

Changing young people's eating habits

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A thesis from the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, reveals how school initiatives are succeeding in getting the message across to young people, but also points out that food advertisements are using health arguments to market unhealthy products.

A thesis from the University of Gothenburg shows that initiatives related to school meals together with teaching with a focus on [fish](#) are achieving results. The study examines the impact of school meals and home and consumer studies instruction on pupils' [fish consumption](#).

The staff at the schools in question were trained in cooking fish, with a particular emphasis on accompaniments, alternative fish recipes and presentation and marketing fish. The pupils were also able to get involved in decisions on which fish dish would be served.

Pupils were also taught about the nutritional value of fish and were given the opportunity to cook and find out more about fish.

The result was a statistically proven increase in pupils' fish consumption in school.

But school is not alone in its ability to influence children's eating habits.

[Food advertising](#) has an impact on children's food and drink preferences and what they consume.

Hillevi Prell has examined the extent and content of television food

advertising. Almost 200 hours of broadcasts have been analysed from the commercial channels that are most popular among children aged 3-12 years (TV3, TV4 and Channel 5).

With its 18 percent share of advertising, food advertising accounts for the largest product group in Sweden.

"An analysis shows that food advertising during the hours that children watch the most is dominated by the fast food, [alcohol](#), [chocolate](#), [sweets](#) and sweet drinks product groups," says Hillevi Prell.

Health aspects are used a great deal in the marketing of, for example, hamburger meals, chips and high-fat dairy products. Physical, mental or social health was referred to in 71% of the commercials analysed and three different ways of describing food in the commercials were noted; food as treatment or protection against illness, food as helping you to feel good emotionally and food as showing care.

Hillevi Prell believes that the intensive nature of food advertising should be brought to people's attention:

"It emphasises the importance and urgency of including this subject for discussion in teaching at schools."

Provided by University of Gothenburg

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