Food depiction in posts of the most popular Lithuanian influencers on Instagram and Facebook in 2024

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Background: Content published in social networks might act as risk factor to health. We aimed to assess the prevalence of posts depicting food published by Lithuanian influencers on social networks.

Material and methods: All publicly available posts (6008 in total) created by 18 most popular Lithuanian influencers on Facebook and Instagram in 2024 were included. Distribution of the posts depicting food was assessed according to social networks, gender and age of influencers.

Results: Every forth (26.6%) post depicted foods. Among them, fast food was depicted in 19.4%, sweets - in 53.5%, fried food - in 58.6%, vegetables - in 55.7%, fruits and berries - in 46.3%, cereals - in 39.1%, milk and dairy products - in 34.3%, meat - in 27.6%, seafood - in 19.9% and food supplements - in 3.2%. Fast food, sweets, fried food, vegetables, fruits and berries, cereals, milk and dairy products, meat and sea food more often were depicted on Instagram (respectively, 7.2% vs. 3.6%, 18.4 vs. 11.0%, 20.4% vs. 11.8%, 17.7% vs. 12.6%, 14.5% vs. 10.6%, 12.3% vs. 8.9%, 10.8% vs. 7.8%, 9.2% vs. 5.9%, 6.6% vs. 4.3%, $p < 0.001$). Food supplements were more often depicted on Facebook (1.4% vs. 0.2%, $p < 0.001$). Overall, women and older influencers more frequently depicted vegetables (respectively, 22.3% vs. 5.7%, 18.3% vs. 9.0), fruits and berries (respectively, 16.9% vs. 4.3%, 13.3% vs. 7.8%), cereals (respectively, 14.8% vs. 4.6%, 12.0% vs. 7.2%), dairy products (respectively, 13.6% vs. 3.6%, 11.2% vs. 5.6%), meat (respectively, 9.5% vs. 4.1%, 7.8% vs. 5.8%), sweets (respectively, 15.9% vs. 8.3%, 13.1% vs 11.3%), fried food (respectively, 22.3% vs. 6.6%, 17.4% vs. 11.4%). Men and older influencers more frequently depicted food supplements (respectively, 1.5% vs. 0.4%, 1.2% vs. 0.5%) ($p \leq 0.05$).

Conclusions: Every fourth post depicted food, more frequently on Instagram. Healthy and unhealthy foods were depicted with similar frequency. Females and older influencers more frequently depicted healthy foods.

Key messages:
- Both healthy and unhealthy foods are presented with similar frequency on social networks – this might lead to the overconsumption of unhealthy foods.
- Differences in depiction of foods between social networks and influencers with different gender, age and number of followers should be taken into account when implementing public health interventions.