

Study to explore the scale of physical activity and nutritional health messaging at major sporting events

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Loughborough University is part of an international consortium examining how physical activity and nutritional health messages are promoted in the run up to and during large-scale sporting events.

A new study examining the promotion of health messaging at [major sporting events](#), such as the Olympics, will be led by Loughborough University.

Dr Joe Piggin, Senior Lecturer in Sport Management and Policy, is part of an international consortium examining how [physical activity](#) and nutritional health messages are promoted in the run up to and during large-scale [sporting events](#).

The PHANSMER Project (Physical Activity and Nutrition at Sport Mega Events Research) as it is known, will examine the policies and processes involved in health promotion and the tensions surrounding the marketing and provision of supposedly 'unhealthy' food and drink during such events.

Preliminary analysis by the PHANSMER team indicates that while the Euro 2016 tournament promoted 'Healthy Stadiums', there were difficulties in providing healthy food and drink options at some stadiums and in fan zones. The analysis also found that some aspects of the tournament were heavily regulated, for example, beer was sold

containing only 0.5% alcohol, and in contrast, some food and drink products, which had very high sugar content and low nutrient content, were not regulated.

In light of the current health issues relating to physical inactivity and poor nutrition, such as heart disease and obesity, this three-year study hopes to inform health policy and promotion during large-scale sporting events. An interdisciplinary approach will be adopted, with assistance from experts at Paris Descartes University in France and Federal University of Minas Gerais in Brazil, drawing on theories and ideas surrounding public policy, marketing, sociology, event management and nutrition.

Dr Piggin, from the School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences, said: "Euro 2016 and the Olympic Games are significant transnational sports events where certain messages about consumption and health are disseminated to hundreds of millions of people.

"Health promotion is a contentious issue for health policy makers. The World Health Organisation has told all member states that settings where children and adolescents gather (such as at sports facilities and events) should be free from marketing of unhealthy foods and sugar sweetened beverages.

"Sporting events are often used to inspire young people, but there are tensions and different interests to manage; on the one hand, companies are lambasted for promoting unhealthy products to consumers, and on the other hand, corporate sponsors are often seen as being an essential part of ensuring sporting events are able to go ahead.

"The decision-making process surrounding food and drink provision at events, and the resulting consumer choices, will form the next stage of the study. Collaboration on a project like this is vital, and our research

partners will be able to provide insightful insider knowledge on what is happening in French and Brazilian cultures."

Dr Haifa Tlili, from Paris Descartes University, said: "This intercultural study is trying to understand how health problems are managed in different cultural contexts and to show how different groups manage and negotiate it.

"Health promotion always takes place within a broader context, often involving political pressure, conflict and tension. We explore how various stakeholders (such as sport, political, health and economic partners) are able to balance what are, at times, competing interests. Further, we ask, does policy rhetoric always turn into practical action?

"The study's strength is its sociological emphasis. The objective includes understanding and raising awareness of how health issues are managed at sports events. We position individuals at the core of the study because, in this field, economic logic can dominate and make us forget the complex reality. For example, what is the impact of different stakeholders on spectators at Euro 2016 and elsewhere? And what is the effect of local health laws at these events? Are they compromised?

"We also examine how social traditions are managed in relation to companies which are often afforded a large amount of control at sports events. For example, our analysis shows that at Euro 2016, many food products were far from traditional French food habits/tastes. Examining this will help us clarify what visions of health are presented at [sports events](#)."

Provided by Loughborough University

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