

Title: Reclaiming Communication as a Right in the Fight for Food Justice

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Sub-Theme: Inclusion and Equity:
Communication as a Right, Not a Resource

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ABOUT US

Community Media Trust (CMT) is a South African not-for-profit media and communication organisation specialising in human rights and social impact storytelling, with a strong focus on public health and behaviour change communication.

CMT has over 25 years of experience in developing and implementing communication campaigns and multimedia content that drives awareness, shifts behaviours, and supports policy and social change.

Our approach combines:

- Social-behaviour change communication (SBCC)
- Human-centred design
- Participatory storytelling methodologies

BACKGROUND

- Big Food corporations exploit regulatory gaps, exposing low-income households to health inequalities.
- Child-centred advertising heavily persuades the consumption of unhealthy products, creating demand and patterns of poor nutrition.
- Inclusive communication can help shift narratives toward healthier and fairer food systems.



COMMUNITY
MEDIA
TRUST

INFORM + INSPIRE

OBJECTIVE

The *Big Food Is Not Telling Us the Whole Truth* was inspired by the acclaimed BBC documentary *Irresistible: Why We Can't Stop Eating* by Dr Chris van Tulleken.

The campaign aimed to:

- Expose the hidden strategies Big Food uses to influence consumer choices.
- Centre community voices, especially those of youth and caregivers, in shaping narratives about food and health.
- Provide accessible, evidence-based content that demystifies the link between marketing and unhealthy diets.
- Create public dialogue that supports advocacy for healthier food environments and stronger policy regulation.

BIG FOOD EXPOSED RESULTS

The mass-media campaign for Big Food Exposed combined TV, radio, and print with paid digital, social media, PR, and a media event.



Target Audience

- Government, policy makers, activists, and key decision makers in the public and private sector
- Top-end influential consumers



Radio

- National and Regional Stations
- 639 spots on 5 stations
- Reach - 35,090,000



Channels

- 2873 spots on National TV Stations and DSTV
- Reach - 42,555,000



Digital Campaign Performance

- Impressions - 30,553,932
- Reach - 6,896,459
- Engagement - 3,303,600
- Views - 2,076,519

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Data was collected after the broadcast of nationwide mass media campaigns to discuss the harms of unhealthy packaged food and sugary drinks, and to promote various policy interventions that can curb consumption.

Report: Research Memo of Public Perceptions of Ultra-Processed Products, Industry Practices, and Support for Policy Measures in South Africa.



KEY INSIGHTS

Attitudes toward food and beverage companies, including perceptions of industry interference

- Many people still believe that companies target vulnerable groups, agreeing that children are specifically targeted.
- There is a strong perception that companies can be misleading and exaggerate or misrepresent the health benefits of products.

Shifts in public support for government policies and actions

- Support for improving children's access to healthy food remains strong, showing that people value practical solutions.
- The support of warning labels on food packaging remains steadfast, reflecting continued public support for policies that help tackle obesity and protect children.



DISCUSSION

- Reclaiming communication as a fundamental right is central to advancing food justice. Food justice is not only about access to healthy, affordable food, but also the right to truthful communication.
- Inclusive communication is a powerful tool to challenge misleading narratives, empowering communities, and shifting food systems toward health, fairness, and justice.

THANK YOU!