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Title: Evaluation of Food Advertising Practices Targeting Children on Malaysian Television Channels.

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Introduction: Unhealthy television food advertising (TvFA) is shown to influence negatively on children's food habits. To tackle this issue, the World Health Organisation advocates implementing food regulation to govern marketing to children.

Methods: This study was designed to capture (i) TvFA in children's popular television (TV) channels in Phase I and (ii) its influence on children's attitudes in Phase II. Phase I applied content analysis to randomly record live telecasts (n=143) starting from August 2012 until August 2013. Food advertisements were coded into core (healthy), non-core (non-healthy), or miscellaneous (unclassified) food categories. Phase II applied an interviewer-administered questionnaire targeting children with a food album of most advertised food products developed from Phase I.

Results: Food and beverage were top commercial products advertised on TV and significantly dominated by non-core foods ($p < 0.05$), in particular during school holidays compared to schooling days (3.53 vs 1.93 food ads/hr/channel, $p < 0.001$). Sugar-sweetened beverages were the top most non-core food advertised and tripled during school holidays (1.16 food ads/hr/channel). Ratings for non-core foods were significantly higher during children's peak viewing time (2.62 vs 1.74 food ads/hr/channel, $p < 0.001$) and nearly doubled (4.53 food ads/hr/channel, $p < 0.05$) during

school holidays. Children spent 3.03 ± 1.52 hrs viewing TV daily (n=402). For every additional hour of TV viewing, the probability for children to like non-core food advertisements as their favourite TV advertisements and request these foods, both increased by 1.06 and 1.04 times respectively.

Conclusion: This study highlights unhealthy food advertising particularly sugary drinks dominated TvFA which portends negative impacts on Malaysian children.