

Original Article

Public support for restrictions on fast food company sponsorship of community events

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This study investigated community attitudes to fast food companies' sponsorship of community events. The aim was to inform future efforts to introduce greater restrictions on these marketing activities to reduce child obesity. While previous research has focused on the sponsorship of sporting events, the present study included all community events and gauged public support for fast food company sponsorships in general as well as specific sponsorship activities such as securing event naming rights, advertising on event premises, and distributing free items to children in the form of food and redeemable vouchers. A large and diverse sample of Western Australian adults (n=2,005) responded to a community attitudes telephone survey that included questions relating to event sponsorship. Almost half of the respondents reported that the promotion of fast foods is inappropriate at community events, and only a third considered it appropriate at events where children are likely to be present. Around two-thirds agreed that promoting fast foods at such events sends contradictory messages to children and just a quarter of respondents considered it acceptable for free fast food to be distributed at events or for children to be rewarded for participation with fast food vouchers. The results suggest that efforts to reduce child obesity that involve restrictions on the sponsorship of community events by organisations promoting unhealthy foods may be supported by a substantial proportion of the population.

Key Words: attitudes, community, children, food companies, sponsorship

INTRODUCTION

Food marketing is acknowledged to be an important contributor to child obesity.^{1,2} It exists in numerous forms, the most recognized being television advertising.³ Due to its higher profile, food advertising on television has been the main focus of research and policy attention to date.⁴ In recent years, self-regulatory codes have been introduced in a number of countries to limit young children's exposure to television advertising for unhealthy foods.⁵ In Australia, two self-regulatory codes were introduced in 2009: the Responsible Children's Marketing Initiative⁶ and the Australian Quick Service Restaurant Industry Initiative for Responsible Advertising and Marketing to Children.⁷ These codes apply only to those organisations that choose to be signatories, and evaluation studies indicate that this limited coverage has prevented them from reducing children's exposure to television advertising for unhealthy foods.^{8,9} Of note is that these codes are focused on television advertising that is explicitly targeted at children and do not specifically relate to organisations' sponsorship activities. In addition to these self-regulatory codes are the mandatory Children's Television Standards (CTS) that constrain advertising in time slots that are allocated to children's programming.¹⁰ For example, the CTS specifies that the nutritional properties of advertised foods must not be communicated in a misleading manner.

Along with increasing attention being given to their television advertising activities, food companies are facing rapid social and technological changes that are making television advertising less effective in reaching their target markets.^{11,12} As a result of the more restrictive regulatory environment and the ascension of new media, marketers are now strategically using additional forms of promotion to maximize their reach. Alternative forms of food marketing available to food marketers include print, radio, outdoor, and Internet advertising, product placements, licensed characters, viral marketing, advergames, sales promotions, and sponsorships.^{4,13-15} Due to the limited research attention to date and their ability to reach large audiences, especially children, sponsorships are the focus of the present study. The fast food industry is the specific food sector of interest due to the dominance of this form of food retailing in expenditure on foods purchased outside of the home and the often

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high levels of fat, sugar, and salt contained in these foods.¹⁶

Sponsorships

Across many industries, sponsorship is increasing in importance within the marketing mix. Over the last two decades, the budgets allocated to sponsorship have grown exponentially, with sponsorship being one of the few areas to receive consistently increasing expenditure over time.¹⁷ This investment reflects the ability of sponsorship activities to achieve a range of marketing objectives, especially increased brand awareness, enhanced brand equity, and sales growth.^{18,19}

As a marketing strategy, sponsorship can facilitate penetration of segments that are often difficult to access via more traditional approaches.^{20,21} In particular, it can be useful for targeting child audiences because of the ability to circumvent existing advertising regulations.²²⁻²⁶ Sponsored sports events, for instance, are frequently televised at times that may otherwise be prohibited because they are within programming periods classified as 'general viewing'. This is a tactic that was successfully used by the tobacco industry in the United States after regulations were introduced to ban television advertising of tobacco products.²¹ The television exposure obtained from sports sponsorships is of concern, given that food companies' sponsorship of both elite and amateur sports can influence children's attitudes to unhealthy food products.^{27,28} Studies have demonstrated that children are frequently exposed to sports sponsorship messages, can often identify the relevant sponsors, and have generally favorable attitudes to the sponsoring organisations.^{27,29,30}

Reflecting the vast amount of sponsorship activity that is directed at professional and amateur sporting events, most research relating to sponsorships involving unhealthy products relates to the sponsorship of sporting events.^{26,27,31-33} This research has found that where food companies sponsor sports that are popular with young people, the food products are generally unhealthy.³²⁻³⁴ Today, however, there are numerous other kinds of events and venues that are sponsored by food and beverage companies.² For example, in Australia the opera is sponsored by Howard Park Wines, horse racing clubs and venues are sponsored by Schweppes (beverage manufacturer), the Air Race is sponsored by Red Bull, and Sydney's Taronga Park Zoo is sponsored by Coca Cola, Streets (ice-cream manufacturer), and Hungry Jacks (burger chain). In this context, it is important to understand sponsorship issues relevant to the full range of community events. Moreover, of interest to policy makers is whether community members support such sponsorship activities in general and those targeting children in particular.³⁵ Awareness of support levels will provide an indication of likely reactions from the community if current advertising regulations are extended to cover sponsorship arrangements.

An issue of relevance to community support for sponsorship activities is how non-profit events can remain financially viable if restrictions are placed on their ability to accept sponsorship support from companies that market unhealthy foods and beverages.³⁶ If community members are concerned that these events could not survive

without sponsorship by such companies, they may be reluctant to support sponsorship restrictions. One possible means of generating funding to replace food company sponsorships is a tax on unhealthy foods and beverages. Studies suggest that this can be a cost-effective means of reducing consumption of these products and generating revenues that can be used to improve public health.^{5,36-37}

While a considerable body of research has examined community support for regulations applying to the marketing of tobacco products,³⁸⁻⁴⁰ there is very little information available relating to support for equivalent activities undertaken by companies promoting unhealthy foods and beverages. To address this gap in the literature, the present study investigated Western Australians' 1) perceptions of appropriate sponsors for community events at which children are likely to be in attendance, 2) support for restrictions on sponsorships involving unhealthy foods and beverages, and 3) support for a 10% tax on unhealthy foods and beverages (as per Sacks *et al.*³⁷) to provide a funding source for health promotion campaigns that could replace corporate sponsorships. This information can assist policy makers in their efforts to engender public support for such policies.²⁸

METHODS

A community attitudes survey was administered by telephone to a sample of 2,005 Western Australians, aged 16 years and older. The questionnaire contained items relating to a range of issues, including attitudes to food company sponsorship of community events. Telephone numbers were randomly selected from an electronic household telephone directory to reach a broad range of respondents. Although the directory included only fixed lines (i.e., mobile phone numbers were not listed), the rate of fixed line ownership in Australia remains high at around 88% of households,⁴¹ indicating that the directory remains an effective means of accessing a broad range of residents.

For each telephone number dialed, up to 10 call backs were made to maximize the response rate. The outcome was a response rate of 60% among eligible households. Upon making contact with a household, the adult with the next birthday was invited to participate in the survey. Table 1 shows the composition of the resulting sample. The sample was weighted in accordance with the age and location (metropolitan versus rural/regional area) distribution of the Western Australian population as per 2006 census data.⁴²

The survey items relating to food marketing asked respondents to indicate their agreement/disagreement with the following sponsorship activities at events where children are likely to be present: promoting fast foods, selling fast foods, and offering fast food for free. They were also asked whether they agreed with specific promotional strategies in the form of corporate signage at venue premises, naming rights, rewarding children for participation with vouchers for free fast food, and distribution of paraphernalia (t-shirts and water bottles) featuring company logos during events. Further, they were asked whether they thought that the promotion of fast foods at community events makes these foods appear healthy and whether such promotion at sporting events gives children conflict-

Table 1. Sample profile (n=2,005)

	n	%
Gender		
Male	953	47.5
Female	1052	52.5
Age, years		
16-29	277	13.8
30-49	665	33.2
50-69	1063	53.0
Region		
Metropolitan	1321	65.9
Rural	684	34.1
Education		
Degree	618	30.8
No degree	1335	66.5
Other/refused	52	2.7
Parental status		
Child under 15	575	28.7
No child under 15	1430	71.3
Fast food consumption in		
Yes	704	35.1
No	1301	64.9
Smoker status		
Current smoker	305	15.2
Non-smoker	1700	84.8
Alcohol consumption status		
Hazardous [†]	1092	54.4
Non-hazardous	909	45.3
Refused	4	0.3

[†]Hazardous drinking defined as per the National Health and Medical Research Council's⁴³ recommendation to consume no more than two standard drinks per day to avoid long term harm.

[‡]Respondents were asked to nominate the number of days in the previous week that they had consumed fast food.

ting messages.

Ethics clearance was obtained from the University of Western Australia Human Ethics Committee. All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS 19.0. Descriptive statistics were used to measure attitudes toward food company sponsorship of community events. Chi-square analyses were used to determine significant associations between policy support and participant characteristics including age, gender, having a child under 15 years of age, smoking status, fast food consumption, and hazardous alcohol consumption. T-tests were used to determine whether there were significant differences in perceived appropriateness of event sponsorship by company type.

RESULTS

Table 2 shows respondents' attitudes to fast food sponsorship of community events. Approximately half agreed that it is inappropriate for unhealthy foods to be promoted at community events and that promoting unhealthy foods at such events makes them appear to be healthy. Almost two-thirds felt that promoting fast foods at sporting events can confuse children about the healthiness of these foods. Overall, females, non-smokers, and those less likely to have consumed fast food or exceeded alcohol consumption guidelines were significantly more likely than others to agree with these statements.

Table 3 shows the levels of support for specific sponsorship activities at events at which children are likely to be present. Around half of the respondents agreed that companies should not be permitted to sell unhealthy foods at these events. Similar but somewhat lower levels of agreement were evident for food companies displaying signage and advertisements at events (44%), distributing promotional items bearing company logos (41%), and

Table 2. Agreement with fast food marketing at community events[†] (n=2,005)

	Promotion of fast foods is inappropriate at community events (Agree/Disagree/No feelings %)		Promotion of fast foods at community events makes fast foods appear healthy (Agree/Disagree/No feelings %)		Promotion of fast foods at sporting events sends conflicting messages to children (Agree/Disagree/No feelings %)	
Total	48/31/21		51/40/9		65/25/10	
Gender						
Male	46/33/21	$\chi^2=4.761$	47/44/9	$\chi^2=14.159$	60/28/12	$\chi^2=23.972$
Female	50/29/21	$p=0.092$	56/36/8	$p=0.001$	70/22/8	$p=0.001$
Age, years						
16-29	41/36/23	$\chi^2=25.931$	45/47/8	$\chi^2=28.514$	65/26/9	$\chi^2=2.897$
30-49	47/31/22	$p=0.001$	50/40/10	$p=0.001$	64/26/10	$p=0.575$
50-69	56/25/19		59/33/8		67/23/10	
Parental status						
Child<15	49/29/22	$\chi^2=1.708$	51/41/8	$\chi^2=0.626$	66/26/8	$\chi^2=3.870$
No child<15	48/31/21	$p=0.426$	51/40/9	$p=0.731$	64/25/11	$p=0.144$
Education						
Degree	50/31/19	$\chi^2=3.318$	51/41/8	$\chi^2=0.603$	67/23/10	$\chi^2=3.055$
No degree	47/31/22	$p=0.190$	52/39/9	$p=0.740$	64/26/10	$p=0.217$
Hazardous alcohol consumption						
No	52/26/22	$\chi^2=16.297$	55/37/8	$\chi^2=8.754$	68/23/9	$\chi^2=7.843$
Yes	45/34/21	$p=0.001$	48/43/9	$p=0.013$	62/28/10	$p=0.020$
Fast food consumed in previous week						
No	52/27/21	$\chi^2=20.532$	54/37/9	$\chi^2=10.719$	68/23/9	$\chi^2=11.365$
Yes	43/36/21	$p=0.001$	48/44/8	$p=0.005$	61/28/11	$p=0.003$
Smoker						
No	48/29/23	$\chi^2=9.020$	52/39/9	$\chi^2=13.019$	66/24/10	$\chi^2=9.337$
Yes	47/37/16	$p=0.011$	49/47/4	$p=0.001$	62/31/7	$p=0.009$

[†] Response options: agree, disagree, no feelings either way.

Table 3. Agreement with sponsorship activities at events where children are present † (n=2,005)

	Fast food company names associated with the event (%)		Fast food company signage and advertisements at venues (%)		T-shirts or water bottles with fast food company logos at events (%)		Fast food companies selling food at events (%)		Rewarding children for participating in events with fast food vouchers (%)		Fast food companies offering their food for free at events (%)	
Total	43		44		41		48		26		26	
Gender												
Male	47	$\chi^2=11.503$	49	$\chi^2=22.363$	47	$\chi^2=37.185$	55	$\chi^2=45.671$	29	$\chi^2=15.442$	32	$\chi^2=36.347$
Female	40	$p=0.001$	39	$p=0.001$	34	$p=0.001$	40	$p=0.001$	22	$p=0.001$	20	$p=0.001$
Age (years)												
16-29	47	$\chi^2=10.312$	49	$\chi^2=14.610$	45	$\chi^2=7.939$	52	$\chi^2=10.546$	28	$\chi^2=4.328$	30	$\chi^2=8.634$
30-49	44	$p=0.006$	45	$p=0.001$	40	$p=0.019$	48	$p=0.005$	26	$p=0.115$	26	$p=0.013$
50-69	38		38		37		42		23		23	
Parental status												
Child <15	44	$\chi^2=0.009$	45	$\chi^2=0.354$	42	$\chi^2=1.959$	49	$\chi^2=1.947$	25	$\chi^2=0.786$	27	$\chi^2=0.508$
No child <15	43	$p=0.926$	43	$p=0.552$	39	$p=0.162$	46	$p=0.163$	27	$p=0.375$	25	$p=0.476$
Education												
Degree	34	$\chi^2=33.110$	38	$\chi^2=12.431$	33	$\chi^2=23.031$	44	$\chi^2=3.932$	22	$\chi^2=7.998$	21	$\chi^2=13.703$
No degree	48	$p=0.001$	47	$p=0.001$	44	$p=0.001$	49	$p=0.047$	28	$p=0.005$	29	$p=0.001$
Hazardous alcohol consumption												
No	42	$\chi^2=2.096$	40	$\chi^2=11.462$	39	$\chi^2=1.135$	45	$\chi^2=4.203$	26	$\chi^2=0.033$	27	$\chi^2=0.112$
Yes	45	$p=0.148$	48	$p=0.001$	42	$p=0.287$	50	$p=0.040$	26	$p=0.856$	26	$p=0.738$
Fast food consumed in previous week												
No	38	$\chi^2=25.944$	38	$\chi^2=33.959$	37	$\chi^2=16.713$	43	$\chi^2=19.032$	22	$\chi^2=14.728$	22	$\chi^2=21.249$
Yes	50	$p=0.001$	51	$p=0.001$	46	$p=0.001$	53	$p=0.001$	30	$p=0.001$	31	$p=0.001$
Smoker												
No	43	$\chi^2=1.731$	43	$\chi^2=2.069$	40	$\chi^2=1.055$	47	$\chi^2=0.895$	25	$\chi^2=1.772$	26	$\chi^2=0.008$
Yes	47	$p=0.188$	48	$p=0.150$	43	$p=0.304$	50	$p=0.344$	28	$p=0.183$	27	$p=0.928$

† Response options: acceptable, unacceptable

Table 4. Support for a 10% tax on unhealthy foods and beverages[†]

	Fast food outlets (Support/No support/No feelings %)		Hot chips (Support/No support/No feelings %)		High sugar soft drinks (Support/No support/No feelings %)	
Total	44/46/10		3751/12		46/46/8	
Gender						
Male	42/47/11	$\chi^2=4.327$	36/51/13	$\chi^2=1.401$	43/48/9	$\chi^2=7.463$
Female	46/44/10	$p=0.115$	39/50/11	$p=0.496$	49/43/8	$p=0.024$
Age (years)						
16-29	44/45/11	$\chi^2=2.364$	34/54/12	$\chi^2=5.465$	43/48/9	$\chi^2=2.837$
30-49	44/45/11	$p=0.669$	39/49/12	$p=0.243$	46/45/9	$p=0.585$
50-69	44/47/9		39/50/11		48/45/7	
Parental status						
Child <15	44/46/10	$\chi^2=0.031$	37/50/13	$\chi^2=0.411$	45/45/10	$\chi^2=0.783$
No child <15	44/45/11	$p=0.984$	38/51/11	$p=0.814$	46/46/8	$p=0.676$
Education						
Degree	45/45/10	$\chi^2=0.245$	39/50/11	$\chi^2=2.819$	47/45/8	$\chi^2=0.423$
No degree	44/46/10	$p=0.885$	36/51/13	$p=0.244$	45/46/9	$p=0.809$
Hazardous alcohol consumption						
No	46/43/11	$\chi^2=3.358$	40/47/13	$\chi^2=10.144$	49/42/9	$\chi^2=9.506$
Yes	43/47/10	$p=0.187$	35/54/11	$p=0.006$	43/49/8	$p=0.009$
Fast food consumed in previous week						
No	47/43/10	$\chi^2=7.228$	42/47/11	$\chi^2=18.913$	50/43/7	$\chi^2=14.204$
Yes	41/48/11	$p=0.027$	32/55/13	$p=0.001$	41/49/10	$p=0.001$
Smoker						
No	46/43/11	$\chi^2=23.958$	39/49/12	$\chi^2=18.221$	48/43/9	$\chi^2=19.016$
Yes	36/57/7	$p=0.001$	28/60/12	$p=0.001$	37/56/7	$p=0.001$

[†] Response options: support, not support, no feelings either way.

purchasing event naming rights (43%). Only a quarter of respondents supported fast food companies being able to give their products away for free at events or provide children with reward vouchers entitling them to free food. Females, older respondents, those with a university qualification, and those who had not consumed fast food in the previous week were less likely to support the nominated sponsorship activities.

The results relating to support for a 10% tax on unhealthy foods and beverages are shown in Table 4. The three product categories selected (fast food, hot chips, and sugar-sweetened soft drinks) reflect that those are commonly consumed in Australia and that contain high levels of sugar, fat, and/or salt.⁴⁴ Support was highest for a tax on soft drinks (46%) and lowest for a tax on hot chips (37%). Smokers and those who had consumed fast food or consumed alcohol at hazardous levels were less likely to support such a tax.

Respondents were asked to rate the appropriateness of particular types of sponsors for events at which children are likely to be present. Table 5 lists the range of industries included in the survey and their varying levels of support among respondents. Only companies whose products were unrelated to unhealthy foods and beverages were considered acceptable by a majority of respondents. The highest level of support was for health agencies (i.e., government health departments or non-profit health organisations), followed by banks and bottled water companies. Of note is that energy drink companies were significantly less likely than other soft drink companies to be considered appropriate sponsors of such events ($t=12.838$, $df=2004$, $p<0.001$).

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that despite the perva-

sive nature of community event sponsorships by organisations promoting unhealthy foods and beverages in Australia, many members of the public do not support this form of marketing activity. Almost half of the 2,005 respondents reported that the promotion of fast foods is inappropriate at community events and only a third considered it appropriate for fast food companies to sponsor events at which children are likely to be present. Around two-thirds agreed that promoting fast foods at community events sends contradictory messages to children and just a quarter of respondents considered it acceptable for free food to be distributed at events or for children to be rewarded for participation with food vouchers. While similar levels of dissatisfaction have been obtained for parents' attitudes to sponsorship of children's sport by food companies,²⁸ the results of the present study pertain to a broader range of events and hence indicate that support for sponsorship restrictions is likely to be similar across all events where children are likely to be present.

Current high rates of obesity at the population level are prompting governments to seek effective public policy mechanisms to address the problem.^{45,46} Increasing attention to the obesity epidemic in the mass media has sensitized the public to the issue and provided accessible information about the relevant contributing factors.⁴⁷ Over time, it is expected that a heightened appreciation of environmental contributors to the obesity epidemic will result in greater support for government policies that aim to modify these factors.⁴⁷ However, the lack of research to date relating to public support for restrictions on sponsorship of community events by food and beverage companies has prevented policy makers from identifying population segments that are most likely to support or resist such restrictions. The results of the present study indicate that support levels are likely to be highest among women,

Table 5. Sponsors considered appropriate for events where children are present[†]

	Health agencies (%)		Banks/finance companies (%)		Bottled water companies (%)		Soft drink companies (%)		Fast food companies (%)		Energy drink companies (%)	
Total	97		90		88		44		37		30	
Gender												
Male	97	$x^2=1.276$	89	$x^2=3.794$	88	$x^2=0.167$	51	$x^2=37.285$	39	$x^2=3.612$	38	$x^2=62.230$
Female	98	$p=0.259$	91	$p=0.051$	89	$p=0.683$	37	$p=0.001$	35	$p=0.057$	22	$p=0.001$
Age (years)												
16-29	97	$x^2=4.126$	87	$x^2=11.185$	93	$x^2=33.879$	51	$x^2=18.415$	39	$x^2=3.831$	42	$x^2=65.085$
30-49	98	$p=0.127$	92	$p=0.004$	89	$p=0.001$	43	$p=0.001$	37	$p=0.147$	29	$p=0.001$
50-69	96		89		82		39		34		20	
Parental status												
Child < 15	96	$x^2=11.769$	89	$x^2=0.785$	87	$x^2=7.354$	45	$x^2=1.803$	35	$x^2=4.557$	31	$x^2=2.238$
No child < 15	99	$p=0.001$	91	$p=0.376$	91	$p=0.007$	42	$p=0.179$	40	$p=0.033$	28	$p=0.135$
Education												
Degree	98	$x^2=4.010$	94	$x^2=16.438$	85	$x^2=12.073$	38	$x^2=12.704$	31	$x^2=14.647$	26	$x^2=7.193$
No degree	97	$p=0.045$	88	$p=0.001$	90	$p=0.001$	47	$p=0.001$	40	$p=0.001$	32	$p=0.007$
Hazardous alcohol consumption												
No	97	$x^2=0.000$	91	$x^2=1.339$	88	$x^2=0.326$	40	$x^2=9.698$	45	$x^2=3.294$	27	$x^2=7.913$
Yes	97	$p=0.997$	89	$p=0.247$	89	$p=0.568$	47	$p=0.002$	39	$p=0.070$	33	$p=0.005$
Fast food consumed in previous week												
No	97	$x^2=1.567$	91	$x^2=3.064$	85	$x^2=20.978$	37	$x^2=44.981$	33	$x^2=18.710$	25	$x^2=26.476$
Yes	98	$p=0.211$	89	$p=0.080$	92	$p=0.001$	52	$p=0.001$	42	$p=0.001$	36	$p=0.001$
Smoker												
No	98	$x^2=2.746$	90	$x^2=2.088$	88	$x^2=0.303$	42	$x^2=13.313$	35	$x^2=8.837$	29	$x^2=7.355$
Yes	96	$p=0.098$	88	$p=0.148$	89	$p=0.582$	53	$p=0.001$	44	$p=0.003$	36	$p=0.007$

[†] Response options: appropriate, inappropriate

those holding a university qualification, non-smokers, those in higher age brackets, and those who are less frequent consumers of fast food and alcohol. The results for gender and age are consistent with those found in studies assessing community support for tobacco control measures,^{38,48} and the results relating to tertiary qualifications are consistent with previous work examining concern with television junk food advertising.⁴⁹ While past research has noted parents' concerns about the marketing of unhealthy foods in schools,⁵⁰ of note is that parental status was the only respondent attribute that was not associated with variations in support for at least some of the sponsorship activities included in the survey. Concerns about the consequences of children's exposure to sponsorship activities thus appear to be common across the community, not just among parents.

In terms of alternative sources of funding for community events, the results indicate high levels of support for sponsorship by health-related organisations in particular, and also non-food-related organisations such as banks. Taxation may represent a further option, with close to half of the respondents reporting that they would support a 10% tax on soft drinks and fast food outlets. Similar to the establishment in Western Australia of a health promotion agency that funds a wide range of events and programs with the proceeds of taxes levied on tobacco products,⁵¹ proceeds from a tax on unhealthy foods and beverages could foreseeably be used to sponsor community events and thus reduce dependence on companies that promote unhealthy products.

While the present study measured explicit attitudes to various kinds of sponsorship activities, it is important to recognise that sponsorships can influence preferences at both conscious and subconscious levels.^{14,17} A growing body of literature demonstrates the importance of automatic associations when making purchase decisions.^{52,53} Of particular relevance to the issue of sponsorship is the finding that repeated exposure to product-related information and/or symbolism within a particular environment can cause automatic connections to be formed between the environment and the promoted product.⁵⁴ This has implications for the promotion of food products at community events where the positive attributes of the environment may be subconsciously transferred to the advertised foods, thereby generating a halo effect that imbues the foods with exaggerated meanings of acceptability, healthiness, and desirability.^{17,18} These associations are unlikely to be fully appreciated by members of the public, dampening resistance to such promotional activities.³⁵ The support for sponsorship activities found in the present study may be considerably reduced if the community is better informed about the potential for corporate sponsorships to influence individuals' food choices at a subconscious level.

A strength of this study is the very large sample and broad representation across the Western Australian community. However, a limitation is the confinement of data collection to one state of one country. Future research is needed to assess the extent to which support for greater restrictions on food marketers' sponsorship activities would be considered acceptable in other regional and national locations. Further work is also needed to test

various means of engendering support among those individuals who are least likely to be supportive of such restrictions. The tendency in the present study for support to be lowest among those exhibiting poor health behaviors (e.g., smoking and excessive alcohol consumption) suggests that this will be a difficult task due to potentially lower levels of health literacy among members of this group.

AUTHOR DISCLOSURES

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Original Article

Public support for restrictions on fast food company sponsorship of community events

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限制速食公司贊助公眾活動之公共支持

本研究調查民眾對速食公司贊助公眾活動之態度。目的是為了降低兒童肥胖，告知未來應盡力對這些商業活動給予更大限制。儘管過去的研究多著重在體育活動贊助方面，本篇研究則包含所有公眾活動，並評量對速食公司的一般贊助及特定贊助面向之公共支持，例如取得活動命名權、在活動場所廣告及以食物或兌換券免費分送給兒童。研究對象來自一個大型且多樣化的西澳成人樣本，共 2005 位。利用電訪調查對於贊助活動之公眾態度。幾乎一半以上的回應者認為在公眾活動中促銷速食食品是不合適的；只有三分之一的人認為有兒童在場的活動，這樣的促銷是恰當的。大約三分之二的人同意在這類活動中促銷速食食品會帶給兒童負面的訊息；且只有四分之一的回應者可以接受，在活動中分送免費的速食食品或給兒童兌換券做為參與活動的獎勵。結果顯示，限制促銷不健康食物之團體對公眾活動的贊助，藉以減少兒童肥胖的用心，可被大部分的群眾所支持。

關鍵字：態度、社區、兒童、食品公司、贊助