




Social Marketing for a Healthy Diet: A Systematic Literature Review

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Objectives: *In this study we focused on how social marketing might encourage healthy eating habits, with particular attention to methodological approaches, theoretical frameworks, geographic representations, and important suggestions for further research.*

Background: *Social marketing is an important tool for promoting healthy eating, but research has not fully explored the implementation of mixed methodologies, included theory-driven approaches, or represented worldwide geographies. These deficiencies have hampered successful strategy creation.*

Method: *We examined 45 research publications in this comprehensive literature review. Methodological approaches, theoretical foundations, intervention tactics, and geographic origins were considered when evaluating the studies.*

Findings: *According to the findings, the study landscape is dominated by the United States and Canada (42%), followed by Europe (31%), with other regions being underrepresented. Despite the potential advantages of mixed-method techniques, just four studies used them. Though most research lacks a theoretical foundation, popular hypotheses include the Technology Acceptance Model and the Theory of Planned Behaviour. One common strategy for encouraging healthier diets is the use of social media. Nevertheless, there is little application of mediating and moderating variables.*

Conclusion: *This review emphasises the necessity of theory-driven social marketing initiatives, suggesting the incorporation of sustainability and health into dietary recommendations through strategies such as controlling the promotion of unhealthy foods and utilizing social media tactics like memes, visual stimuli, celebrity endorsements, and peer interactions—all of which are crucial in encouraging consumers, especially women and young audiences, to adopt healthy eating practices.*

Key words: social marketing, healthy diet, social media, systematic literature review, social advertising, nutrition.

INTRODUCTION

Raising awareness about healthier dietary patterns underlines the crucial role of social marketing. According to Chichirez and Purcărea,¹ social marketing represents a

type of social innovation that is aimed at supporting beneficial societal changes by influencing individual behaviors. Key benchmark criteria used in social marketing interventions include exchange, competition, formative research, audience segmentation, behavioral

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objectives, and the marketing mix. According to Carins and Rundle-Thiele,² these tools have demonstrated effectiveness in successfully encouraging behavior change and healthier eating among a range of demographic groups, including adults, adolescents, and children. Although several interventions have been used to examine the role of social media in influencing diet-related behaviors and subsequent food intake, the limited application of social marketing approaches that target improvements in retail consumer dietary behaviors points to a need for theory-driven social marketing programs. Notably, few studies have implemented social marketing campaigns aimed at promoting healthy eating habits in developing countries such as India, Brazil, and China.

According to Vollset et al³ ensuring that everyone has access to a wholesome diet will unavoidably have an impact on the environment, especially given that the world population is expected to peak at 9.7 billion people by 2064. This possibility for population increase emphasizes the necessity of implementing sustainable healthy diets (SHDs) to reduce the impact on the environment. As Poore and Nemecek⁴ imply, an SHD is often defined by a diet rich in plant-based foods and low in animal-sourced items. This focus on SHDs is attributable, in part, to the disproportionate effects of animal-based food production on the environment.^{5,6} Major environmental impacts decrease gradually when diets become more plant based.^{7,8} Meat from ruminants, such as beef and lamb, and some dairy products are the most environmentally intensive foods derived from animals.⁹ According to Romanello et al¹⁰ and Erb et al¹¹ the production of red meat and dairy products alone was responsible for roughly 62% of agricultural greenhouse gas emissions in 2023, primarily because of the direct methane emissions from livestock (via enteric fermentation) and the indirect carbon emissions from deforestation performed to increase pastureland and feed crop production.

Through this review study, we have aim to add the following information to the body of existing literature:

- the variables adopted for the various studies reviewed on social marketing and healthy food practices,
- the research methodological strategies that were discovered during the last 8 years,
- research theories that back up earlier findings
- success factors and challenges for the effectiveness of social marketing campaigns in promoting healthy eating
- future research avenues
- policy implications

Despite the growing use of social marketing to encourage healthy eating, existing research shows

significant differences in methods, theories, and geographic focus. To bridge these gaps, in this review we aimed to investigate the following research question: How have social marketing strategies for promoting healthy eating been examined across diverse populations, methodological paradigms, theoretical frameworks, and geographical contexts? This research question was formulated employing the PICOS framework (see Table 1).

The rest of the article is organized as follows: The next section provides the theoretical background. In Section 3, the procedures used for the literature review are described, followed by the results of this bibliometric and meta-textual analyses. The last section discusses the research's limitations, future directions, and policy implications.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Factors Influencing the Adoption of a Healthy Diet

Maintaining a nutritious diet, which is influenced by several key elements, is closely tied to a healthy lifestyle. Primary impacts include societal eating norms, food accessibility, product convenience, and habitual eating patterns.¹² Food enjoyment,¹³ conscious habitual eating,¹⁴ and healthy eating intentions¹⁵ are acknowledged as important influences. Furthermore, according to research by Bègue and Treich,¹⁶ reducing meat and fish intake significantly improves the healthiness of eating.¹⁷

Table 1. PICOS Criteria Used to Define the Research Question

PICOS Element	Description
Participants (P)	Studies on healthy eating interventions mainly focus on consumers, especially women and young people.
Interventions (I)	Social marketing strategies promoting healthy eating, including social media campaigns, memes, celebrity endorsements, peer interactions, and dietary recommendations.
Comparisons (C)	Variations across study methodologies (mixed vs single-method), the use of theoretical frameworks (theory-driven vs non-theory-driven), and geographic contexts (United States/Canada, Europe, and other regions).
Outcomes (O)	Adoption of healthier eating practices, effectiveness of intervention strategies, and identification of methodological and theoretical gaps.
Study design (S)	Systematic literature review of 45 research publications. The PRISMA technique was followed, adhering to strict inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Abbreviation: PRISMA, Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses.

The availability and accessibility of food,¹⁸ taste preferences,¹⁹ and nutritional awareness²⁰ are additional important considerations.

According to a study by Tsartsapakis and Zafeiroidi,²¹ personality qualities significantly affect dietary decisions. Conscientiousness is associated with healthy eating habits, whereas openness has a negative correlation with food neophobia and a positive correlation with healthy consumption.

Also notable is the impact of media on eating patterns. According to Egbert et al²² people who are prone to binge eating consume considerably more candies after being exposed to unhealthy food advertising, which harms their attitudes and behaviors around food. However, a study by Benito-Ostolaza et al²³ found that girls were more likely to choose nutritious foods when exposed to favorable visual stimuli. According to Giménez García-Conde et al²⁴ the use of a celebrity endorser enhances the successful marketing of fruits and vegetables to younger audiences.

Social Marketing and Healthy Diet

Social marketing has gained substantial significance over the past decade in addressing public health challenges such as obesity, inadequate nutrition, and non-communicable diseases while promoting healthy eating practices. This approach employs consumer-centric strategies and behavioral change models to facilitate the voluntary adoption of healthy dietary habits.^{25,26} Truong and Dang²⁷ state that formative research in social marketing health treatments is widespread, particularly in nutrition, but theory application and stakeholder involvement are not so advanced. Recent research indicates that digital platforms can enhance the reach and personalization of dietary interventions. In particular, social media enables peer reinforcement and dynamic engagement, thereby expanding the dissemination of nutrition-related messages.²⁸ By leveraging these technologies, public health professionals and nutritionists can collaboratively create value with communities, enhancing behavioral outcomes and the credibility of their communications.

Moreover, scholars advocate for responsible content governance due to ethical concerns and misinformation. For instance, Potvin Kent et al²⁹ have highlighted risks associated with unverified health claims and promoted transparent, fact-based advertising campaigns that conform to ethical marketing principles. The domain of social marketing has also evolved as a consequence of advancements in artificial intelligence and big data analytics. Health campaigns can be tailored in real time by use of sentiment analysis and behavioral prediction tools, enhancing their relevance and outreach.³⁰ Social

marketing, digital innovation, and ethical rigor have been effectively leveraged to enhance public initiatives promoting healthy eating practices.

Use of Social Media Campaigns for the Adoption of a Healthy Diet

It has been demonstrated that strategic use of social media campaigns can improve knowledge of good eating and lifestyle choices among young adults, which in turn helps youngsters accept more nutrient-dense foods.³¹ According to research by Samoggia et al³² retailers with a large following and a higher degree of Twitter (currently X) engagement tend to place less emphasis on encouraging good eating habits. On the other hand, retailers with more profits tweet (or post on X) more frequently to promote healthy eating. Additionally, millennials and women interact with nutrition-related information on Instagram more frequently than the general male population, according to Tricas-Vidal et al.³³

According to Wong et al³⁴ in some areas of Asia, young people and family decision-makers—mothers in particular—look for diet-related information on social media and abide by the advice and guidelines.³⁵ On the other hand, Theodore et al³⁶ emphasized how businesses usually use various persuasive digital marketing techniques to promote products of low nutritional value, like sodas and fizzy drinks. Regrettably, regardless of the platform or marketing strategies employed, social networks predominantly promote products that are abundant in nonessential nutrients.

According to Zhao et al³⁷ regular social media contact greatly enhanced connections within online groups, especially when encouraging the consumption of healthful foods. Furthermore, Griauzde et al³⁸ discovered that young women commonly use social media to disclose their children's feeding habits and to seek advice.

METHODOLOGY

A systematic literature review, adhering to established reporting standards and the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) meta-analytical framework, provides a comprehensive and trustworthy assessment of peer-reviewed journal quality, mirroring the current literature.³⁹ For this study we chose the PRISMA method for its thoroughness and effectiveness in improving review consistency. The choice of PRISMA is justified by its thoroughness and ability to improve uniformity across reviews. The complete PRISMA checklist is provided in the [Supplementary Material, Appendix B](#).

The inclusion criteria (Table 2), search string key words (Table 3), and quality assessment criteria are outlined (Table 4).

The search strategy and identification process consisted of 3 main activities: selecting suitable key words, evaluating relevance, and assessing quality.

For the data search we utilized a prominent multi-disciplinary database of peer-reviewed research literature, specifically, Web of Science and Scopus. Li et al⁴⁰ examined the usability of these databases, which have been gaining popularity as scientific instruments across various countries and knowledge domains.

An article may often seem relevant but might lack the necessary quality. Consequently, to produce higher-quality articles, an ongoing focus on peer-reviewed and reputable journals was established, along with journal ranking criteria based on the Association of Business Studies (ABS) Journal Quality Guide. This refinement

Table 2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria Set for this Study

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Selection criteria revolving around the key words – “social marketing,” “nutrition,” “diet,” “eating,” and “advertise”	Books
Papers published in journals Full-text papers only	Conference papers Papers with no abstract availability
Peer-reviewed journals	Articles other than in the English language
Full reference availability	Other attributes that do not account for social marketing
Articles published between 2017 and 2024	

Table 3. Search String

Category	Keywords
Advertise	“Social advertising *” OR “Social advertisement(s)”
Social	“social marketing” OR “social media” OR “social marketing networking sites” OR “social advertising”
Nutrition	“nutrition” OR “diet” OR “healthy eating”

Quotation marks imply searching for an exact phrase in a search engine.

The “*” symbol at the end of a word implies that the word has to root in the whole character of this symbol, which will be identified in research.

Search String: 6708 articles (6196 from WOS and 512 from Scopus).

Table 4. Quality Assessment Parameters

Criteria for Inclusion	
Peer-reviewed	1
At least in the ABS List	1
Non-inclusion of working papers	1
Published after 2017	1

Abbreviation: 1, Yes.

process led to the inclusion of 45 articles in this systematic review (see Table 4).

Based on the search key words, 6196 articles published between 2017 and 2024 were identified in ScienceDirect. Then, 2950 articles were rejected, with the exclusion of book chapters, mini-reviews, editorials, and discussions, leaving 3246 relevant articles. In addition, 1813 articles were eliminated because of inappropriate subject areas (including only medicine, social science, psychology, business management, and accounting), leaving 1433 meaningful articles. Finally, 805 articles were also eliminated that were not included in the ABS ranking, some of which were working articles, leaving 628 selected articles.

The second phase of the article assessment was based on criteria like the appropriateness of the title, narrowing down eligible articles with the right key words, and meaningful influence on the dependent variable, nutritional apps. Finally, 27 articles were selected for this review (Figure 1).

Based on these search key words, 512 articles were identified that were published between 2017 and 2024 in Scopus. Then, 84 articles were rejected, excluding book chapters, mini-reviews, editorials, and discussions, leaving 428 relevant articles. In addition, 69 articles were eliminated because of non-English articles, and scrutiny of 268 appropriate subject areas (including medicine, social science, psychology, business management, and accounting) left 91 meaningful articles. Finally, 73 articles not included in the ABS ranking were also eliminated.

The second stage of the article assessment was based on criteria like the appropriateness of the title, narrowing down with the right key words, and meaningful influence on the dependent variable, nutritional apps. Finally, 18 articles from Scopus were selected for this review (Figure 2).

Therefore, altogether, 45 articles are included in this review (27 from ScienceDirect plus 18 from Scopus) (see Supplementary Material, Appendix A).

The articles remaining in this systematic literature review after screening, in addition to a bibliographic analysis,⁴¹ reflecting the publication trend observed over the last 8 years, identify the most significant and influential journals and publications on social marketing for a healthy diet approach.

BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS

Publication Trends

Figure 3 depicts the year-by-year distribution of articles. It shows a steady increase in articles about how social marketing encouraged people to adopt a healthy diet in

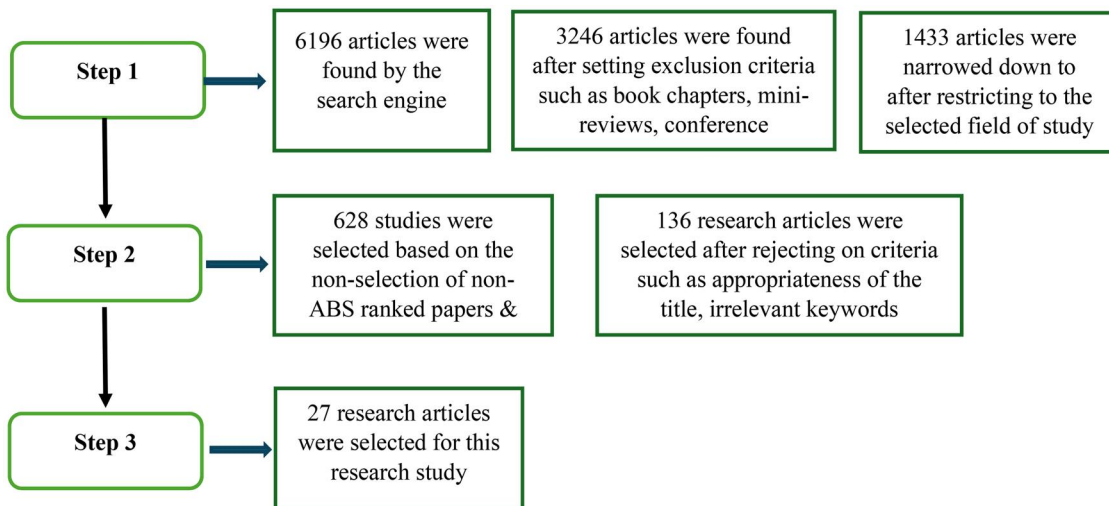


Figure 1. Flowchart of the Study Selection Process from ScienceDirect

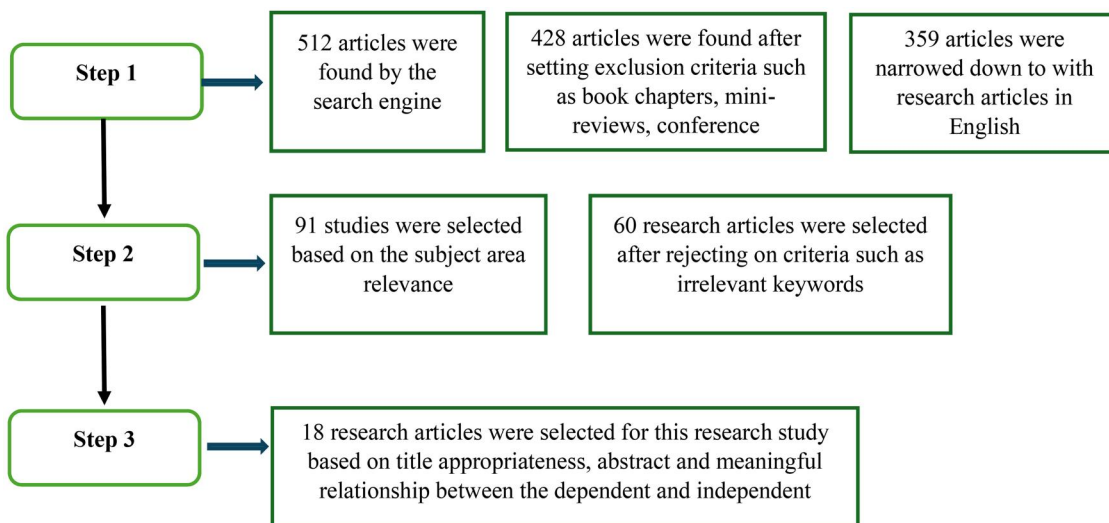


Figure 2. Flowchart of the Study Selection Process from Scopus

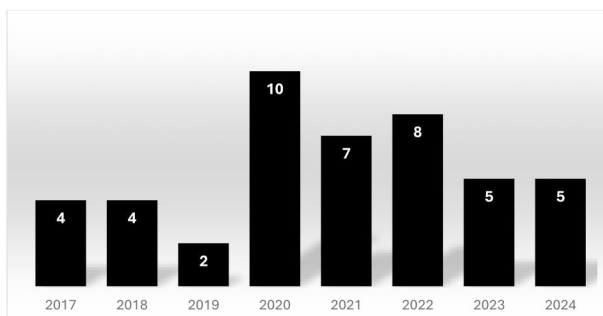


Figure 3. Distribution of the Empirical Publications by the Year of Publication

2020 and 2021, followed by a stable number of publications in the subsequent 3 years. These data suggest that retail marketers in this area are slowing down a little and highlights the urgent need for additional research to enable investigators to fully comprehend the impact of social marketing on healthy eating habits.

Geographical Distribution

The results of this systematic literature review show that with 19 out of 45 publications, or more than 42% of the research, the United States and Canada are the center of research for understanding the impact of social marketing on healthy eating habits. After the United States and Canada, Europe accounts for the most significant research (14 studies, or 31%). Asia and other nations are the third largest contributors to this study (7 studies, or 15% of all empirical articles studied). Future studies should use this study as an insight into the more developing Latin American markets, such as Brazil and Colombia, along with studies directed to the Asian market of India (Figures 4 and 5).

Most Impactful Journals, Articles, and Keywords

According to Goyal and Kumar,⁴² bibliometric analysis is a statistical method for analyzing and summarizing data in specific areas of scholarly interest. This method helps identify the most influential and highly cited journals based on their number of citations. Prominent journals have significantly contributed to social marketing and healthy eating practices, which is important to this study. These publications include Social Science and Medicine, Body Image, and Public Health, to mention a few (Table 5).

This study highlights the many discipline- and industry-specific journals in the fields of behavioral science and health that are on the list. This shows that to reduce the incidence of non-communicable diseases that result in early mortality, governments are considering the impact of social marketing, including advertisements, on consumers and their efforts to maintain good eating habits.

Bibliometric analysis is a professional method, accomplished by using statistical tools, that disperses information, including author affiliations, citations, and key words, to facilitate evaluation of the efficacy of designated methods.⁴³

Mulet-Forteza et al⁴⁴ have defined keyword co-occurrence analysis as the building a network of topics and their relationships that define the conceptual area of any discipline. The most frequently occurring key words in these articles (eg, “nutritional food,” “social advertise,” “healthy eating,” “social marketing,” “consumer awareness,” “nutritional diet,” and “healthy diet”) are displayed in Figure 6. These key words suggest that consumers are gaining awareness of their physical health and making healthier dietary choices.

META-TEXTUAL METHOD OF ANALYSIS

Methodologies Adopted

In this section, we report our analysis of the research methodology of the publications focusing on the impact of social marketing on the healthy eating habits of consumers. Empirical articles are categorized into qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods.⁴⁵ Tables 7 and 8 present the data collection and analytical techniques applied to comprehend the influence of social marketing on consumers’ healthy eating practices. The survey

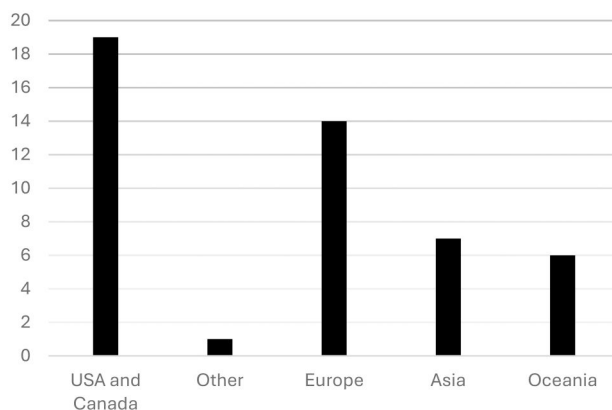


Figure 4. Classification of Articles Investigated Region-Wise

Note: Research for some articles was conducted in more than one country, so the sum does not equal the number of articles included in the review.

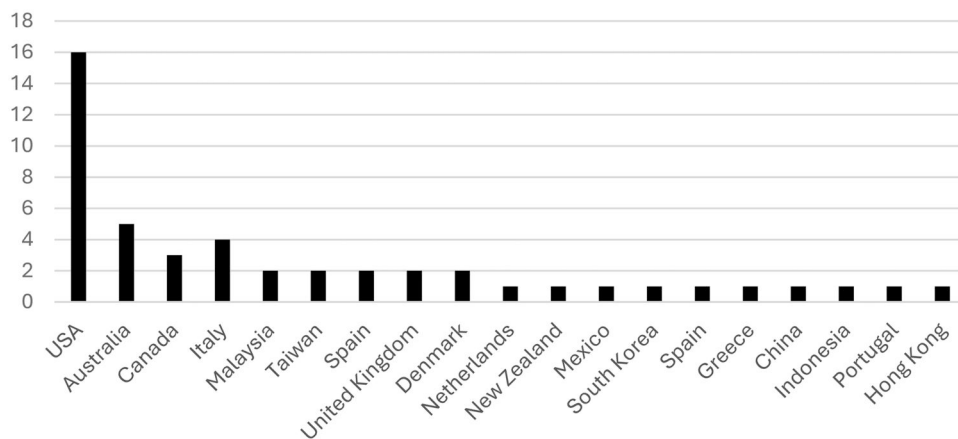


Figure 5. Classification of Articles by Country

Note: Research for some articles was conducted in more than one country, so the sum does not equal the number of articles included in the review.

Table 5. Bibliometric Analysis: Most Impactful Journals

Rank	No. of articles	Top Journals	Total Citations— Google Scholar	Citations—Web of Science (WOS)
1	8	Social Science and Medicine	346	168
2	4	Body Image	169	51
3	4	Public Health	113	58
4	2	Telematic and Informatics	104	58
5	1	International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management	62	20
6	2	Journal of Adolescent Health	59	38
7	2	Eating Behaviors	35	20
8	3	Social Marketing Quarterly	34	17
9	1	Evaluation and Program Planning	25	5

is by far the most often used quantitative method. Additional methods include thematic analysis and the focus group interview methodology. The most popular data analysis methods are regression, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and structural equation modeling, which account for 37% of all research reviewed. Content analysis and profile biography methods were as follows. Mann Whitney χ^2 methods, mapping interviews, and U tests were also applied.

Research Theories Adopted

The reviewed articles presented a varied theoretical context found in the articles across disciplines and revealed 15 articles with a grounded theoretical backbone (Table 9). This outcome reveals that most of the studies included in this review lack a theoretical background.

Variables Used in the Study

In this section we report our review of the various independent, moderating, control, and dependent variables in consumer engagement studies influenced by the

impact of social marketing on the healthy eating habits of consumers and the associated relationships that were tested to unfold certain phenomena concerning these variables (see Table 10).

Independent Variables. The independent variables studied for this research included consumer-related variables, such as consumer engagement, consumer perceptions, consumers' unhealthy food choices, and personality traits, to name a few (10 studies, accounting for 22% of the total studies). Other independent variables included studies capturing the social drivers for decision making (8 studies), including retailer tweets, Instagram influencers, social media celebrity influencers, food industry advertising, and sponsorship.

Dependent Variables. The dependent variables, including consumer-related studies, incorporate food selection behavior of consumers, dietary behavior of adults, healthy nutrition and diet, consumption intentions of consumers, healthy eating practices, and active lifestyles, to name a few (16 studies account for 35% of the total studies selected). The studies also included service-

Table 6. Highly Cited Papers^a

Rank	Article titles	Journal	Total Citations— Google Scholar	Citations— WOS
1	The effects of social adversity, discrimination, and health risk behaviors on the accelerated aging of African Americans: Further support for the weathering hypothesis	<i>Social Science and Medicine</i>	175	113
2	The effect of physical appearance perfectionism and social comparison to thin-, slim-thick-, and fit-ideal Instagram imagery on young women's body image	<i>Body Image</i>	115	35
3	Food retailing marketing management: Social media communication for healthy food	<i>International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management</i>	65	27
4	The Frequency and Healthfulness of Food and Beverages Advertised on Adolescents' Preferred Web Sites in Canada	<i>Journal of Adolescent Health</i>	61	39
5	Digital marketing of products with poor nutritional quality: A major threat for children and adolescents	<i>Public Health</i>	39	20
6	The influence of social media on child feeding practices and beliefs among Hispanic mothers: A mixed methods study	<i>Eating Behaviors</i>	30	16
7	Healthy eating as a trend: Consumers' perceptions toward products with nutrition and health claims	<i>Revista Brasileira De Gestão De Negócios</i>	30	14
8	Evaluating a social marketing campaign on healthy nutrition and lifestyle among primary-school children: A mixed-method research design	<i>Evaluation and Program Planning</i>	28	9
9	Personal and social predictors of use and non-use of fitness/diet app: Application of Random Forest algorithm	<i>Telematics and Informatics</i>	27	15
10	Using visual stimuli to promote healthy snack choices among children	<i>Social Science and Medicine</i>	18	4

^aDepicts the most influential articles considering the number of citations impacting social media campaigns for a healthy diet.

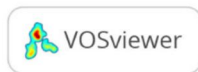
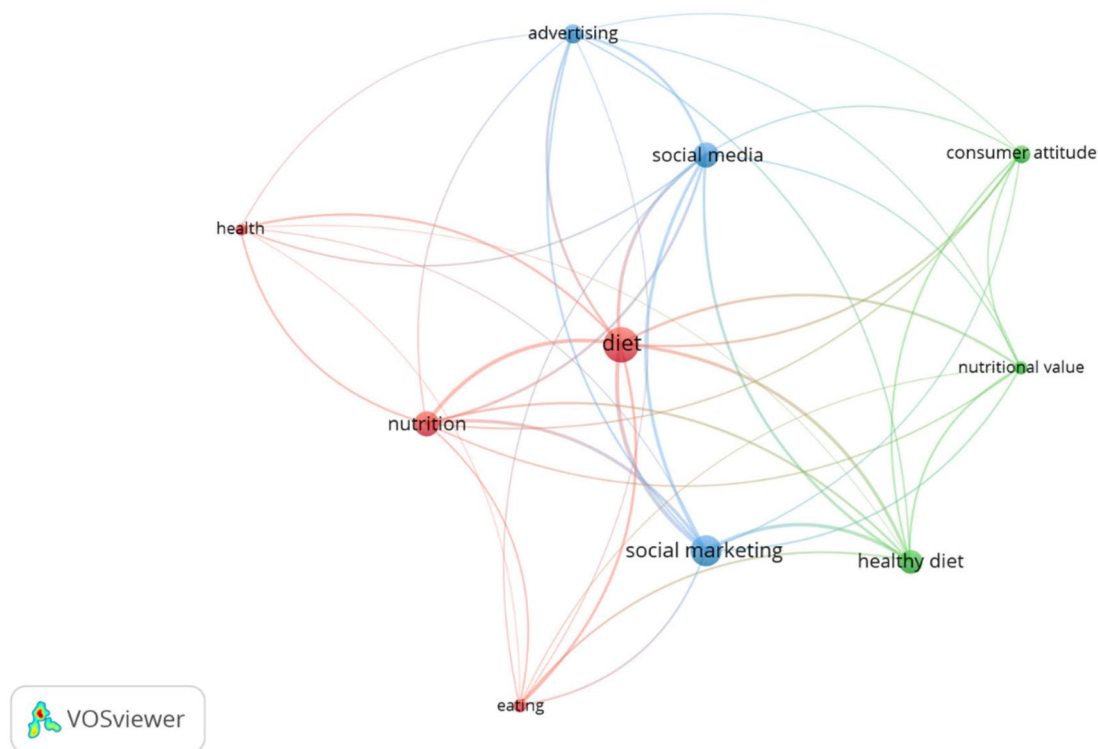
**Figure 6.** Co-occurrence of Author Keyword Distribution

Table 7. Methodologies Adopted in the Studies

Methodological Approaches	No. of Studies
Qualitative study (observational method, semi-structured interview, focus group, thematic analysis, mapping interview)	15
Quantitative study (linear regression, SEM; Chi Square Test, Mann Whitney U Test, ANOVA, Correlation, t-Test, MANOVA)	26
Mixed method (survey method and Wilcoxon one-sided Rank Test and McNemar's χ^2 test; Profile Biography and Content Analysis, Fuzzy Cognitive Mapping and Interviews, descriptive analysis and regression)	4

Table 8. Analytical Tools Used in the Studies

Analytical Tools	No. of Articles
Regression	8
ANOVA	5
Structural equation modelling	4
In-depth interviews	4
Focus group interview	3
Thematic analysis	3
Semi-structured interview	2
Content Analysis	2
Chi-Square Test	2
Mann-Whitney U Test	2
MANOVA	2
Observational method	1
Wilcoxon one-sided rank test	1
McNemar's χ^2 test	1
Profile biography	1
Mapping interview	1
Fuzzy cognitive mapping	1
Pan American Health Organization Nutrient Profile Model	1
Correlation	1
t-Test	1
Descriptive analysis	1
General inductive approach	1

Table 9. Theories Used in the Studies

Theories	No. of articles	Example
Theory of Planned Behavior	3	Giménez García-Conde et al., ²⁴ Palmedo et al., ⁴⁶ Mahmoud and Grigoriou ⁴⁷
Technology Acceptance Model	2	Cho and Kim, ⁴⁸ Chuah ⁴⁹
Prospect Theory	1	Giménez García-Conde et al. ²⁴
Theory of Cognitive Dissonance	1	Giménez García-Conde et al. ²⁴
Theory of Reasoned Action	1	Palmedo et al. ⁴⁶
Signaling theory	1	Zou and Liu ⁵⁰
Behavioral theory	1	Martinez-Brockman et al. ⁵¹
Theory of Embodied Cognition	1	Lipson et al. ⁵²
Ambivalence Theory	1	Lipson et al. ⁵²
S-O-R	1	Zhao et al. ³⁷
Protection Motivation Theory	1	Niederdeppe et al. ⁵³
Social Cognitive Theory	1	Niederdeppe et al. ⁵³
Three Streams Theory	1	Yergaliyev et al. ⁵⁴
Social Judgment Theory	1	Moura and Aschemann-Witzel ⁵⁵
Social Comparison Theory	1	McComb and Mills ⁵⁶
Punctuated equilibrium theory	1	Cicchini et al. ⁵⁷
Source Credibility Theory	1	Pijlman and Burgmeijer ⁵⁸

related variables: marketing actions of firms and unhealthy food sponsorships.

Moderating Variables. The moderating variables investigated included those related to child food allergies as part of consumer-related variables.

Control Variables. The control variables studied include demographic factors like age, sex, and the income profile of the related consumers.

The Impact of Social Marketing on Nutrition

Although the efficiency of social marketing varies depending on the medium, message, and audience, social marketing nonetheless significantly influences dietary behaviors.

By promoting peer support and facilitating value co-creation, social media initiatives enhance healthy consumption, particularly during crises such as COVID-19.³⁷ The efficacy of meticulously crafted narratives and educational content is further evidenced by video-based body image programs,⁵⁹ which effectively raise awareness and mitigate harmful behaviors without adverse effects. However, it should be noted that not all marketing strategies yield positive outcomes. An increase in the consumption of unhealthy foods has been associated with exposure to direct-to-consumer advertising (DTCA) for consumers concerned about diabetes and heart disease,⁵³ suggesting that medicalized messaging may inadvertently downplay the importance of diet and exercise.

Programs that provide school-based meals represent a notable instance of institutional social marketing that demonstrates considerable promise.⁶⁰ The

Table 10. Examples of Variables Used in the Studies

Variables	No. of Studies	Examples	Contributing Theory
Independent Variables			
Consumer-related variables	10	Consumer engagement, consumer perception, consumer's unhealthy food choices, personality traits, binge eating	Source credibility theory, Theory of cognitive dissonance, Theory of Planned Behavior, Consumer Perception Theory, Personality Theory
Social drivers	8	Retailer tweets, Instagram influencers, social media celebrity influencers, social media influence, social media campaigns, counter-advertising, urbanization, social marketing, food industry advertising and sponsorship	NA
Service-related variables	1	Nutritional level regulation	Signaling Theory
Dependent variables			
Consumer-related variables	16	Consumer food selection behavior, parental intentions, adults' diet behavior, healthy nutrition and diet, effectiveness of social media campaign, consumer consumption intention, social health change, healthy eating practices, consumer active lifestyle, healthy policy, consumer following on nutritional content, consumer eating behavior, youth's diet behaviour, parental perspectives, food shopping behavior, unhealthy food consumption, consumer mood	Source model theory, Prospect theory, Theory of Planned Behavior, Theory of Reasoned Action, Consumer Perception Theory
Service-related variables	2	firm's marketing action, unhealthy food sponsorship	Signaling Theory
Control Variables			
Consumer related variables	1	demographic variables	NA
Moderating variables			
Consumer related variables	1	child food allergy	Planned Behavior Theory

prevalence of overweight condition in children was comparatively lower among children who utilized school canteens where the food aligned with nutritional recommendations; however, family cultural capital remained a superior indicator of health outcomes. Perceptions regarding food costs significantly influenced behaviors as well. Families with lower income levels assess affordability through absolute and relative criteria, considering packaging, waste, and satiety.⁶¹ Moreover, social media marketing risks ineffectiveness if it disregards these lived experiences. Finally, although nutritional labeling can assist consumers in making healthier choices, this practice primarily benefits consumers who are already health-conscious, limiting the capacity of nutritional labeling to reach those most in need.⁶²

The substantial impact of cultural variables on consumer decisions across demographic categories has been highlighted by Shah and Asghar.⁶³ Consumer decisions about healthy eating and their intention to buy organic goods are also influenced by the traits of social media influencers.^{64,65} Furthermore, the visual content of food photos shared online influences viewers' decisions to buy, according to Abell and Biswas.⁶⁶ Furthermore, according to García-León and Teichert,⁶⁵

electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) is a crucial factor in the social marketing context, motivating customers to embrace good eating habits.

In this section we report our examination of the findings regarding the effectiveness of particular social marketing initiatives in promoting healthy eating habits. According to Lavuri et al⁶⁷ perceived customer efficacy, green brand image, and green advertising are all successful tactics for encouraging a healthy diet. Additionally, a key component of effective social media advertising is brand trust, which is boosted by brand relevance and engagement.^{68,69} Campaigns backed by well-known influencers produced more branded material that could be shared, expanding their visibility and reach. Furthermore, memes substantially affected target audiences, particularly those replicated or supported by media influencers.⁷⁰ Consistent and meaningful campaign participation increases campaign efficacy on social media, according to research by Bialkova and Paske.⁷¹ Fernandez et al⁷² have explained how moral feelings and psychological consumer empowerment are important drivers of social media marketing that support healthy eating.

Even if social media efforts are widely successful, some have poor or ineffective results. For instance, high

levels of brand–consumer involvement might occasionally result in negative pricing connotations or lower perceived brand value.^{73,74} Poor complaint handling practices might also harm a brand’s reputation.⁷⁵ According to Kwiatek et al,⁷⁶ building trust in online brand advertising requires an influencer’s credibility. Furthermore, Leite and Baptista⁷⁷ have shown that the self-disclosure practices of influencers might affect consumer trust in brands, which may have a detrimental effect on consumer views.

Goldring and Azab⁷⁸ have examined how various customer groups exhibit unique social media buying behaviors, from awareness to decision-making. For example, peer interactions on social media have a significant impact on choices of healthy foods by adolescents through attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control.⁷⁹ Additionally, various consumer groups may be impacted differently by image-driven content on social media platforms; young adults may be especially vulnerable to its adverse effects.⁸⁰ Therefore, social marketing efforts must be customized for consumer segments while considering the possible effects. For example, in children and adolescents, the unchecked use of social media could have adverse effects, especially concerning exposure to unhealthy food promotions.^{81,82}

CONCLUSION

Conclusively, this study has offered an initial investigation into the broader factors that contribute to comprehending the influence of social marketing on consumers’ healthy eating practices. The intention of this study was to stimulate additional scholarly investigation of this quickly developing topic by highlighting important variables and circumstances. These results will prompt more in-depth investigation, broadening comprehension and encouraging increased creativity in creating and applying social media marketing and advertising.

Study Limitations

This review has several limitations. Publication bias is a significant problem in systematic reviews because it can lead to overestimation of effects because research with good results is more likely to be published.⁸³ Moreover, the scope of the literature evaluation might have been limited by the inclusion and exclusion criteria and the search method used. Some pertinent articles were probably unintentionally excluded despite the use of a thorough search string that yielded many hits, especially given the interdisciplinary nature of the topic. The inclusivity of the search may have been restricted by the choice of more general key words, which could have led

to the omission of relevant studies. Furthermore, it is possible that the rigorous dependence on journal quality rankings, like ABS and Scopus, resulted in the removal of worthwhile studies published in journals that did not fit these requirements, thereby missing out on crucial discoveries and gaps in the literature. Restricting the search to the review of English-language articles could have led to excluding varied viewpoints and cultural subtleties reported in non-English studies. Future studies should consider including more search engines, different kinds of documents (including books, conference proceedings, and editorials), and manual search methods like backward and forward reference checks to increase comprehensiveness. Integrative reviews could also increase the amount of literature reviewed, and applying a meta-analysis could produce quantitative estimates of variable impacts. Last, investigating substitute frameworks for systematic reviews could yield new information and direct future lines of inquiry.

Future Research Directions

A prospective approach is crucial for any systematic review, as Singh et al⁸⁴ have pointed out. Key areas in which more research is strongly advised are highlighted below after a review of studies analyzing the effects of social marketing on encouraging a healthy diet. Although a great deal of progress has been made in understanding of the variables that affect consumer decision-making when it comes to social marketing in the business world, further research is necessary to improve and broaden the recommendations that follow:

1. It is recommended that more theory-driven research on healthy eating be conducted in the field of social marketing.
2. It is recommended that more mediation and moderation effects be explored in the relationships between the independent variables and various measures of the effectiveness of social marketing campaigns to stimulate healthy eating.
3. It is recommended that quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches be combined more often to benefit from their strengths and triangulation.
4. The impact of social marketing on healthy eating should be investigated more often in other regions of the world, apart from North America and Europe. Conducting cross-national and cross-cultural research in this domain is highly recommended.
5. To highlight the importance of encouraging healthy eating habits, future studies should include influencers in the local community, such as athletes, organizations, content providers, and celebrity influencers from various cultural backgrounds.

6. Policies like taxes and bans on sales in hospitals and schools should be investigated in various international jurisdictions.
 7. Research endeavors may center on contrasting diverse social media. The influence of emoticons, emoji and graphical material on user behavior on these platforms should also be investigated in research.
 8. Future research should focus on the effectiveness of social marketing nutrition interventions in promoting changes in nutrition-related behavior. To evaluate the effects of social marketing activities, more thorough and strategically coherent research designs utilizing a wide range of social marketing theories are required.
 9. According to Horn and Jongenelis,⁸⁵ behavioral patterns and the degree to which intentions result in long-term behavior change should be examined in subsequent research.⁸⁶ Longitudinal research is required to determine how intentions for health-related behavior convert into long-lasting changes.
 10. Finally, studies could examine how policy influences the behavior of food producers and consumers and contrast their viewpoints on sustainability, health, and nutrition with those of health sector players. Understanding these processes will help future policy and intervention measures to improve public health outcomes.
7. It is recommended to use celebrity endorsements in healthy diet campaigns.
 8. It is recommended to design social media campaigns in such a way that electronic word-of-mouth is encouraged and rewarded.
 9. It is recommended to boost psychological consumer empowerment in the social marketing campaign for healthy eating.
 10. It is recommended that peer interactions, especially among adolescents, be encouraged in social media environments devoted to promoting healthy eating.

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Supplementary Material

Supplementary Material is available at *Nutrition Reviews* online.

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Conflicts of Interest

None declared.

Policy Implications

This literature review study allowed us to formulate the following list of policy implications regarding the promotion of healthy eating with the use of social marketing activities:

1. There is a need for more theory-driven social marketing programs aiming to promote healthy eating habits.
2. Dietary guidelines should combine health and sustainability (implementing healthy diets).
3. Certain limits should be imposed on unhealthy food advertising. More extensive legislative actions and targeted social marketing activities are required to curb young people's consumption of carbonated soft drinks and fast foods.
4. Social media campaigns are recommended to promote healthy eating, especially among young consumers and women.
5. It is recommended that the use of visual stimuli in healthy diet campaigns be streamlined.
6. Using memes in social marketing for healthy diets is recommended.

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