

FOOD MARKETING VIA VIDEOGAME LIVESTREAMING PLATFORMS: WHAT IS THE EXTENT, NATURE AND IMPACT ON ADOLESCENTS?

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KEY MESSAGE

The issue: Adolescents are exposed to high levels of HFSS food marketing via videogame livestreaming platforms. This marketing is powerful, and is associated with their food-related attitudes, purchasing, and consumption behaviours. It is currently unregulated.

Implications for policymakers: The UK Government proposal for an online ban on HFSS food marketing should include videogame livestreaming platforms. Current definitions and scope are unclear.

HFSS = high in (saturated) fat, salt, or sugar



INTRODUCTION

Digital media has become an integral part of adolescents' lives. Mirroring this trend, food and non-alcoholic beverage (hereafter: food) brands increasingly market in popular digital media to maximise their reach with young consumers.

What is a videogame livestreaming platform?

Videogame livestreaming platforms are a growing form of digital media, where individuals can broadcast or watch streamed videogame footage. The top three platforms (market share by hours watched) are Twitch (77%), YouTube Gaming (15%), and Facebook Gaming Live (7%), with a combined 29.5 billion hours watched in 2022 [1].

Are these platforms popular with teenagers?

A large majority of UK adolescents use video-sharing platforms, play videogames online, and watch livestreams (98%, 76% and 73% of 12-15-year-olds respectively [2]). Streamed videogames include those popular with young people, such as Fortnite.



What does food marketing look like on these platforms?

Influencer and digital game-based marketing occur together. For example, a gaming influencer may consume a product on screen (typical influencer marketing) or include a brand logo overlaid on the gameplay (typical digital game-based marketing). This marketing is usually for HFSS foods [3, 4].

What do we know about the impacts of this food marketing?

Preliminary evidence suggests that food marketing via Twitch is associated with food craving, purchasing and consumption in adults [5].

Is this food marketing regulated?

Currently, no.

KEY QUESTIONS

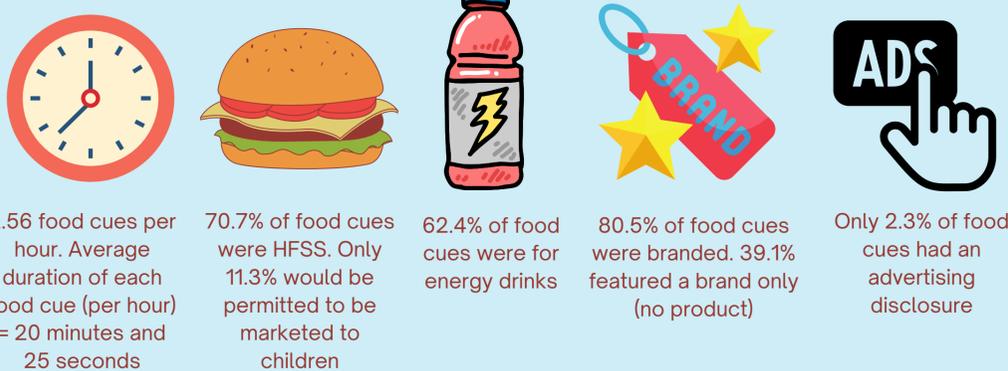
1. What kind of food marketing are **adolescents** exposed to on these platforms?
2. How powerful are the food marketing techniques (influencer & digital game-based marketing) used on these platforms?
3. Does this food marketing impact **adolescent** eating behaviour?



FINDING 1: ADOLESCENTS ARE EXPOSED TO HIGH LEVELS OF HFSS FOOD MARKETING

Methods: A content analysis of food marketing via Fortnite streamers on Twitch using a World Health Organization (WHO) protocol and both the UK and WHO Europe Nutrient Profile Models. Food cues in videos (n = 52, 52h) uploaded to the platform during October 2020 - September 2021) by influencers likely to be popular with adolescents were analysed.

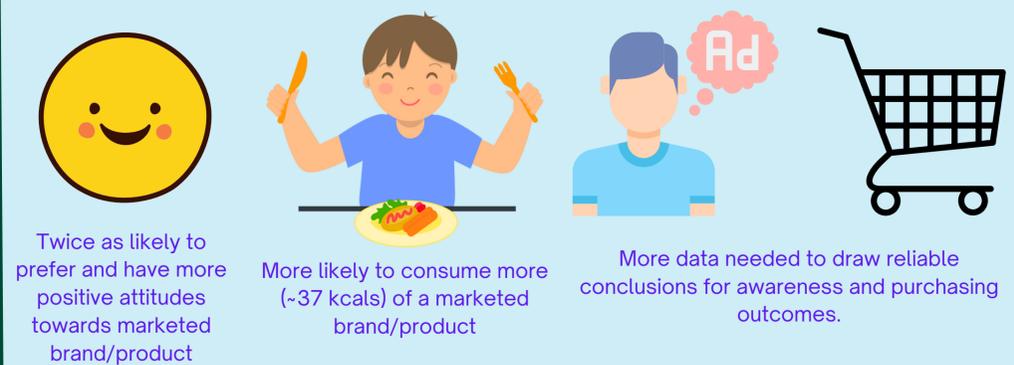
Findings:



FINDING 2: INFLUENCER AND DIGITAL GAME-BASED FOOD MARKETING ARE POWERFUL

Methods: A systematic review and meta-analysis examining the evidence for a relationship between exposure to digital game-based or influencer food marketing, and food-related (brand awareness, attitudes, preferences, purchase, and consumption) outcomes in young people (≤ 18 years). Twenty-three databases were searched in March 2021. Twenty-two studies met the inclusion criteria.

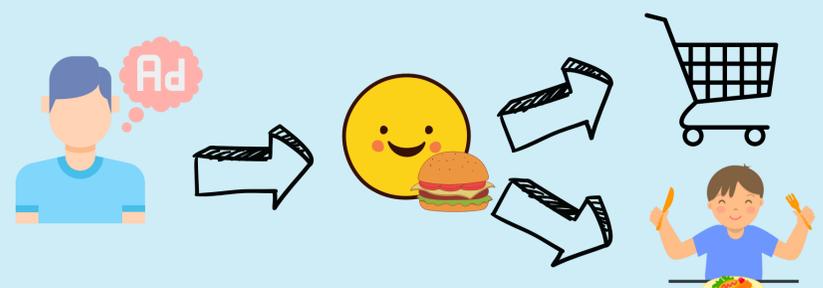
Findings:



FINDING 3: THIS FOOD MARKETING IS ASSOCIATED WITH ADOLESCENT EATING BEHAVIOUR

Methods: An online questionnaire was given to adolescents (n = 490, mean age = 16.81, 30.2% female) exploring their recall of food marketing on the top three videogame livestreaming platforms, and relevant behavioural (purchase, consumption) and attitudinal outcomes. The hierarchical relationships between the key variables were explored.

Findings: Recall of HFSS food marketing was associated with more positive attitudes towards HFSS foods, which in turn was associated with greater purchase and consumption of these foods.



Bite Back 2030 "The bottom line is this — it should be easy for young people to be healthy, it isn't. Our world is flooded with junk food, and billions are spent marketing and advertising it to us. This devastating power imbalance between corporates and consumers will continue if no one holds companies to account for the products and practices that damage our health."
- The young people of Bite Back 2030

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