Advertising as a cue to consume: a systematic review and meta-analysis of the effects of acute exposure to unhealthy food and non-alcoholic beverage advertising on intake in children and adults

Food marketing especially towards children often uses persuasive techniques to reach its target audience. Most notable on television and the Internet, this type of marketing almost entirely promotes food high in fat, salt and sugar. This systematic review and meta-analysis looks at studies that experimentally manipulated advertising exposure and measured simultaneous or ensuing food intake.

While the sub-group analyses revealed that exposure to food advertising did not increase adults’ consumption, it appeared to have a significant effect of moderate magnitude in children. This reinforces the long-standing argument that children might be more vulnerable to food marketing given their incapacity to understand the persuasive intent behind it. Consequently, the findings of this study provide strong evidence to support immediate policy action in this area.