A content analysis of British food advertisements aimed at children and adults

On average, children watch about 17 hours of television per week, a majority of which are commercials. A significant amount of money is spent every year on child-focused food advertisements and it was estimated that British children are exposed to 18,000 advertisements per year. Children are an important target to consider: they simultaneously have considerable spending power and can influence the purchasing habits of their parents. This study explored the content of food advertisements and compare those which are child-focused to those which are adult-focused.

14 content categories were created and accounted for a number of aspects of the advertisements. It was found that significantly more of the ‘Children’ advertisements were for ‘unhealthy’, ‘fast’ and snack foods than were the ‘Non-Children’ advertisements. These were unfortunately not counter-balanced by an equal number of ‘healthy’ and ‘non-fast’ food advertisements.