

DIGITAL FOOD ENVIRONMENTS



Food environments are a combination of physical, economic, policy and social settings, opportunities, and situations that influence health and nutrition.

Digital food environments (DFE) are made up of online settings that provide opportunities and barriers for food choices to influence health and nutrition offline. They involve any actor that conducts food and nutrition activities in a digital setting.



DFE ACTORS

- People or organizations that conduct food and nutrition activities in digital settings.
- Many actors work in both online and offline spaces, such as the food industry and governments, but some actors are based primarily online, such as social media influencers.



DFE ACTIVITIES

- Any kind of food or nutrition related activity that is conducted in a digital setting.
- These activities are the same as offline food and nutrition activities, such as health promotion, food marketing, and food retail, but also include influencer marketing, social support, and connecting with others.



DFE SETTINGS

- Any virtual space where digital actors conduct food and nutrition activities, including social media sites, websites, blogs, apps, and video games.

DOMAINS OF THE FOOD ENVIRONMENT



- 1 PHYSICAL** What kinds of foods are available?
- 2 ECONOMIC** What types of foods can we afford to buy and how much does healthy food cost?
- 3 COMMUNICATION** What kinds of messages do we receive about food and nutrition?
- 4 SOCIAL** What attitudes and beliefs shape eating practices?
- 5 POLITICAL** What rules and policies govern food availability, affordability, and messages?

DOMAINS OF THE DIGITAL FOOD ENVIRONMENT



- A ONLINE COMMUNICATION & SOCIAL MEDIA** Digitally, the communication and social domains overlap and are represented by online communication and social media.
- B ONLINE TO OFFLINE (O2O)** The physical and economic domains are replaced with online to offline retail where food is purchased electronically and can be delivered or picked up at a physical location.
- C POLITICAL** Digital food environments are dynamic and transient, making it more challenging to apply food and nutrition rules and policies within these spaces.



ONLINE COMMUNICATION & SOCIAL MEDIA



The internet is an important source of food and nutrition information, including misinformation and disinformation. Users can actively seek information and may also be passively exposed to it via social media feeds and ads on websites.

Attributes of online communication:

- Anyone can generate content.
- Anyone can engage with content by liking, commenting, and sharing it.
- It facilitates the creation of social support and common interest groups.



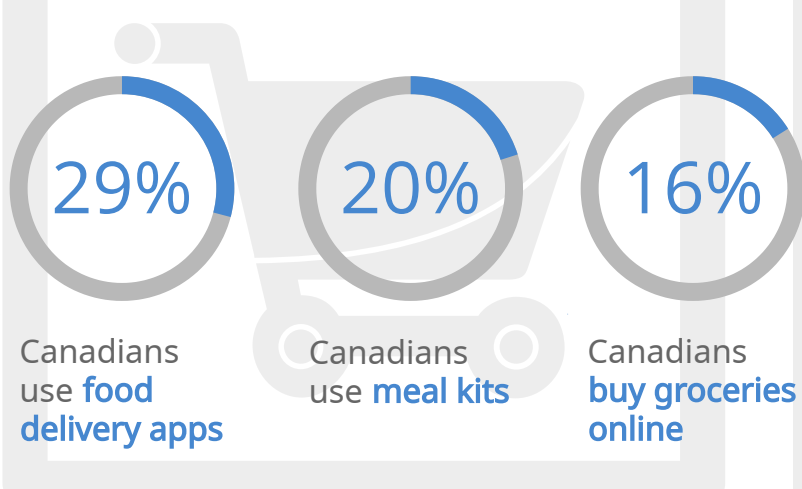
The food and beverage industry can easily reach consumers with highly targeted marketing based on personal data and persuasive electronic word of mouth.

Social media influencers are largely independent of the food and beverage industry, but may still have a strong impact on eating practices by promoting products, services, and ideologies.



DIGITAL FOOD RETAIL

- ✓ **Convenient** and saves time
- ? **May reduce impulse purchasing**
- ? **May increase access to healthy and unhealthy food**



- Online communication about diet and nutrition by digital actors, including the food and beverage industry, may impact offline dietary choices.
- The strong desire for convenience has increased the popularity of digital food retail, such as food delivery apps, meal kits, and online groceries. Its impacts on health and nutrition are currently under investigation.
- With the integration of technology in daily life, digital food environments are an emerging area of research and practice.

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