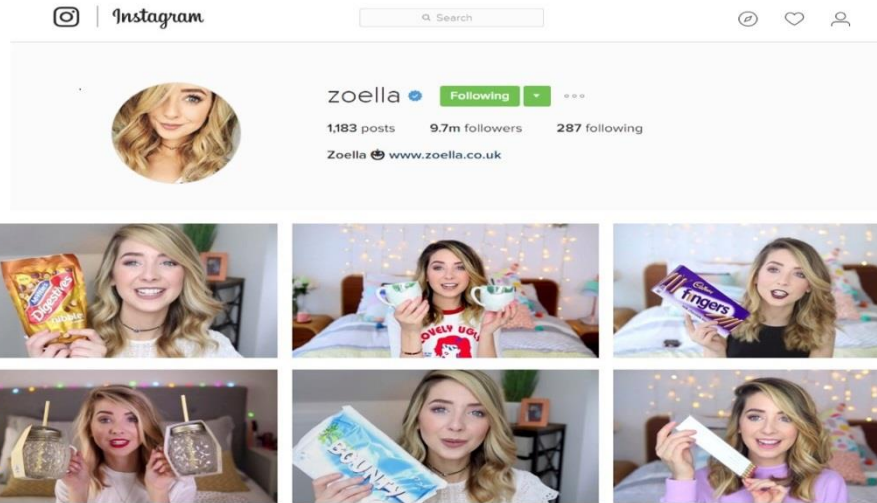


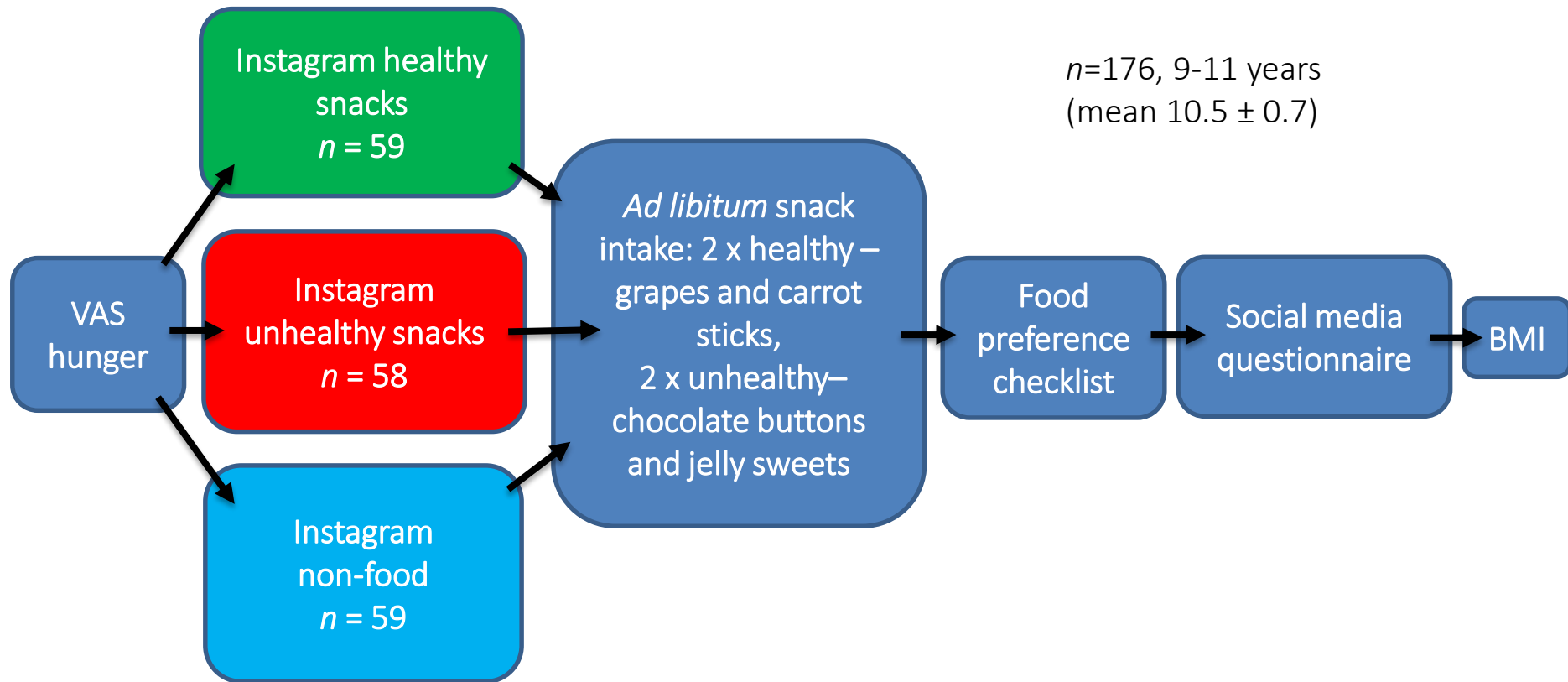
Children and digital Marketing: rights, risks and responsibilities
(UNICEF, 2018)

- Promotion using social media
- Sharing and liking
- Immersive and engaging (the “Pepsi Challenge”)
- Augmented reality, online gaming and other virtual environments
- Facilitated by data collection and behavioural profiling
- Location targeting and mobile marketing

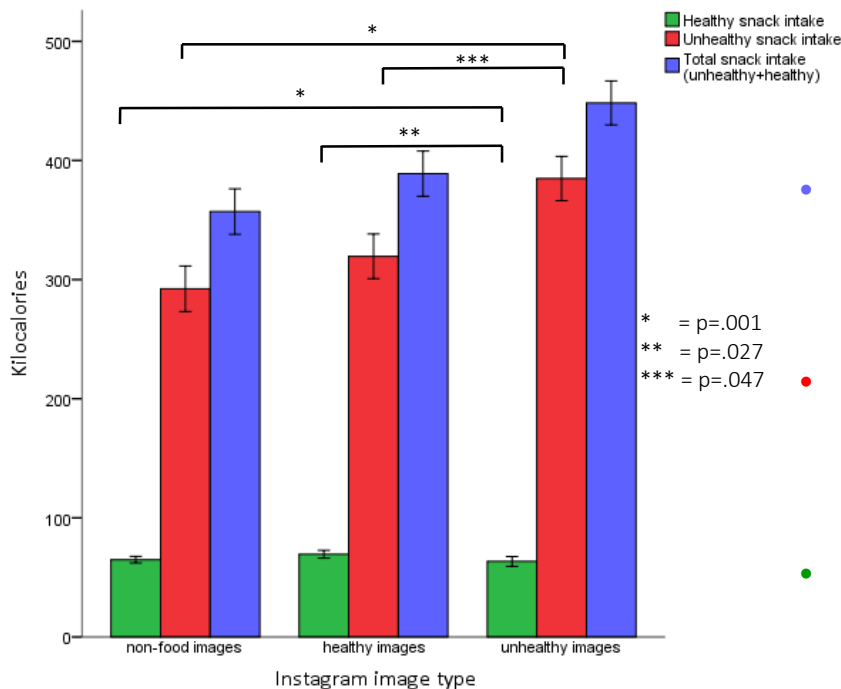
Montgomery and Chester, 2011

Use of peer influencers





Results – food intake



- **Total snack consumption:**
Unhealthy **26%** more than non-food
Healthy no different to non-food
- **Unhealthy snack consumption:**
Unhealthy **32%** more than non-food
- **Healthy snack consumption:**
All results non-significant.

Summary

Social media
marketing
unhealthy snacks



Increase in intake of
unhealthy snacks and
intake overall

Social media
marketing
healthy snacks



No increase in intake of
healthy snacks or
intake overall

- Children are active on social media
- Influencer marketing of unhealthy food
 - Embedded in engaging and entertaining content
 - Impactful

Summary of challenges

Age of the child

“Targeted” to children vs.
exposure

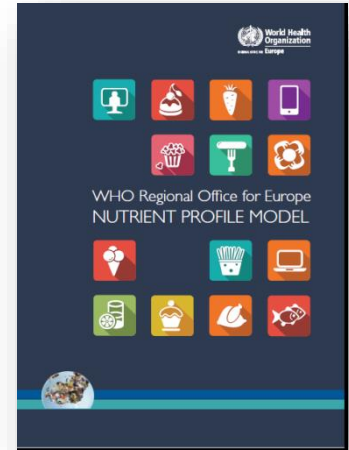
Challenges

Nutrient profiling

Addressing all forms of
marketing

WHO Nutrient Profile Model






- Category-based model that classifies foods according to their nutritional composition and relative healthfulness
- Identifies healthiest foods (i.e. appropriately strict for protecting children)
- Determines whether a product is permitted or not permitted for marketing to children
- Adopted in regulations in Slovenia and Turkey



WHO Nutrient Profile Model



Comparing nutrient profiling criteria

	Breakfast cereal	Biscuits, cakes, cereal bars	Yoghurts	Ice cream	Potato chips
EU Pledge	30g sugar	35g sugar	13.5g sugar	20g sugar	670mg sodium
Israeli labels					

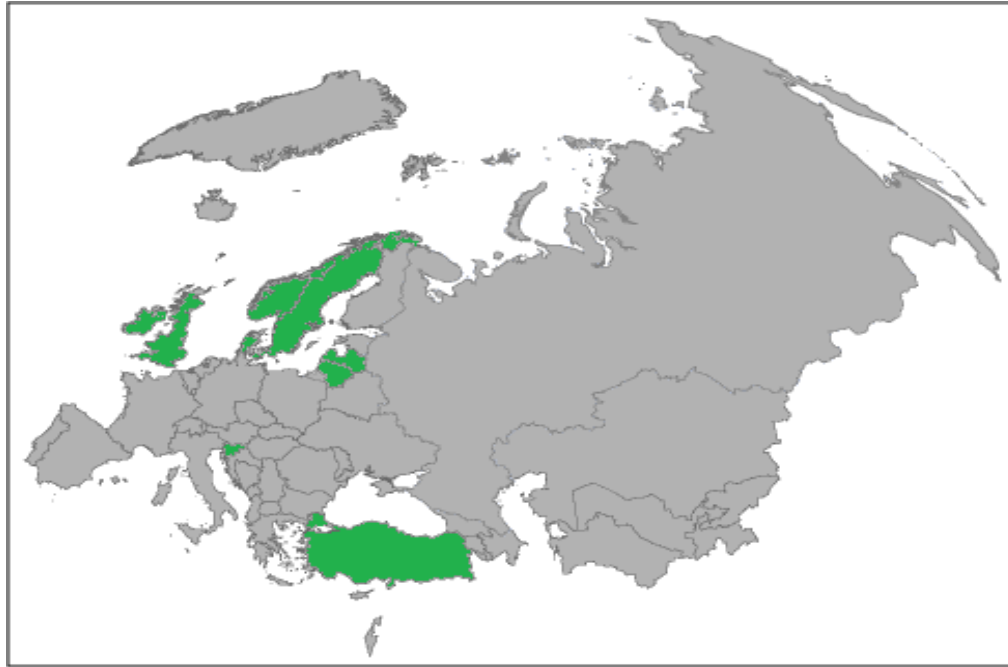
Comprehensive approach

How to ensure marketing does not “migrate”:

- from regulated to unregulated programmes
- from regulated to unregulated media
- from regulated to unregulated marketing techniques
- from regulated to unregulated settings



Notable policy examples



- Canada
- Chile
- South Korea

Advantages of regulation

- Applies to all food manufacturers and retailers – sets a level playing field
- The criteria of the policy are set independently and tend to be stricter (i.e. age; “targeted at children”; less exemptions)
- Enforcement mechanisms available
- [Cost to government and private sector minimal]

Advantages of regulation

Review

Reducing the volume, exposure and negative impacts of advertising for foods high in fat, sugar and salt to children: A systematic review of the evidence from statutory and self-regulatory actions and educational measures

Stephanie A. Chambers ^{a, b} ✉, Ruth Freeman ^a ✉, Annie S. Anderson ^b ✉, Steve Mac Gillivray ^c ✉

Highlights

- There are concerns over children's exposure to unhealthy food advertising.
- Statutory, self-regulatory and educational measures are proposed to curb its impact.
- Review findings suggest statutory regulation can be successful.
- Evidence is less strong for self-regulatory and educational measures.
- Evidence is limited by varying study quality, outcomes and nutrient criteria.

Advantages of regulation

Public Health

The impact of junk food marketing regulations on food sales: an ecological study

Summary

Objective: To evaluate the impact of junk food broadcast marketing policies on nationwide junk food sales and identify policy characteristics effective in reducing sales.

Methods: Country policy data ($n = 79$) were categorized in a thorough literature review and analysed using a repeated measures design against data on food sales per capita. Study conducted in United States, 2017.

Results: Countries with junk food broadcast marketing policies saw a decrease in junk food sales per capita after implementation, while those without said policies saw an increase ($p = 0.013$). Countries with statutory policies saw a decrease in sales per capita, while those with only self-regulation saw an increase ($p = 0.004$). Audience restrictions ($p = 0.024$) and standardized nutrition criteria ($p = 0.008$) were policy characteristics significantly associated with a decrease in sales per capita.

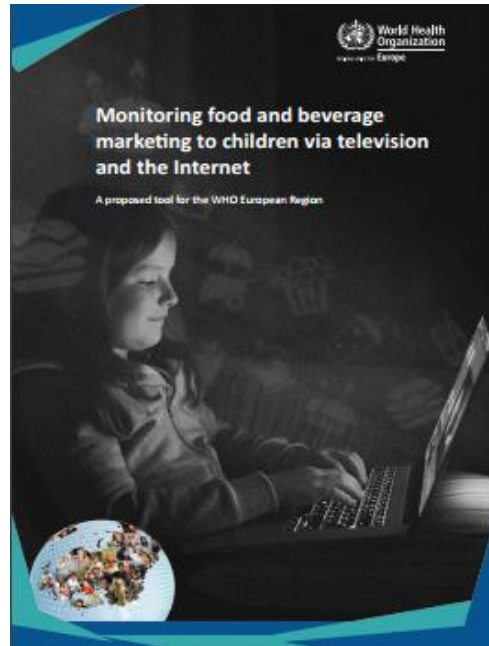
Conclusions: Utilizing a novel approach to evaluate junk food broadcast marketing policies, the study demonstrated that countries with statutory policies saw a significant decrease in junk food sales per capita not seen in countries with no or only self-regulatory policies. To effectively reduce exposure to child-targeted junk food marketing, governments should establish strong, comprehensive statutory regulations. Additionally, countries that implement junk food marketing policies can use food sales data to track policy effectiveness.

Keywords: Food marketing policy, non-communicable diseases, processed foods.

Debunking some myths

- Advertisers can fill their slots – two UK studies using same methodology found an average rate of 28.2 ads per hour in 2008 (pre) and 29.1 ads per hour in 2010 (post).
- Advertising restrictions are not the most important factor influencing broadcaster revenues: “not feasible to disentangle the impact of the restrictions from other factors” (Ofcom Review)

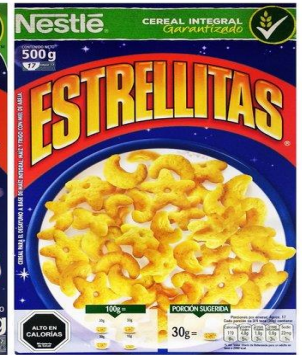
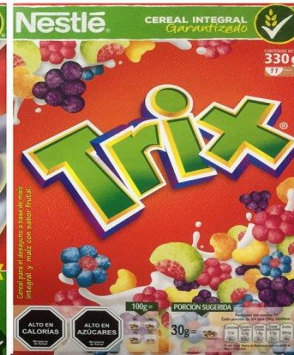
Monitoring – building strongest arguments



Key challenges for years ahead

- Move away from broadcast advertising restrictions only
- Expand focus beyond child-oriented programming to capture media that children are actually engaging with and using
- Adolescents are negatively affected by HFSS food marketing – they must be included in policies
- Use evidence-based nutrient-profiling systems to ensure policies are sufficiently strict
- Prefer regulation

Thinking more boldly



Thank you

Acknowledgement to Dr Mimi Tatlow-Golden, Dr Emma Boyland, Prof. Jason Halford, and Dr Becky Freeman for some slides and intellectual input

