Television food advertising to children in Malta

# Details

## DOI

10.1093/heapro/dav105

## Issued

2015

## Language

English

## Volume

32

## Issue

3

## Start Page

## End Page

## Authors

Cauchi D.;Reiff S.;Knai C.;Gauci C.;Spiteri J.

## Type

Journal article

## Journal

Health Promotion International

## Publisher

Oxford University Press (OUP)

## Topics

* Content-related issues
* Wellbeing
* Risks and harms

## Sample

7 national free-to-air television stations

## Implications For Policy Makers About

High-quality content online for children and young people

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Other

## Other Stakeholder Implication

Advertisers

# Abstract

To undertake a cross-sectional survey of the extent and nature of food and beverage advertising to children on Maltese national television stations. Seven national free-to-air channels were recorded for seven consecutive days in March 2014 between 07:00 and 22:00 h. Advertisements were coded according to predefined categories, with a focus on advertisements aired during ‘peak’ children’s viewing times, defined as periods during which more than 25% of children were likely to be watching television on any channel. Food and beverage advertisements were classified as core (healthy), non-core (unhealthy) or miscellaneous foods. Whole population, with a focus on children. Food and drinks were the most heavily advertised product category (26.9% of all advertisements) across all channels. The proportion of non-core food/drink advertisements was significantly greater during peak compared
with non-peak children’s viewing times (52 vs 44.6%; p ≤ 0.001). A majority of advertisements aimed at
children are for non-core foods, and are typically shown during family-oriented programmes in the late evening rather than being restricted to children’s programmes. ‘Taste’, ‘enjoyment’ and ‘peer status’ were the primary persuasive appeals used in adolescent and child-focused advertisements. This first content analysis of television advertising in Malta suggests that there is scope for the implementation of statutory regulation regarding advertising of foods high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS) during times when children are likely to watch television, rather than during children’s programmes only. Ongoing, systematic monitoring is essential for evaluation of the effectiveness of regulations designed to reduce children’s exposure to HFSS food advertising on television.

# Outcome

Food and drinks were the most heavily advertised product category (26.9% of all advertisements) across all channels. The proportion of non-core food/drink advertisements was significantly greater during peak compared with non-peak children’s viewing times (52 vs 44.6%; p ≤ 0.001). A majority of advertisements aimed at
children are for non-core foods, and are typically shown during family-oriented programmes in the late evening rather than being restricted to children’s programmes. ‘Taste’, ‘enjoyment’ and ‘peer status’ were the primary persuasive appeals used in adolescent an