

ABSTRACT

Commercial food advertising at the university of Ghana, Legon campus

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Background: Most foods promoted within the school environment have been reported to be unhealthy. Exposure to unhealthy food advertisements can influence preference, purchasing and consumption of such foods. Consumption of unhealthy food, for instance Energy Dense Nutrient Poor Food (EDNP) is implicated in the onset of obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

Objective: The study examined the nature and extent of commercial food advertising at the University of Ghana, Legon campus.

Methods: The study was observational, using descriptive cross-sectional design. A coding tool, programmed onto a data collecting application (Open Data Kit) was used to concurrently capture digital photographs and attributes of all sighted advertisements as well as their geo-location within the University. Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates of food outlets were also taken. Food advertisements were further categorised as healthy or unhealthy, based on a classification system used in previous research on outdoor advertising. Descriptive analysis was performed using IBM SPSS version 21 to generate frequencies of advertisement attributes. Bivariate and binary logistic regression analyses were used to determine relationship and strength of associations between advertisement attribute and the category of food product advertised (healthy vs. unhealthy). ArcGIS was used to examine the distribution of unhealthy food advertisement around food outlets using hot spot analysis.

Results: The study recorded a total of 503 advertisements within the University of Ghana, Legon campus, 47.3% of which were food advertising. The proportion of food advertisements was higher around food outlets (75.2%). Small sized food advertisements were the most common (58.0%). Categories of food products advertised were healthy (38.7%), unhealthy (57.6%), and miscellaneous (3.8%). Sugar sweetened beverages (37.0%) were the most advertised food product. Top four most advertised brands were Coca-Cola (13.9%), Fan Milk (10.5%), Pepsi (8.0%), and Indomie (3.8%). Promotion techniques such as the use of promotional characters, premium offers and claims were included on food adverts. Free-standing food advertisements were 19 times more likely to be healthy food advertisements (aOR=19.177; 1.837 – 200.207)

Conclusion: This study demonstrates that outdoor advertisement of unhealthy food products particularly sugar-sweetened beverages is prevalent at the University of Ghana, Legon campus and mostly situated at food outlets.