



## Young people and food branding

- Branding is a very powerful form of marketing, because the meanings and values associated with particular brands are created by consumers themselves. This makes branding a potentially important influence on consumer behaviour in relation to food.
- Young people use brands, particularly clothing brands, to construct a desired image and to avoid peer disapproval and ridicule. Boys, younger teenagers and those from more disadvantaged backgrounds appeared to attach more importance to brands. There is strong stigma attached to being seen with economy and value brands.
- Although branding is less important to young people in the context of food than clothing, our study shows that having the right brand of snacks or drinks in a school packed lunch still matters. Premium food brands, particularly for crisps, confectionery and fizzy drinks, are associated with positive concepts such as popularity and trendiness.
- The influence of branding on food choices is concerning because the most heavily marketed brands tend to be for products high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS).
- Non-HFSS brands tend to have more negative associations such as dullness, 'geekiness' and pretentiousness. However, some non-HFSS brands appeal to young people. Brand attitudes to *Volvic* (as an example of a non-HFSS brand) were almost as positive as those towards *Coca Cola*, and much more positive than attitudes to a low status economy brand of cola. This suggests there is the potential to create non-HFSS brands which positively engage young people and encourage healthier food purchases.
- However, young people's attitudes towards the concept of healthy eating are mixed and ambivalent. The healthy eating 'brand' as it is presented to them in the form of healthier school food does not always deliver benefits that they value, such as taste and value for money.

**Details of the research team**

Martine Stead<sup>1</sup>, Anne Marie MacKintosh<sup>1</sup>, Laura McDermott<sup>1</sup>, Thomas Boysen Anker<sup>2</sup>, Ashley Adamson<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Institute for Social Marketing (ISM), University of Stirling and The Open University;

<sup>2</sup>Department of Media, Cognition and Communication, University of Copenhagen; <sup>3</sup>Human Nutrition Research Centre, Institute of Health & Society, University of Newcastle.

**Address for Correspondence**

Martine Stead, Deputy Director, Institute for Social Marketing, University of Stirling and The Open University, Stirling FK9 4LA, UK.

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