



Child and Teen Consumption 2012

**Food Consumption, Communication,
Life Styles and Fashion**

**5th International Conference on Multidisciplinary
Perspectives on Child and Teen Consumption**

PROCEEDINGS

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«*Food Consumption, Communication,
Life Styles and Fashion*»**

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Please think about the world that our children will live in before printing this pdf version.

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type of character in the book (congruent versus incongruent with the promoted vegetable). Compared to a baseline group of children (4-6 years; N = 56) who were not exposed to the book, only the children in the interactive shared reading condition consumed more of the promoted vegetable. Further investigation indicated that when children had to answer questions about the story, they not only developed a strong belief about the vegetable, but also more positive affective responses, increasing their consumption of the vegetable.

Keywords: characters, congruence, entertainment education, healthy food intake, interactive shared reading, picture books, pre-schoolers

Topic D. Food Consumption
d.4. Educating children in food consumption

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Competing food messages and its appropriation by children at schools and its surroundings

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Abstract

School menus represent a rational approach to eating, following nutritional expertise and food safety standards, but children are exposed to food offers that compete with the school menus. In this paper we intend to understand how competing and contradictory rationalities related to food are expressed in concrete visual sights and representations of food, made available to children in school canteens and food shops in the surroundings of schools, and appropriated by them.

The empirical data was collected in four primary and secondary public schools in the area of Lisbon. Food-related sights, messages and images displayed at schools and in its surrounding commercial food outlets were subject to analysis, together with data from interviews with school directs and kitchen staff, and focus groups with parents and children, and direct observation.

Results show sharp contrasts between sights and representations of food at school canteens and at commercial food outlets outside schools. Data also suggests that subjection to supervision, control and normatively discourse of diner ladies in the canteens stand out against autonomy, freedom and self-management of food purchases in the street. Parents approve and even encourage their children to eat outside the school, as it seems a way of experiencing life, gaining autonomy, socialising and exhibiting a higher social position relatively to their peers.

Keywords: food, school, children, school meals, food marketing, fast food shops

Topic: D. Food consumption
d. 4 Educating children in food consumption: interaction between parents, school, marketing messages

1. INTRODUCTION

Obesity and overweight global statistics obtain impressive estimates that account for more than one billion people under this category, wherein 300 million are obese, making it one of the challenging problems in the 21st century (WHO, 2005). This issue achieves special importance amongst children, where it has gained epidemic contours. The scarce studies conducted in Portugal show that more than 30% of children between 7 and 11 years old are overweight or obese (IOTF, 2005). Children's imbalanced food diets (with excess sugar and fat) are one of the justifications. Moreover, a substantial part of children's life is spent at school, it being of crucial importance the role of the school, and particularly the school meal system, in providing and encouraging children to adopt healthier lifestyles and eating habits. In Portugal, as in other European countries, the school meal system has been strongly criticised for providing nutritiously poor food, where products high in fat, salt and sugar repeatedly abound on school menus. Given the pertinence of this theme concerns on what children know about food and how they connect to and appropriate food are increasing. To respond to these problems, a gradual school meal reform has been taking place in several European countries (Morgan and Sonnino, 2008). Portugal is not an exception, and in the last years government recommendations have been issued providing guidelines to schools and their catering services on how to elaborate nutritiously balanced menus and offer healthier food in school cafeterias. In tandem, European Union initiatives to encourage children to eat more fruit and vegetables have been enforced through the School Fruit Scheme, and Portugal has embraced this initiative. Yet, these initiatives are not applied homogeneously and imbalances persist across the country's schools, with successful initiatives coexisting with poor school food services.

The school menus clearly represent a "rational and reasoned approach to eating", very much dictated by the nutritional and medical expertise and food safety standards (Coveney, 2000). However, this 'rationality' is interwoven with other rationality logics that can be observed, for instance, in the discursive frame of food marketing practices. In fact, today children live in highly sophisticated marketing environments (Calvert, 2008), exposing children to contradictory messages about food. According to the Institute of Medicine of the U.S. National Academies (McGinnis, Gootman & Kraak, 2006) there is strong evidence that marketing of food and beverages to children influences their preferences and diets, and that the prevailing pattern of food and beverage products marketed to children focus mainly on high calories, sugar, salt, fat, and low nutrients foods. In addi-

tion, food marketing to children is expanding in a number of venues (e.g. product placement in television programmes, video games, internet, in-school activities or in-store promotions), and advertisers are becoming increasingly creative in alluring children to particular food consumption practices (Harris, Pomeranz, Lobstein and Brownell, 2009). This is worsened by the fact that children very often do not understand the persuasive intent of marketing techniques (Calvert, 2008). Moreover, it has been found that messages conveyed in food marketing frequently portray unhealthy eating behaviours and positive outcomes (such as excitement, fun, happiness and being “cool”) from consuming nutrient-poor foods (Harris, Pomeranz, Lobstein and Brownell, 2009).

Although, in Portuguese primary schools, practices such as in-school advertisements are seldom, the exposure of children to marketing messages happens daily at home and in other spaces, and may be unnoticed since it is part of children’s daily routines. Children are often also exposed to food offers both in school and its immediate surroundings that compete with the school menus. Processed and convenience foods (chocolates, cakes, biscuits, deep-fried beef sandwiches - e.g. panados -, salted peanuts and other snacks, fizzy drinks, etc.) are offered in cafeterias, buffets, vending machines, fast food and other commercial food outlets in immediate proximity of the school. These “competitive foods” are often high in calories and low in nutritional value (Calvert, 2008) and are accompanied by attractive images and marketing messages. The acknowledgment of the fact that the school surrounding environment may represent a threat to the healthy lifestyles that are being encouraged in schools has led the Portuguese government to produce regulations on commercial spaces in school surrounding areas in 2002. However, they mostly focused on the sale of alcoholic drinks. A proposal for revision of the advertising regulation that would forbid to advertise food and drinks with high sugar, fat or sodium content in schools and within its surroundings was never made law. The importance given to the attractiveness of food to children has been reflected in a governmental initiative and its efforts made to turn canteens as attractive and appellative spaces to eat, as well as to offering coherent messages between what is taught in school curricula and what is made available in the school food service.

In this paper we present the first results of one of the dimensions of analysis included in larger research project funded by the Portuguese Science National Foundation focusing on children’s (and their families) eating habits and food knowledge.

2. OBJECTIVES

There is abundant literature on the relation between children and food, and also on food marketing directed to youngsters, especially regarding (un)healthy eating and obesity, but little research focus on the symbolic context in which children eat at school and its surroundings. A set of questions frame our quest to explore further how children appropriate the food and food-related messages and sights available at school and its surrounding environment. How do children relate in their everyday lives to the inconsistent food messages and knowledge enacted between the school and its surrounding environment? What is the role of 'junk food' as a means for enabling group belonging and friendship relations? Considering that recent work in the 'new' sociology of childhood recognizes children as social actors capable of reflexivity (Almeida, 2009), how do children negotiate and creatively appropriate the competing messages between school's healthy but boring food and unhealthy but attractive food offers by commercial spaces and advertising? In this paper we intend to contribute to understanding how children relate to food in a context in which food offers and food-related visual messages and sights in schools, and its immediate surroundings, are competing and contradictory.

The main objective that guides our research plan is therefore to understand how competing and contradictory rationalities related to food are expressed in concrete visual sight and representations of food, made available to children and appropriated by them, influencing their knowledge and practices. Thus, firstly, we aim at identifying the presence in school spaces of food offers – namely at canteens, cafeterias and vending machines – and messages – whether elements from official campaigns of healthy eating and food education or posters resulting from school initiatives. Secondly, we pretend to identify tensions between messages conveyed at school from initiatives towards healthy eating promotion and sights or visual features of school meals and canteens. In this regard, attention is given to the composition and ordering of food on the plate of the school menu's dishes (e.g. diversity of colours, vegetables and fruit provided) in order to assess if these dishes are attractive to children. Thirdly, we intend to identify in school surroundings the presence of food outlets and commercial food strategies, i.e., visual messages and elements of marketing strategies displayed in spaces within easy walking distance to schools that may expose children to foods of poor nutritional quality. Finally, it is our purpose to identify the main ways of appropriation by children of those different images and messages related to food. To accomplish this attention will be given to the ways children speak about food and to their

performative rituals of eating together either in the canteen or outside the school.

3. METHOD

The research approach developed and considered appropriate to capture the aforementioned issues consists in a combination of qualitative research techniques, from document analysis of the food-related messages and images displayed at schools and its surrounding environments, visual analysis of how food and eating spaces are set, and thematic content analysis of focus groups with children and interviews with teachers and school staff. This strategy will be complemented by direct observation of children's eating practices in the canteen and in spaces outside the school.

The empirical material includes messages from official initiatives that promote children's healthy and sustainable food education displayed in schools (at canteens' walls and billboard panels); the messages exhibited and launched by schools to encourage healthy food (leaflets, posters, posts in schools websites); the composition, colour and ordering of school menu's dishes; food and food packaging supplied in cafeterias, vending machines and retail infrastructures surrounding schools; and food-related marketing messages displayed nearby schools. The empirical data was collected during field visits at schools, their canteens and commercial outlets in surrounding areas. These commercial outlets were identified with the help from members of school staff. All elements identified as relevant for analysis were recorded with photos.

Four primary and secondary public schools engaged in healthy food promotion initiatives in the area of Lisbon were selected. The catchment areas of these schools reflect different families' socio-economic backgrounds (low, medium and high income families). The analysis focused on children between 7 and 12 years old.

With this analysis we seek to systematically code the visual discourse around three main themes: food meanings and values, attractiveness of food and food packaging, and conceptualizations of health and status related to food. Then we juxtapose the types of visual discourses and representations found on these themes onto a typology, in order to characterize tensions and moments of rupture, inflexion, continuity and discontinuity.

We consider two levels of analysis: denotation and connotation. At a denotation (description) level, we consider the sights, colours, composition of foods and spatial or material, as well as social, dispositions. In a second level of analysis, we take into account the connotations these elements may have in the social contexts of its reception (or interpretation)

by children. Field notes taken from direct observation of eating events, interviews and focus groups will contribute to understand the meanings of these elements.

In order to compare the competing and contradictory rationalities underlying food, we use the concept of binary oppositions, adapted from structuralism. With this notion of opposing ideas, food-related meanings may be contrasted and placed in oppositions, organising patterns of thought. According to Lévi-Strauss (1972), the identification of binary oppositions is a methodological mean of revealing the hidden rules that compose culture. In our understanding and use of the concept, children's capacity of reflexivity is incorporated in the analysis through direct observation of their eating practices and declarations in the focus groups.

4. RESULTS

The four analyzed schools offer to all students meals accordingly with the Ministry of Education guidelines, which intend to encourage healthy menus, following nutritional, safety and hygiene orientations. School cafeterias also follow these recommendations. These guidelines give instructions on foods to be provided and to be avoided (such as deep fried foods, burgers, pizzas, cured meat products, cakes and sweets). Under the School Milk Program, primary schools also provide each child with plain milk at one of the breaks.

Children from families considered as having low incomes do not pay for school meals. Younger children are not allowed to leave schools at lunch time, but older ones – even if only ten years old – with permission from their parents can go out and choose what to eat in a food outlet near the school. Yet, schools do not control entirely students entering or leaving the school at lunch time and, even without permission from their parents they are able to get out. To encourage students to eat at school canteens, cafeterias are closed during lunch time, and children do not need to carry money to pay for their meals at the canteen, instead each one uses an electronic card rechargeable by their parents. Due to high percentages of working mothers and nuclear families in Portugal, only a small number of students have the possibility to have lunch at home.

Food offers in the surroundings of the four schools analyzed depend on each area socio-economic profile. All the analysed schools are located in residential areas, but the one in a poor neighbourhood has a lower number of food outlets than the others. Other schools have also more variety, including food shops targeted at schoolchildren and supermarkets.

Two of the analyzed schools are engaged in initiatives towards food

education. In one of them, with a strong and motivating school board, teachers voluntarily assist children in the canteen, class activities and kitchen activities were organised around food education, and food and public health experts gave talks to children. Another school is engaged in the “Programa 100%”, a program launched by Unilever with the support of the Portuguese government. Recognizing that some children consider that canteens are menacing and non attractive places, this program aims at the improvement of school food and education by stimulating children acceptance of school meals.

4.1. FOOD OFFERS AND SIGHTS WITHIN SCHOOL SPACES

Three of the analyzed canteens are large spaces with (apparent) good air quality in modern buildings with wide windows, although requiring artificially illumination. A fourth canteen, in a school built in 1958, is a smaller space with poorer air renovation. All the rooms are noisy and far from cosy. In all the cases the kitchen is open to the eating area and tables are almost always disposed in lines, enabling for 8 to 16 students to eat together.

In the four analyzed canteens visual communication through posters or panels in the walls are nearly not explored. Except for the canteen in the older building, which presents several posters made by children during classes, other canteens rarely show posters in the walls. The canteen under the “100%” program on food education exhibits three professionally made posters, but only one is visible. It’s a large poster with no information, only the logo of the “100%” program and a drawing representing a ribbon. It portrays a few vegetables, but they are hidden behind a much more appealing ribbon, rendering movement and joy and suggesting party; although it has vivid colours, the white background does not call the attention. The other two posters from the “100%” program, although with a red background, are small and placed behind the doors of the canteen. Both relate food – the ingestion of fruit and water – to beauty (eating fruit for better looking skin and drinking water as the best moisturizing lotion). Another canteen exhibits a small size poster produced by a yoghurt brand (Danone), representing the food wheel and, in very small lettering, recommending the consumption of yoghurt for health reasons. Regarding the posters made by children in one of the canteens, they all appeal at the act of eating, relating food with children’s wishes, like growing up or good taste: “I will eat until I’m satisfied because if I don’t I won’t grow up”, “If you want to grow up you have to eat”, “If you’re hungry, don’t speak... Eat!”, “What a nice dish the cook made! How good is this taste and smell.” One

other canteen has a printed panel done by a teacher by using a computer as part of that school's food education project. It presents the food wheel as a story on how diverse food groups are necessary for healthy children. In almost all these cases lettering and images are too small to be read or perceived and posters' overall visual impact is reduced. All verbal messages conveyed are normative, compelling children to behave in certain ways, and appeal to their rationality. The iconic qualities of food with its strong capability to appeal to emotion and desire (Eco, 1976) are not used in these posters.

Regarding the use of colour in the four canteens and considering its potential in stimulating children's interest, attention was given to tableware. At the four canteens we saw that plates, paper serviettes (when available) and napkins are always white, soup is served in bowls made of metal (or, in the case of one canteen, in a white soup plate), with transparent glass cups and stainless steel cutlery. Variations are found in desserts: in one canteen, fruit is served in plastic coloured yellow or red bowls; in another, both in transparent glass or metal bowls; in a third canteen, it is simply handled, without bowls or plates; in a fourth one it is handled if it's a whole piece (such as an apple or orange) and served in a white plate if it is a slice (of melon, for instance). Even in the canteen under the program "100%", which recommends the use of coloured paper serviettes, these are absent.

Regarding the meals provided, all school canteens offer one single menu composed of a fresh vegetable soup, a main dish of meat or fish, in alternate days, with vegetables, one bread and one dessert (seasonal fruit, generally apples, oranges or pears, or yoghurt, occasionally jelly and seldom pudding). To drink, water. Menus' main dishes are frequently composed of only two kinds of cooked elements ranging in shades from white to beige or brown (meat and rice or fish and boiled potatoes, for instance). A colourful dish was never observed. The same as for soup: all of the observed looked yellowish, despite the wide range of possibilities available in Portuguese cuisine. When chosen by children, salad is composed by one sole ingredient (generally lettuce without seasoning), except in one of the school in which a variety of raw vegetables is offered (grated carrot, corn, slices of cucumber).

A possible explanation for this chromatic monotony is the perception by the kitchen staff that children do not like to eat vegetables, and that if they would be able to identify any in their plates, they would reject it, leading the cooks to adopt the strategy of shredding as much as possible all the vegetables, concealing them, but also losing its specific colours and textures. Meat and fish also tend to be shredded to facilitate young children's

fork and knife handling. When possible, meat or fish and vegetables are all cut, chopped, crushed and blended, as in a pale Russian salad, in order to deliberately avoid the identification by children of different ingredients used. Boiled potatoes, for instance, which generally are rejected by children, are served in small pieces mixed with fish or beef shreds. Another common example is boiled fish added to rice. Mayonnaise, white sauce and other sauces are used to blend these mixtures. Often vegetables are pureed. This easiness in eating has a high cost: diversity of colours, textures, flavours and shapes, and even food education, in exchange for loss of visual stimuli, depleted sights of food, and ignorance.

This strategy does not avoid children's complaints and rejections. In parents' focus groups, a mother said that her daughter complains about these mixtures with sauce: "she likes the flavour, even of grilled fish. [But] sauces end up concealing the taste of things; that is a big mixture."

In the canteen where teachers assist children during the meals, they encourage them to eat soup and fruit and also to have good table manners. In other cases only occasionally teachers assist children's diners. In the case of younger children, generally school staff serves the food and clear the tables; older children take and handle their own plates in trays. Diner ladies try to persuade children to eat soup and fruit, but when children keep refusing to eat diner ladies end up giving in.

Through direct observation we found a widespread resistance to eating soup, fruit, salad and bread. In one of the canteens, fruit is left over the tables with just a few small bites, and slices of bread remain untouched. Pieces of lettuce leaves are left on the plates. At the canteen where teachers assist children the amount of leftovers is smaller. But here teachers only let children go out to the playground after eating their fruit.

Interviews with cooks and diner ladies corroborate children's resistance to eat soup. Only few eat it easily and in their opinion none would eat if of their own free will. The same resistance is felt against vegetables. Their perception is that children dislike all school meals in general. "There is not any day when one may say that today most [of the children] ate everything." In their view "children only like [to eat] pizzas, fried potatoes, hamburgers and so". And these are only served in special occasions, like pizza on Children's Day in one school, or fried potatoes, fried-egg and sausages in another one.

Meals are eaten with low enthusiasm and children play and get easily distracted with other things. Some children take so much time eating that when many of the others leave the table they still have their plates full. Children create their own strategies to manage with food they don't like,

such as passing lettuce onto other colleagues' plates, put soup on the bowl of another colleague, or filling bread with foods they don't like and throwing it under the table onto the floor. Another strategy is to hide a bowl full of soup piled under an empty bowl. Others complain about seasoning, persuading kitchen assistants to sprinkle some more salt or olive oil on their plates. Others just say the food is tasteless or cold. Sometimes food is considered repelling: "I hate purée (...) purée makes me vomiting."

Parents heard in focus groups say that they know immediately when their children didn't like the school meal: they arrive home starving.

In some classes, only a few eat at the school canteen. The others eat at the school cafeteria or go out and buy something to eat at a nearby supermarket, grocery or fast food shop. Often, after having lunch at the canteen, children get out of school to buy ice-cream.

The official recommendation is that school cafeterias should close during lunch time, but is not followed in all schools. The analyzed primary schools do not have cafeterias or vending machines. In secondary schools, we found a very small offer of food: fruit juices, chocolate milk, water, bread with ham, croissants with ham, sorts of brioche, cereal bars. Vending machines also have small packages of chocolate chip cookies, chocolates, chocolate candy, crisp bread, sandwiches, apples, water, fruit juices and chocolate milk. Children complain of this lack of variety.

4.2. FOOD OFFERS AND IMAGES IN SCHOOL SURROUNDINGS

Shops in school surroundings play an important role in children food system. In many cases this starts early morning, at children's breakfast. In one of the schools, the one which has most of low income families, data from interviews and focus groups show that many times children and their mums leave home without eating, buy their breakfast in a coffee shop or supermarket, eat it on the way to school, and children arrive there still swallowing their breakfast. Other children that also buy their breakfast in the way to school eat it only at the morning break (together with school milk). Many of the older students have their lunch outside the school in supermarkets, groceries, coffee shops or fast food shops. Also after school some have their snacks in food outlets nearby.

Food available in school surroundings reflects the taste of the children, but it also reflects children's food-related values and culture. In accordance with the owner of a fast food shop near one of the schools, his intention is to offer a great variety of foods, including healthy foods, but youngsters don't like many flavours, such as those of vegetables. In fact, data collected through direct observation, focus groups with children and parents and

interviews with school directors and staff show that the favourite foods of children that eat in school surroundings centre on deep-fried foods, baked goods made with refined white flour, and soft drinks. For breakfast, those children that eat in the way to school prefer puff pastries, bollycao, ice-tea and coke. Often they also eat bread or croissants with butter and ham. For lunch they choose mostly hot dogs, meat puff pastry, potato chips and hamburgers. Many times a lunch is composed by a coke and potato chips or a meat puff pastry or a hot dog or a hamburger. After leaving school, for the afternoon snack, they prefer to buy puff pastries, chocolates and gums.

These food preferences are influenced by the culture they live in (Wright, Nancarrow & Kwok, 2001). In fact, some of these foods correspond to brand products (such as Coca-Cola, Ice Tea or Bollycao) and iconic products (an hamburger, hot dog or chips, for instance), consisting in cultural conventions strongly associated to high expectations of not only flavour, but also well-being, fashion and social status. We must not forget that in dominant mass culture, eating fast food, and junk food, is represented as an appropriate behaviour of young people, considering their scarce material resources, informality of manners, and preference for candies.

Marketing and advertising play an important role in setting and recalling these conventions. Marketing techniques are used to achieve the attractiveness of fast food shops and food packaging. In fact, some sorts of food, beverages and snacks packaging for sale at food outlets in the surroundings of schools present a variety of attention-getting bright colours, frequently glossy. Also at window displays of commercial food outlets, cakes are sometimes shown and there is a frequent use of visual representations of colourful painted food (e.g. hot dogs), together with appealing verbal messages, sometimes in English, such as "So good!".

A decisive factor corresponds to parent's attitudes. In focus groups with parents it was clear that some families support and encourage their children to have lunch outside the school: "It's good for them." And although they admit it as being a once in a week practice, we may suppose that in fact it happens more often. From parents' point of view, this represents a way out of the routine and also a way for their children to experience life: "kids of that age need to have fun and have to eat a little bit of everything". In fact, this way parents are encouraging their children's socialisation with peers and promoting their inclusion in the schools' reference groups. Although parents are aware of health risks from eating the kind of food their sons buy outside the school, they seem to trust on their children education regarding their choices towards healthy food, and they rather want their

children to be included in their group of friends. Eating outside the school also seems to reassure parents regarding another food-related health risk: diets. Parents fear their sons wish to engage on radical diets, and in their view it seems that when eating out of school with their friends, even if its fast food, their children are behaving normally. The trust that parents place in their sons when allowing them to choose their lunch outside the school is also a way of promoting children's autonomy and responsibility. "I think that's great that she goes and feels free", says one mother. It seems that for these children, and their families, to have access to tasty food bought outside the school together with their colleagues allow them to express their individuality, giving them advantage over other children that dine everyday at the canteen and stay under the control of school staff, like younger children. Eating outside seems therefore to symbolize a higher social position relatively to the others. Furthermore, it means the exhibition of economic ease, especially during a severe economic crisis. In an interview with a school director, she recalls that when she enters a coffee shop near the school, where many children and their moms daily have breakfast, she announces in loud voice: "Today, I came to have breakfast with the rich."

5. DISCUSSION

Our initial intention was to analyse how competing and contradictory rationalities underlying food and food education are both expressed in concrete visual representations of food and appropriated by children: the commercial strategies of food outlets in school surroundings based in marketing techniques including colours, bold and dynamic images and verbal messages, able to attract children's attention on one side; and, on the other, school canteens exhibiting dull and monotonously poor coloured dishes, in a inconsistent way regarding official campaigns of healthy food education.

Some of the results drawn from the empirical materials collected have in fact shown sharp contrasts between sights and representations of food at school canteens and at commercial food outlets outside schools. The coloured and appealing images of food in shops outside the school contrast with poor colour combinations at school meals. An overall perspective on the characteristics of canteens suggests that school meals are offered in spaces emotionally not appealing, and food itself lacks flavour and inspires expressions of dissatisfaction. As Carolan (2011: 21) says, the food experience in the canteen is deeply relational, consisting in "an experience full of sounds, smells, tastes, textures, sights and affects". Daily complaints

against school meals, many dislikes and even nausea, and low seasoning dishes offered at canteens sharply differ from the taste and smell of fried, high fat, sugar and salt food found in fast food shops and supermarkets, which corresponds to some of children's favourite flavours. Furthermore, nearly nonexistent choice at canteens opposes to diversity of choice in food outlets outside the school (see Table 1).

	School canteen	Shops in school surroundings
Visual messages	Low visibility	High impact.
Verbal messages	Normative, difficult to read: food related to health (mostly), growing up, beauty, taste, smell.	Informative: prices, ingredients. Appealing: taste, energy, health, flexibility (composition of menus).
Colour	Shades from white to beige or brown (main dishes and soup).	Bright and vivid colours (packaging).
Autonomy	Nonexistent (pre-paid cards to buy lunch).	Self-management of purchases.
Choice	Nonexistent (unless dessert or salad in two canteens).	Diversity.
Attractiveness of food	Frequent complaints and dislikes.	Favourite flavours.
Food-related values	Low-cost, safety, not differentiated.	Taste, social distinction, variety, socialising with friends, identity.

Table 1: Food and food-related sights within school and in its surroundings.

But in the course of our analysis we also found that there are other competing meanings we should consider in addition to food-related marketing strategies. Data also suggests that subjection to supervision, control and normatively discourse of diner ladies in the canteens stand out against autonomy, freedom and self-management of food purchases in the street.

Moreover, a crucial factor influencing children's choices seem to correspond to the overall experience of eating out, and to social interaction processes between them. In fact, as Ward and Martens (2000) say, eating out has a considerable social and symbolic significance. The variety of food available in shops outside the school also should be noted. Although it is more apparent than real, because children tend to eat only a small as-

sortment of foods, as stated by the owner of a highly frequented fast food shop nearby one of the schools in an informal interview, the variety of food offers in the school surroundings suggest key-values of consumer societies such as “choice, freedom, personal control and discretion” (Warde & Martens, 2000: 14).

In a study conducted on food preferences, eating behaviour and food choice of primary schoolchildren, Ross (1995) found out that children give a higher priority to what they like and dislike, and also to play and socialisation, than to health attributes of food when making their choices. More recently, Pike (2008) in her ethnographic fieldwork in the school canteens concluded that a nutritional discourse focused on achieving healthy eating is privileged over the discourse that enhances the commensality and the social aspects of eating. Yet, this way, by focusing on nutrition, children are induced to engage with food in accordance with a particular ‘frame’ or ‘rationality’ that infuses a character of risk and anxiety, self-monitoring and self-surveillance to children relations with food, instead of privileging pleasure and sociality, for instance.

It’s outside the school that children find their favourite flavours of food. But eating outside the school also means much more than that. As Bourdieu (1984) says, taste is predisposed to function as a marker of class. Food tastes are shaped by childhood experiences, family norms and socialisation processes, and in this context, eating out is a form of social distinction (Warde & Martens, 2000). And in fact, parents approve and even encourage their children to eating outside the school, as it seems a way of experiencing life, gaining autonomy, socialising and exhibiting a higher social position relatively to their peers.

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Influence of children's lifestyle and food choice in the adherence to a Mediterranean Diet in Northern Italy

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Abstract

The food cultural match of the Mediterranean countries is undeniable. However, the relationship between the adherence to a Mediterranean Diet and food consumption patterns in parents and children living in a metropolitan area of a Mediterranean Country have never been analysed yet. The main purpose of the present study is to investigate the impact of children lifestyle and food consumption behaviour on the adherence to a Mediterranean Diet of both children and parents. Specifically, the objectives are threefold: 1. to examine the relationship between parents' food choice and the adherence to a Mediterranean Diet; 2. to analyse the effect of children dietary habits on their Diet. 3. to verify if the television fruition has an impact on children's Diet. The survey is conducted in a sample (N=1.899) living in the metropolitan municipality of Milan. The instrument used is a self-administrated questionnaire filled-out by parents of primary school-aged children (6-11 years). The results show a relationship between the adherence to a Mediterranean Diet and both the food choice and the children's lifestyle. The findings can be used to improve communication policy and information dissemination. Furthermore, they should be available to implement education interventions addressed to consumers. The study introduces a novel link between adherence to a Mediterranean Diet and the wider context where the food consumption behavior occurs.

Keywords: Mediterranean Diet, food choice, children, family, television, lifestyle

Topic: D Food Consumption
d 8 The everyday practices surrounding young people's food consumption