



Foreword from Bite Back campaigners

Bite Back campaigners come from all over the country, but one thing that many of us have in common is our passion for football. Whether it's attending matches, following online or gaming on FIFA, we're hooked and we wear our club colours on our sleeves!

But here's the thing, cheering on our teams comes with a seriously sinister side. Everywhere we look we're bombarded with advertising for food and drinks that are super unhealthy. Our favourite players are plastered on the side of fizzy drink cans. Adverts for junk food pop up when we're watching matches. And clubs that we loyally support sign multi-million pound deals with brands that couldn't care less about our health.

To protect our health, things have to change.



“ Me and my family are AVID Manchester United supporters. To be a fan is amazing because of the encouraging atmosphere, and the memories as a family we've had with the club are so special. But at the same time I find it really disappointing that many of the club's sponsors are unhealthy food brands like Cadbury, and ads are plastered around the barriers of the pitch. ”

Mia, aged 15, Manchester

“ Watching and playing football should be a time to escape and wind down with my friends, but instead it is being used as an opportunity for junk food companies to shove their products in my face. I feel like I'm being tricked when the athletes I admire promote junk food to me, and I'm disappointed that major events such as the World Cup get used as a stage to shine the spotlight on unhealthy foods. ”

Alice, aged 17, London





“ As a footballer myself, and a proud Manchester City fan, I can say that the pure thrill of playing and watching football cannot be compared to anything else. Nestle is a regional partner of Manchester City, and around the world the company pours out a flood of unhealthy options. In other words, Nestle is our biggest rival. But clubs can have a positive impact too, like my team’s City in the Community programme which provides opportunities for young people to play in safe and inclusive places. Why can’t clubs go even further to support us and take junk food out of sport?! ”
Farid, aged 15, Manchester

We want to see football teams playing their part in creating a healthier future for young people like us. But to do that we needed to show just how big the problem is. So we did some research. Keep reading to discover what we found out...

Team Bite Back

Executive Summary

At Bite Back 2030, we believe marketing should be a force for good when it comes to child health. This is particularly true for sports-based marketing, given the enduring popularity of sports of all kinds and the high profile and influence sports stars have with young people. Who can forget the Ronaldo water bottle moment of Euro 2020, where the footballer pushed aside Coca-Cola bottles placed in front of him and said “agua” (water)?!



Cristiano Ronaldo removing the Coca Cola bottles and promoting water went viral on social media.

Sports are a significant component of the food and drink marketing environment. Sponsors aim to build awareness and engagement with their brands and influence purchasing and consumption through their marketing tactics. So when sponsorship and marketing activity consistently puts unhealthy food and drinks in the spotlight, it's bad news for children's health.

Even more cynically, our screens and billboards are awash with brands placing a 'health halo' around unhealthy products – suggesting that consumption can have enhancing effects for non-athletes. And these unhealthy brand associations often hit at the very core of the misunderstanding about drivers of health by suggesting we can burn off what we eat through physical exercise, perpetuating the myth that all we need to do is eat less, and move more.

In 2022, Bite Back commissioned a piece of qualitative research to help bring to life just some of the ways in which food and drink companies are targeting young people through sports marketing. Through the eyes of young sports fans we set out to find out how food and drink brands associate their products with sports, and which are most associated with football – the nation's most popular sport.

Key findings

Across TV, social media, gaming and more, food and drink brands have built huge reach and deep engagement with young football fans, 'piggybacking' on organic emotional connections to their clubs. These marketing tactics in turn give fans a pseudo-emotional connection with the brands.

We found that:

- Unhealthy foods and drinks are closely linked to young people's experiences of football.
- Fast food brands clearly dominate in football. When asked to think about brands associated with football, the top five brands mentioned by young people were Coca-Cola, Lucozade, Walkers, Pepsi and McDonald's. On any given day, McDonald's was the most viewed food and drink advertisement seen by participants when watching football related content.
- Sports-based marketing had a clear, immediate effect on participants, who reported feeling hungry, excited and wanting to make a purchase after viewing branded content.
- There is a clear overlap between what participants consume when watching football content, and the adverts they see.
- Participants with a higher awareness of sports-based marketing often noted how while they are watching football, food and drink brands deliberately put unhealthy options in the spotlight.



Call to action

The Government should introduce regulation to ensure that only healthier food and drink products can be associated with sports, with robust new restrictions on any kind of sports-based marketing of unhealthy products and brands. This should include: virtual events, e-sports, in-game sponsorship, mega-events like the football World Cup and Olympic Games, grassroots sports, social responsibility and community programmes run by clubs, leagues and national associations, title sponsorship for cup competitions and leagues, and all sports and events taking place within a school setting.

Sports clubs and associations should declare any existing relationships with food and drink companies promoting unhealthy products and the length of time remaining on any deals, and decline any new sponsorship or marketing deals, or any renewals of current contracts, with unhealthy food and drink companies.

Individual sportspeople should only promote the food and drink products they regularly consume themselves, and commercial partnerships with players that undermine child health should be phased out of sport.

Introduction

Think about most sports and it isn't just brilliant athletic performances that come to mind.

Sports-based marketing has a long history, with individual athletes, teams, events leagues and stadiums usually sponsored by one or more commercial entities. Everywhere you look from football shirts to pitchside billboards is plastered in advertising – and the same is true on our screens too, from club social media channels to our TV screens.

This is BIG business, with sports-based marketing bringing significant benefits to companies, enabling brands to reach and engage with audiences of millions of loyal fans of all ages.



11:30 AM · Apr 2, 2023 · 13.8K Views

Papa John's banners lined the streets outside Wembley on cup final day



1:59 PM · Oct 3, 2019

KP Snacks promoting its partnership with The Hundred on Twitter

But the types of products we see on a daily basis are often at odds with what sport is really all about: fuelling our bodies with healthy nutrition to support us getting active and enjoying physical activity with others. Right now eight Premier League clubs are sponsored by the same confectionery brand; the England and Wales Cricket Board's competition, The Hundred, is sponsored by an unhealthy snack company; and England Rugby has an official pizza and an official energy drink partner.

These associations are particularly problematic given the evidence which shows the impact of unhealthy food marketing on young peoples' food preferences, the products they consume and the associated impact on health.¹ One in three 11-12-year-olds in England are at higher future risk of diet related health issues due to the food they eat.²

The UK Government's Sport Strategy, published in 2015, acknowledged the need to review commercial funding, including sponsorship, as well as voluntary measures to restrict the marketing of foods high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS).³ Since then, the Government's focus on child health (evidenced by multiple 'obesity' strategies) has paved the way for stronger HFSS advertising restrictions, both on TV and online - although these have suffered significant delays. However, sports marketing continues to be exempt. In addition, only ads at the product, and not brand, level are in scope. There are worrying signs and precedents that such loopholes mean we can expect sports-based marketing to grow as other areas get squeezed.

With young people bombarded by junk food marketing, and up against a flood of unhealthy options, we wanted to explore how football is used in this marketing, and the potentially negative impact on young people's ability to live healthier lives. Our research involved 52 young people aged 13 to 18 from Gen(eration) Z: digital natives born between 1997 and 2012, who have grown up surrounded by the internet. Using their mobile phones, the young people carried out 12 tasks over the course of ten days in May 2022 around English Premier League fixtures. These were designed to give an insight into the ways food and drink marketing connected to football infiltrates their everyday lives, and included recording and uploading their interactions on social media and sharing their thoughts on the content they were seeing.

This research was co-designed by Professor Emma Boyland, Chair of Food Marketing and Child Health at the University of Liverpool, and Dr Robin Ireland, author of 'Sport, Sponsorship and Public Health' and Honorary Research Fellow, School of Health and Wellbeing, the University of Glasgow.

Full methodology is outlined in the appendix - p22.

¹ Boyland, E., McGale, L. & Maden, M. (2022). Association of Food and Nonalcoholic Beverage Marketing With Children and Adolescents' Eating Behaviors and Health: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. *JAMA Pediatr.* 2022;176(7):e221037. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2022.1037

² <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/national-child-measurement-programme/england-provisional-2021-22-school-year-outputs>

³ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/486622/Sporting_Future_ACCESSIBLE.pdf

The current policy context

The bulk of food and drink advertising promotes food and drink high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS). Research over the last four decades has demonstrated that unhealthy food advertising helps to normalise unhealthy eating, increases recognition of brands, and increases children's requests for, purchase and consumption of less healthy food. This kind of advertising is in breach of children's right to health, especially as young brains do not always fully understand the commercial intent of advertising.⁴

Policy in the UK is slowly but surely catching up with the growing evidence base. Current regulations restrict the food and drink advertising of HFSS products to children under the age of 16. Ofcom is the regulator for broadcast media;⁵ the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) for non-broadcast media.⁶

On paper, this includes a total ban on HFSS advertising on dedicated children's channels and other media, and restrictions where children are overrepresented in the total audience. But in practice, the threshold allows TV advertising of HFSS products during family entertainment shows watched by millions of children, as well as websites and on social media platforms such as YouTube and Instagram that are popular with children and teens.⁷

In 2021, the UK government committed to ending junk food advertising on TV prior to the 9pm watershed and paid-for junk food advertising online at any time. Not only do these regulations omit sports marketing, their implementation has now been delayed until October 2025. That means child health continues to be at risk.

⁴ Food Active and Children's Food Campaign (2021), Kicking Out Junk Food, <https://foodactive.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Kicking-Out-Junk-Food.pdf>

⁵ https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0024/31857/hfss-review-final.pdf

⁶ https://www.asa.org.uk/type/non_broadcast/code_section/15.html

⁷ Obesity Health Alliance (2019) "Britain's Got a Problem with Junk Food Adverts", <http://obesityhealthalliance.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2019/10/BGT-advertising-analysis-2019.pdf>

Findings

Sports-based marketing creates passion and excitement, to drive what we eat and drink

Fans' relationship with their clubs is driven by excitement, passion and a sense of belonging. Support for a club can be handed down in families, with front rooms and bedrooms alike decked out in club colours and club mementoes. Brand marketers want to associate their products with the strong positive feelings fans have about their clubs. Loyalty to both clubs and individual players is important to young and older fans alike and helps drive both viewing and consumption habits. The young people surveyed were often aware of the sponsorship and its intention, and accepted it as part of their football viewing experience.

“ Sports-based foods and drinks marketing makes me feel very connected, confident and eager to belong to a particular club. ”

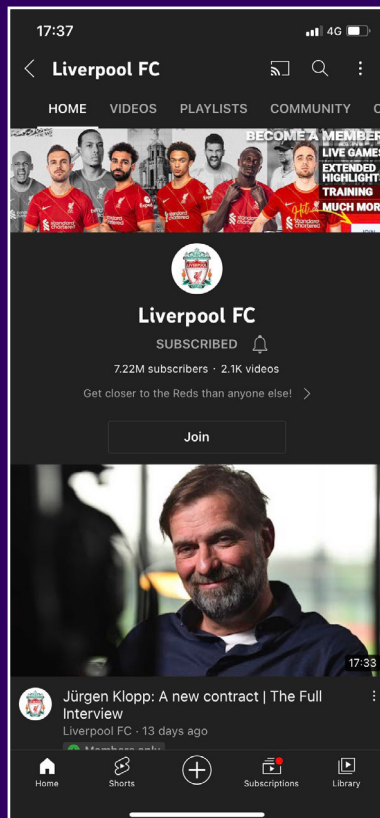
Male, 18

“ I think I've realised how football companies and clubs use their sponsors to make them more known and make people buy... ”

Female, 16

“ This is a Coca-Cola [... advertisement], among all the ads I uploaded I am pretty sure that this ad makes me feel [like I] belong. [It] portrays[s] unity, happiness, oneness and peaceful coexistence among premier league fans. It's the best ad for me so far. ”

Male, 18



Club loyalty. Male, 14 (left). Female, 17 (right).

The participants were very aware of energy drink branding, with Lucozade frequently mentioned. The young people were highly familiar with the marketing claims that these drinks help sporting performance and reported that this directly led to their purchase and consumption of these products. Those participants who took part in sport stated that the product was perceived as giving them “a lot of energy”. (Male, 16). “They boost your energy and keep you hydrated”. (Female, 13). “If the real pro-athletes drink it, then I’ll be able to perform like them”. (Female, 16).

And finally:

“If they’re drinking it (footballers), then it will have a positive effect on health, it will affect me if I drink it.”

Male, 17

Football and brand association

When the respondents were asked to talk about food and drinks they associated with football, soft drinks and energy drinks dominated – being mentioned 84 times among 48 respondents. Fast food brands were also frequently mentioned, with respondents naming takeaway food brands 43 times. Crisps and savoury snack brands closely followed, and were mentioned 31 times.

The specific brands that participants cited when thinking about an association with football were also those generally associated with high fat, sugar and salt products. The top five brands mentioned by participants were:

1. Coca-Cola (Over 45% mentioned, 22 respondents total).
2. Lucozade (Over 45% mentioned, 22 respondents total).
3. Walkers (Over 39% mentioned, 19 respondents total).
4. Pepsi (Over 35% mentioned, 17 respondents total).
5. McDonald's (Over 27% mentioned, 13 respondents total).

When young people were asked to reflect on how the marketing they saw made them feel, ten of the participants reported feelings of hunger and nine said that the marketing they saw made them want to buy and try out the products advertised.

Speaking specifically about a McDonald's ad during Sky Sports Football programming, one participant said it "made me feel hungry and I wanted to get some chicken nuggets." (Female, 13)

What's more, feelings of excitement for the food and drink ads young people saw were then connected with their existing excitement for football. For example, one participant said that food and drink sports ads from sponsors, which 'bookend' segments of football programming, "make me feel excited because I know the football is about to start in a way." (Female, 13).

This participant almost defined what the marketers are hoping to achieve:

“ I enjoy the ads that appear on the TV. They heavily inform me to buy the products to fully engage with the show. It makes the experience more enjoyable. ”
Female, 15

Drinks

Lucozade
Pepsi Max
Budweiser
Heineken
Carabao Energy Drink

Food

Mars bar
Mcdonald's
Papa Johns
Doritos
Walkers

A 16-year-old female used her phone to note the food and drink brands that she associated most with football.

Exposure to junk food and drink marketing

Thinking more specifically about the ads themselves, participants were asked to record one advert break on a match day and a non-match day, via whichever platforms they used to engage with football. Regardless of whether it was a match day or not, fast food adverts were the most common type of food advert seen by participants. Within this category, McDonald's dominated the food and drinks advertising, with adverts from the fast food brand accounting for just under a quarter of food and drink adverts recorded on non-match days and nearly a third on match days.



Television advertising. Female, 13.

The stronghold of the fast-food giant was so powerful that during the study, on any given day, McDonald's was the most common food and drink advertisement recorded by participants on social media. Out of the 32 participants who recorded food and drink ads on social media:

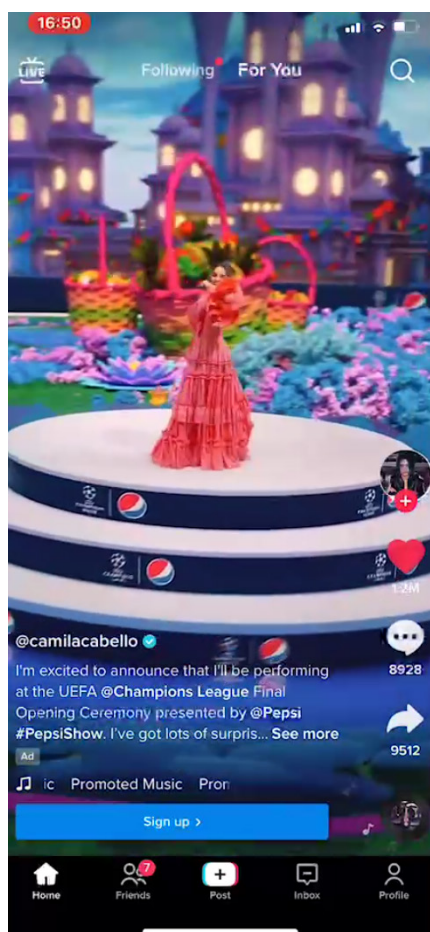
1. 25% recorded adverts from McDonald's (8 respondents total).
2. 20% saw adverts for alcoholic drinks (7 respondents total).

All in all, most of the participants who recorded food and drink ads on social media saw ads promoting fast food and alcohol:

1. 43% saw fast food adverts (14 respondents total).
2. 25% saw adverts from alcohol brands (8 respondents total).



Television promotion. Female, 15



Smartphone screen. Female, 14

It should be noted that at the time of this study, Just Eat sponsored the English Premier League on BT Sport, McDonald's UK sponsored the FA Cup on ITV, Domino's sponsored the ITV Hub, and Pizza Hut sponsored Sky Sports News. This ethnographic study included the final day of the English Premier League and the FA Cup final, which may have further increased the intensity by which these brands showed their ads on all platforms. This multi-channel appears to be driving connections that young people make between football and HFSS food and drink products.

Alcoholic drink products were viewed by a number of participants, all of whom were aged 18 or under. Some mentioned feelings of alienation when seeing this content, especially those from cultural or religious backgrounds where alcoholic consumption is not the norm. Others, however, reported positive emotions towards content seen from alcohol brands, which is highly worrying considering their age and vulnerability.

Advertising awareness

When talking about their awareness of the marketing tactics used by food and drink brands within the sports environment:

- Nearly two-thirds (63%) said they were very aware (26 respondents total)
- One-fifth (20%) said they were somewhat aware (8 respondents total)
- The remaining 17% said they were unaware (7 respondents total).

Those who were very aware often noted how food and drink brands try to influence people towards unhealthy options whilst watching the football:

“ It’s just influencing people to buy them [unhealthy/fast food] when they’re really unhealthy. ”
Female, 18

However, those who said they were unaware tended to claim that the lack of awareness comes from a decision to avoid the ads altogether. These participants said that they skip/mute ads or move away from the television when they come on:

“ Adverts are something I just don’t pay attention to, or turn the TV down. ”
Female, 15

“ I’d normally just skip past them, like I don’t really watch adverts that often. That’s when I normally go off and get a drink or get food or something like that. ”
Male, 18

Advertising impact

It appears that marketing kept brands in the spotlight, with most participants saying that they had purchased food and drink products that they had seen in adverts whilst undertaking this study.

“ [The food and drink marketing]... influences people to go out and buy these products because of the way they’re advertised. ”
Female, 14

“ Food and drink marketing makes me feel I should enjoy myself whilst watching football. ”
Female, 18

During the study:

- Almost three quarters (71%) of participants said they **purchased food or drink products that they had seen advertised** (29 respondents total)
- Almost one third (30%) said they **made different purchases** to their norm due to the marketing that they had seen (8 respondents total)
- A third (32%) said they had **avoided food or drinks products** they had seen advertised during the study (12 respondents total)

Participants reported enjoying the ads as well as directly responding to them:

“ Food and drink brands use sport quite heavily as... in all honesty this kind of marketing is great. I believe that when I’m hungry or thirsty it does make me want these products I’m being shown. ”
Male, 16

And:

“ When I see them, it just makes me hungry and want to drink them. ”
Male, 13

Match-day Food and Drink

When asked to show what food and drink products they consumed whilst watching a football match, the overwhelming majority of participants reported eating foods that are likely to be high in fat, sugar and salt. Additionally, over one third of participants recorded drinking some kind of fizzy or energy drink.

Out of 51 respondents reporting what they ate and drank during a football match:

- The categories soft drinks and confectionery (chocolate and sweets) were the most popular, mentioned 24 times each
- 11 mentioned crisps
- 14 mentioned fast food brands
- Coca-Cola was the most popular brand, with 9 of the participants saying they were consuming the company's products whilst watching football
- Walkers was also very popular, with 7 participants reporting consuming a product from the brand whilst watching football



Pizza. Female, 14.



Pizza & sweet treats. Female, 14



Energy drinks. Male, Age not known.

It is unsurprising that the brands consumed are the brands associated with football. As described previously, when asked about food and drinks that they associate with football, Coca-Cola was popular, alongside Pepsi, Lucozade, and Walkers.

“ I’ve seen all the ads from football about [Coca-Cola]/Pepsi and yes it has influenced my decision to drink them. The ads are quite interactive and they showcase some of the world’s favourite players drinking the drinks whilst performing tricks. ”

Male, 15

Gen Z in the online world

Overall, participants mentioned 29 different media channels through which they come across football on a daily basis, showing the range of platforms young people use regularly to connect with the things they love. The most popular channels included: Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, TV and the EA Sports game FIFA.

Social media in all its forms was important to the participants in the study. When asked about their favourite social media channels to engage with football related content online, the Meta-owned photo sharing platform Instagram reigned supreme, with TikTok and YouTube following respectively.

Speaking about Instagram, one of the participants noted:

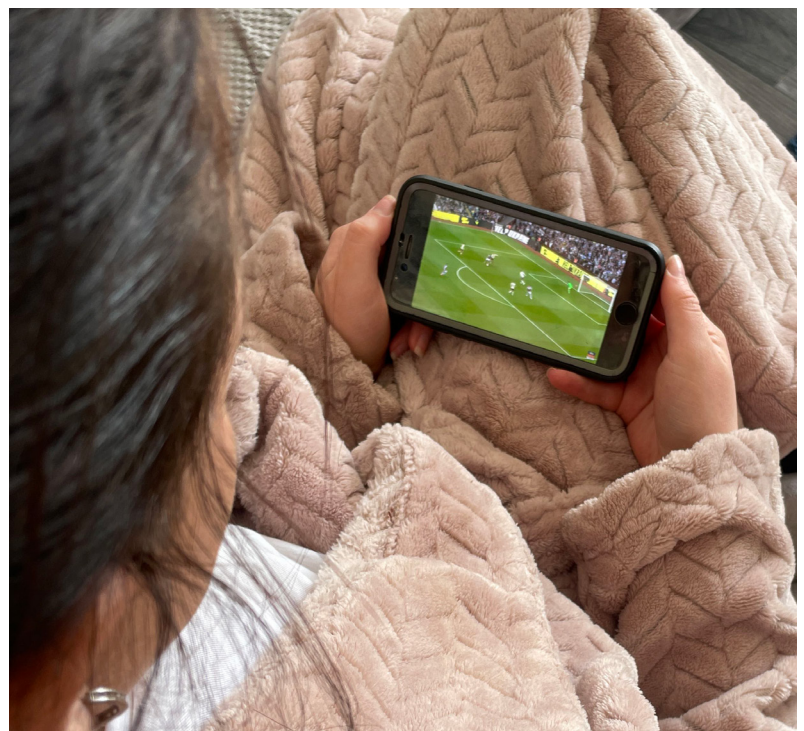
“ [Instagram is] the easiest place to find football news (other than using actual football apps). And I feel this way because you can select which pages you like, and you can create a ‘favourites’ feed where you only see those pages. It makes it really useful to keep track of football news. ”

Male, 15

The appeal of video platforms such as YouTube where young people could choose the content they wanted to watch was clear, making them an important outlet for brands trying to connect with Gen-Z.

“ YouTube contains everything you need no matter how you feel. If [you’re] sad, angry, happy. YouTube is always somewhere to go if [you’re] feeling a certain way. YouTube contains many channels and videos to help you on almost anything you can think of. ”

Male, 14



Instagram. Male, 17 (left). Smartphone. Female, 16 (right).

When consuming in-game content (for example live content from players, gaming, streamed highlights), participants turned mainly to Instagram and EA Sports' video game FIFA. In the FIFA game, users can play the game alone, with friends, or online with people all around the world.

“ [FIFA] helps you keep up to date with who is currently on form from your favourite teams for example with team of the season. It keeps me up to date on how footballers have been performing in [real] life. ”

Male, 15

Television became a lot more relevant for Gen Z when thinking about their consumption of live football specifically. When our participants were asked about their consumption of live football, 58% of participants mentioned watching on Sky Sports.

Discussion: By Dr Robin Ireland

Author of 'Sport, Sponsorship and Public Health' and Honorary Research Fellow, School of Health and Wellbeing, the University of Glasgow

Over the course of the 10-day ethnographic study, the love of football from the Gen Z participants was highly abundant and apparent. The ease at which they interacted with football-related content through a vast range of mediums, continued to keep up to date with English Premier League fixtures, and expressed their love for their favourite players and clubs, shows us the actions which can come from the emotions of younger demographics of football fans. What's more apparent, though, is the keen awareness of this phenomenon by food and drink brands which use football-related programming and content to advertise their products.

When thinking about the long-running and extensive networks food and drinks brands have used to continually promote their products in varied spaces within football, it's less surprising to see the participants' brand associations with football. The efforts of food and drink brands selling HFSS products to increase brand awareness amongst youth audiences are older than the youth demographics themselves, with the most prolific brands amongst them utilising a range of tactics to ensure longevity and 'futureproofing' of their brand. The Olympics and the FIFA World Cup have helped to create the modern world of sport sponsorship and sugary drinks and fast food companies have been a core component of this model of marketing.

For example, Coca-Cola has been associated with the Olympics from 1928 and the World Cup since 1978. Coca-Cola, McDonald's and Cadbury were all sponsors of the London Olympics in 2012 and McDonald's continue to run junior football training sessions in the UK. In addition, Lucozade Sport, Coca-Cola, Snickers and Walkers are current sponsors of the Football Association. This deal enabled Lucozade Sport to be associated with England Women's Football Team's (The Lionesses) success at the 2022 European Football Championships. It's clear to see that the foundations of Gen Z's ability to connect HFSS food and drink products from multinational brands to football were set long before this generation came to be, and their effects are very much present in young football fans across the nation. Furthermore, these effects are only growing at an increased rate due to marketers' ability to adjust to the times, employing digital methods to access a digitally-native generation.

The direct correlation between the social media platforms the participants used to regularly engage with football online and the social media platforms where they see the most food and drink advert content shows the level of understanding brands have as to where to find young people to consume their 'branded propaganda'.

The tactics at their disposal seem endless, with social media platforms continually innovating ways in which platform users' data can be used to push 'paid' or 'sponsored' branded content in front of varied groups of users, based on demographics data, interests data, and previous usage data. It's no surprise that despite the participants' awareness of the volume of, and intentions behind the branded content they consume, they don't report any changes to their individual food and drink consumption.

As described, one participant reported feeling excited when watching these ads because it is an indication that the second half is about to begin. We already know that exposure to food and drink marketing "is likely to create an association between clubs and brand sponsors among fans," (Polonsky and Speed (2001))⁸ but there is actually another layer to this. Brands are piggybacking on fans' organic emotional connection with football which, in turn, gives fans a pseudo-emotional connection with the brands.

The alarming findings from this report pose some difficult questions.

How are young people supposed to live healthier lives if HFSS food and drink brands have been working to centre themselves in the minds of Gen Z since before their birth?

How are young people supposed to enjoy the game, players, leagues and clubs they love, if they're constantly coupled with a high volume of HFSS food and drink brand sponsorships?

Solutions which seek to empower young people to make individual choices might be well-meaning, however they are not powerful enough to combat the now-systemic issue of HFSS food and drink brand marketing in football (and their everyday environments more broadly). Timely and robust regulation is needed from the government to regulate these food and drink brands in order to ensure a holistic review and monitoring of all marketing activity these brands seek to carry out; from traditional marketing, to brand sponsorships to digital marketing. Specifically, the ability to target young people on social media apps with products and brands young people cannot legally consume or is highly detrimental to the health of this generation, must be curtailed.

⁸ Polonsky M and Speed R (2001) Linking sponsorship and cause related marketing. Complementaries and conflicts. European Journal of Marketing, 35(11/12):1361-85

Finally, the clubs and players which Gen Z love and adore must do more to ensure they are on the side of their young fans by shifting the brands they partner with for sponsorship.

If football marketing can produce such alarming results, healthier food promotion with healthier brands and public health bodies has the vast potential to improve the current landscape of food and drink consumption amongst young people and in wider society.

Potential further areas for exploration which this study could not include are food and drink football marketing content in gaming, and whether long term awareness in young people on the vast effects of HFSS food and drink brands' involvement in football can work to change individual and collective attitudes towards these brands, and behaviours in consuming their products.

Appendices

Methodology

Recruitment of Participants

A commercial agency was used to recruit 55 young people from diverse backgrounds across the UK for the study. Participation was incentivised as the young people may have had to contend with final or mock examinations, revision classes and other commitments expected during this time of year.

The criteria for recruitment of the research participants were as follows:

- Participants must own a smartphone and use social media platforms daily using their smartphones
- Participants must be aged 13–18 years old
- Participants must be based in the United Kingdom
- Participants must follow English Premier League football
- Participants must support an English Premier League football team

To further ensure the participants represented as diverse a group of young people as possible within the criteria listed above, targets for recruitment included age, gender, ethnicity, location, and free school meals eligibility.

Overall, 52 participants were recruited, with 45 participants completing all tasks, and 50 participants completing 80% or more of the full task list. Participants were paid a fee pro rata according to the percentage of tasks completed.

A participant's consent form was used outlining how data was to be used and stored to ensure confidentiality.

Task Design

The task design stage of this study involved the agency research team, Bite Back team members, and leading academics in the fields of sports marketing and HFSS food and drink consumption. A short list of tasks was developed, finalised by all parties listed above, as well as support teams from Indeemo, the online ethnography platform used.

The task list consisted of activities requiring participants to record and upload their interactions on social media, interactions online engaging with football and food and drink marketing material, interactions with marketing from food and drink sports brands on match days, food and drink they consume during match days, and their thoughts on the content they saw, responding to a series of prompts listed in relevant tasks.

Live Qualitative Study

The live qualitative study phase of this project took place over a 10-day period, split into two periods of 5 days from the 11th May to 15th May 2022 (Week 1), and then from the 18th May to 22nd May 2022 (Week 2). These dates were selected to encompass the final two weeks of English Premier League fixtures of 2021/22, whilst allowing rest days for participants from the 16th–17th May to ensure they were able to balance this study with other commitments they might have during this time of year, such as final or mock examinations.

Every participant in this study was required to complete the full task list consisting of 12 tasks selected. All participants involved were expected to spend no more than **20 minutes per day** total completing either one or two tasks. All live study days required only one task to be completed, with the exception of tasks scheduled for 15th May and 18th May, where two tasks were required of the participants.

Analysis

The ethnographic analysis phase of this study started during the live qualitative study. The researchers used the Indeemo platform to assess the content the participants saw on a daily basis and allowed the team to curate a database of findings. These included the frequencies and percentages of food and drink sports brands participants were exposed to during the study and in which context, social media platforms mentioned and used, and key sentiments towards the content participants consumed, all in relation to each task. This, combined with a detailed tool recording participant quotes, enabled the report findings described above. All the images used are taken from the reports the participants uploaded to Indeemo.

Participants' task list

1.	Football engagement online	How do you engage with football? Screenshots of images from TV, social media, streaming services etc.
2.	Social media scroll-through	Record videos of responses to favourite social media platforms.
3.	Sports non-match day	What ads do you see on sports programmes on non-match days?
4.	Football media task	How do you experience football online? Record a screenshot with captions.
5.	Sports match-day ads	Record a video from your favourite match-day ad and note your response.
6.	Match-day food and drink	What food and drink do you consume whilst watching football?
7.	Food and drink on social media	What food and drink ads do you see on your favourite social media?
8.	Football, food and drink association	What food and drink brands do you associate most with football?
9.	Favourite football team and player	Tell us why you love your team and the EPL player you have chosen.
10.	Revisiting ads	Go back to ads you have seen during the study. How do you feel about them? Are the brands featured healthy?
11.	Final reflection	Record a video on your thoughts and reflections on all the sports food and drink branded content you have seen during the study.
12.	Final task – Match-day ad recording	Record one ad-break from a match on the final match-day of the EPL 2021/22 season. Comment on ads from your experience over the study period.

About Bite Back 2030

Bite Back 2030 is a youth-led movement working to transform the food system to put child health first. That means healthy schools, healthy screens and healthy streets for every child, no matter where they live. It's a stark and damning fact that by the age of just 11, as they leave primary school, the health of one in three children is now at risk from the food they eat. Together we want to change this.

Our young people are campaigning for change across England, with around 100 brilliant campaigners based across the UK. Almost 3,000 young people are participating across our School Food Champions and Community Food Champions programmes this year. And we keep getting bigger.

Bite Back started exploring sports-based marketing in 2021, with the #PacketIn campaign targeting the new Hundred competition and its organisers, the England and Wales Cricket Board. We highlighted how their partnership with KP Snacks was letting unhealthy snacks take centre stage in children's minds by literally dressing their cricket heroes as crisp packets. We used our sponsorship of Dulwich Hamlet FC as an example of what good can look like in the sport sponsorship arena.

Follow us @biteback2030
www.biteback2030.com

