

# Food marketing through social media influencers: Sponsorship on food blogs focused on child feeding



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## Background

- Understanding factors that contribute to parents' child feeding behaviors is essential for obesity prevention.<sup>1</sup>
- Food marketing using product placement and promotion may contribute to parents' food purchasing decisions.<sup>2,3</sup>
- While child-directed food marketing has received significant empirical attention, more research is needed on parent-directed marketing.<sup>4</sup>
- In particular, research is needed on novel digital marketing strategies that use social media.<sup>5</sup>

## Research Questions

- What is the prevalence of brand sponsorship on food blogs focused on child feeding?
- What brands provide sponsorship on food blogs focused on child feeding?

### References

1. Birch & Ventura (2009). *International Journal of Obesity*, 33
2. Levin & Levin (2010). *Journal of Consumer Behavior*, 9(5)
3. Abrams, Evans, & Duff (2015). *Appetite*, 87(Supp. C)
4. Lamberton & Stephen (2016). *Journal of Marketing*, 80(6)
5. Emond et al. (2015). *Pediatrics*, doi:10.1542/peds.2015-2853
6. Federal Trade Commission. (2013). .com Disclosures: how to make effective disclosures in digital advertising [Online]

## Methods

### Sample

- 13 food blogs focused on child feeding published by mothers of 2- to 5-year-old children were selected using purposive sampling
- ~20% of blog posts published between February 1, 2013 and March 1, 2014 were randomly sampled from each blog (N = 325)

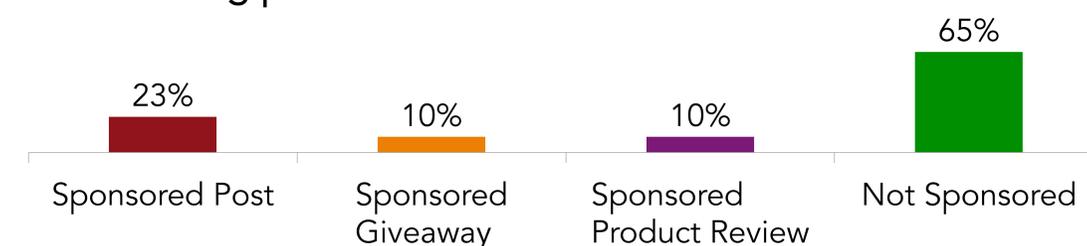
### Coding

- Posts were coded for sponsorship using a qualitative coding scheme developed from the 2013 Federal Trade Commission guidelines for digital advertising disclosure<sup>6</sup>
- Sponsor names were recorded and coded as food and non-food brands

Code	Definition
Sponsored blog post	Blogger disclosed receiving compensation from a brand for writing the post as a whole
Sponsored giveaway	Blogger disclosed that items given away to blog readers (e.g., via raffle) were provided by a brand
Sponsored product review	Blogger disclosed product and/or experience reviewed in the post was provided by a brand
Not sponsored	No disclosure statements
Food brand	Brand website presents primarily food items
Non-food brand	Brand website presents primarily non-food brands

## Results

### Types of Sponsorship on Mom Food Blogs N = 325 blog posts



- 35% of sampled blog posts received one or more sponsorship codes (n = 115)
- Sponsorship of any kind varied across the 13 blogs and ranged from 0% to 20% (M = 7.7%; SD = 7.2)
- There were 85 unique sponsors: 64% food brands (n = 54), 36% non-food brands (n = 31)

Select food brands:

Select non-food brands:

## Conclusions

- Approximately 1-in-3 sampled blog posts were sponsored
- Brands that market healthier (e.g., The Blueberry Council) and less healthy (e.g., Blue Bunny Ice Cream) foods were present
- Brands that market non-food items were also present (e.g., cooking tools, lunch boxes, vacation destinations)
- More research is needed to understand how food marketing through social media influencers impacts the child feeding behaviors of blog readers

