

Learning from TikTok Food Pranks to Promote Food Saving Among Adolescents

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Abstract : Food waste is a global issue, with an estimated 30% to 50% of food created never being consumed. Therefore, it is vital to reduce food waste and convert wasted food into recyclable outputs. TikTok provides a simple way of creating and duetting videos in just a few steps by using templates with the same sound/vision/caption effects to produce personalized content - this is called a duet, which is revealing to study the impact of TikTok on wasting more food or saving food. The research focuses on examining food-related content on TikTok, with particular attention paid to two distinct themes, food waste pranks and food-saving practices, to understand the potential impacts of these themes on adolescents and their attitudes toward sustainable food consumption practices. Specifically, the analysis explores how TikTok content related to food waste and/or food saving may contribute to the normalization and promotion of either positive or negative food behaviours among young viewers. The research employed content analysis and semi-structured interviews to understand what factors contribute to the difference in popularity between food pranks and food-saving videos and insights from the former can be applied to the latter to increase their communication effectiveness. The first category of food content on TikTok under examination pertains to food waste, including videos featuring pranks and mukbang. These forms of content have the potential to normalize or even encourage food waste behaviours among adolescents, exacerbating the already significant food waste problem. The second category of TikTok food content under examination relates to food saving, for example, videos teaching viewers how to maximize the use of food to reduce waste. This type of content can potentially empower adolescents to act against food waste and foster positive and sustainable food practices in their communities. The initial findings of the study suggest that TikTok content related to pranks appears to be more popular among viewers than content focused on teaching people how to save food. Additionally, these types of videos are gaining fans at a faster rate than content promoting more sustainable food practices. However, we argue there is a great potential for social media platforms like TikTok to play an educative role in promoting positive behaviour change among young people by sharing engaging content suitable to target audiences. This research serves as the first to investigate the potential utility of TikTok in food waste reduction and underscores the important role social media platforms can play in promoting sustainable food practices. The findings will help governments, organizations, and communities promote tailored and effective interventions to reduce food waste and help achieve the United Nations' sustainable development goal of halving food waste by 2030.

Keywords : food waste reduction, behaviour, social media, TikTok, adolescents

Conference Title : ICFSPPI 2023 : International Conference on Food Security, Preservation and Packaging Innovations

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : December 11-12, 2023