# Food Marketing and Selling Healthy Lifestyles with Science

Transhistorical Perspectives

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# Introduction

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### Introduction

For food and drink manufacturers today, marketing products with health and well-being associations are of vital importance. For such marketing, references to science and technological development—whether through choices of language, image, colour or typography—play a crucial role in making food appear as healthy and providing well-being for consumers. But how novel are these practices? Perhaps not as novel as we might think.

The practice of selling food with scientific rationality, in fact, has a long history dating back to the mid-nineteenth century. This was a time when food production became industrialised, the field of modern nutrition science was established and scientific discoveries and inventions were occurring at a rapid rate (Scrinis, 2013). It was also a period marked by the expansion of mass-mediated communication, which facilitated more systematic and targeted marketing (Cross and Proctor, 2014). Together, these factors transformed the food advertising industry, inaugurating a new way of seeing things and fashioning a mythology of consumerism that set a precedent for the consumer economy in which we now live (O'Hagan, 2021a).

The introduction of scientific discourse into food marketing was innovative and created an artificial demand for products on the basis that trusting consumers thought that they would improve their lives (Loeb, 1994). By drawing upon scientific, medical and nutritional knowledge, manufacturers constructed authority and credibility, while also tapping into middle-class anxieties around health, morality and fitness, convincing consumers that certain products—and later, nutrients—were essential to the modern, "healthy" way of living. Technical descriptions, scientific buzzwords and testimonials from doctors and scientists were replete in food advertisements, along with infographics, diagrams, geometric shapes and photographs—all of which functioned to convey the "health-giving" properties of food products. Brands also continuously reshaped and remarketed their products in response to emerging and changing understandings of science, medicine and nutrition so as to remain popular and

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relevant to consumers. However, at the same time, these products were shrouded with an air of mystique as their complexities were not readily understood by consumers, thus turning them into both mirrors and instruments of social ideas (O'Hagan, 2020).

While nutritional advice has evolved over the past 150 years, science still remains a central aspect of food and drink marketing. Moreover, despite stringent regulations now in place to combat false advertising, there are still loopholes that can be exploited, particularly when it comes to semiotics (e.g. the use of colour, typography, framing and composition). This can create "spaces of confusion" (Sprackley, 2020:57) for consumers upon which marketers capitalise, generating panic around what to consume and even creating new needs as consumers get caught on a "nutrient treadmill" (Scrinis, 2013:43) and believe that certain products will change their lives. To better understand the ideological patterns and discourses that govern contemporary food marketing, it is instructive to examine the historical circumstances in which the intersection of scientific, nutritional, medical, commercial and social interests first emerged.

With this in mind, *Food Marketing and Selling Healthy Lifestyles with Science: Transhistorical Perspectives* sets out to historicise our understanding of contemporary trends by studying the long relationship between science, food and drink marketing and the promotion of healthy lifestyles. Specifically, it aims to bring together qualitatively oriented contemporary and historical research, considering how scientific discourse and ideas about health and nutrition are channelled through visual and material culture (i.e. advertisements, food packaging and social media). In doing so, it seeks to foster a cross-disciplinary and cross-temporal dialogue, uncovering links between past and present ways that manufacturers have capitalised upon scientific innovations to create new products or rebrand existing products and employ science to make claims about health and nutrition. Its objective is to demonstrate the continuity of science in food and drink marketing—even if fundamental ideas about nutrition have evolved over time—showcasing how many of the marketing strategies employed today can, in fact, be traced to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Given this ambition to historicise the understanding of contemporary food marketing trends, we approach the topic from a *transhistorical* perspective.

## Transhistoricising Food Marketing

Our drive to put together this edited volume goes hand in hand with the growing turn in Media and Communication Studies towards transhistorical research and the realisation that it could make a much-needed contribution to Critical Food Studies, specifically in the context of food marketing. The concept of "transhistorical" was popularised by the groundbreaking book *Message and Medium* (2020) by Tagg and Evans, which outlined exactly what transhistorical research entails and its importance for exploring communication.[1] Tagg and

Evans (2020:3) argue that looking at texts *transhistorically* rather than just *historically* enables communicative practices to be explored not only as:

> lived experiences grounded in historical contexts, but also to identify and explain those elements of human behaviour that transcend historical boundaries and, therefore, to look beyond particular developments in communication technologies to understand the enduring motivations, stances, relationships and identity performances that drive human communication

*Message and Medium* boldly attempted to bring together scholars from a range of disciplines (i.e. Media and Communication Studies, Sociolinguistics, Sociology, Cultural Studies and Social History), yet united in their belief that studies of communicative practices and technologies must provide "an interrogation of earlier practices and phenomena against which claims about novelty can be made" (2020:3).

Fundamentally, transhistorical research seeks to identify antecedents in the communicative histories of individuals and communities that shape a text's creation (Tagg and Evans, 2020). By "unpick[ing] the complex and multiple relationships between message and medium" (Tagg and Evans, 2020:1), it aims to place seemingly novel contemporary communicative practices in a wider history of technologically mediated change. In doing so, it reveals similarities in the forms and functions of texts, while also demonstrating that their creation is guided by different social, cultural, historical and ideological values and bounded by the potentials, norms and traditions of the period in which they were created. It, thus, demonstrates how the fundamentals of human communication endure across time and space, despite the evolution of technologies that shape their message.

Essential to transhistorical research are considerations of *affordance*, *provenance* and *power* (van Leeuwen, 2005). In this context, affordance can be understood as the qualities or properties of a text that define its possible use, provenance describes a text's materiality and what it has been repeatedly used to mean and do and power entails how the meaning potentials of a text can be framed by hierarchical relations and serve ideological interests. Delving further into these three concepts, Adami (2020) outlines three questions that transhistorical research broadly asks when approaching a text. These are questions directing the analyses conducted in the contributions to this volume and can be summarised as follows:

1. Affordance: How did materiality, social availability and individual creativity afford (or constrain) the text?
2. Provenance: What meaning potentials did the text have and how have these meanings changed (or stayed the same) across space and time?
3. Power: Who produced and engaged with this text, how is this similar (or different) to now and how do these changes affect present understanding of the past?

Another key part of transhistorical research is "remediation" (Bolter and Grusin, 2000), understood as the way that texts can repurpose and translate existing technologies in an *incremental* instead of a *transformational* way, which is deeply embedded in changing historical and cultural contexts. Remediation, therefore, allows communication to be understood as part of a "wider integrated communicative environment" (Tagg and Evans, 2020:6) that responds to changing communicative practices and technologies. A recognition of comparison and continuity is also essential in transhistorical research. In other words, transhistorical research is not simply about reading backwards to a finite point; rather, it concerns how a text builds upon historical communicative practices, as well as how these historical communicative practices may have grounded themselves in earlier historical conventions of meaning making.

Given its interdisciplinarity, there is no one set way to approach transhistorical research. As Tagg and Evans' book shows, it can draw upon a variety of methodological and theoretical perspectives, from pragmatics, rhetoric and social semiotics to paratext theory, corpus analysis and sociocultural theory. Equally, it can be conducted directly through comparative or contrastive analysis by contrasting the past with the present or indirectly by applying a concept from one time period to another. In all cases, however, transhistorical studies share a deep awareness of the wider historical trajectory in which texts occur and the importance of assessing (dis)continuities between contemporary and historical modes of communication. In line with this mindset, the current edited volume brings together contributors from a variety of disciplines, such as Media and Communication Studies, Critical Food Studies, Linguistics, History and Sociology. Likewise, the contributors draw upon direct and indirect forms of analysis, tracing the roots of "contemporary" food trends and buzzwords (e.g. Chapter 7 on coffee substitutes; Chapter 9 on ghee and Chapters 10 and 11 on "pure") and exploring the evolution of the same product over time (e.g. Chapter 2 on dairy products and plant-based alternatives; Chapter 4 on muesli and Chapter 6 on Ribena).

To date, most transhistorical research has been concerned with contemporary social media practices and their resemblance to earlier forms of communication (e.g. Golden, 2010; O'Hagan and Spilioti, 2021; Gillen, 2023) or the development and affordances of communication technologies (e.g. Fischer, 1994; Herring, 2013; O'Hagan and Serafinelli, 2022). Our volume, thus, develops this line of research by applying it to a new field of study—food marketing—thereby encouraging the identification of the (dis)similarities in past and present articulations of health and science and how "new" media always builds upon pre-existing media ecologies.

There have been innumerable studies centred on the use of science in historical (e.g. Qvarsell and Torell, 2005; Smith, 2008; Lonier, 2010; Scheire, 2015; Emery, 2017; Steinitz, 2017; Pohl-Valero, 2020; Nelson et al., 2020; Cesiri, 2022) or contemporary food advertisements (e.g. Koteyko, 2009; Prell et al., 2011; Frye and Bruner, 2012; Jovanovic, 2013; Andersson, 2019; Chen and Eriksson, 2019a, 2019b, 2022; Ledin and Machin, 2020a; MacGregor et al.,

2021). However, there have been relatively few studies that focus on the *trans*historical, using history as a lens through which to understand contemporary food marketing and centred particularly on the use of linguistic and other semiotic choices (e.g. image, colour, typography, layout, composition).

Our work as part of the FoodKom Research Network—established in 2015 at Örebro University (Sweden)—has been chiefly concerned with this emerging area of study. Such research has explored the historical origins of many contemporary food trends, including protein (O'Hagan, 2021b), functional drinks (O'Hagan, 2023a) and cannabidiol food products (Runefelt and O'Hagan, forthcoming). It has also outlined the ongoing transformation of late-nineteenth-century buzzwords, such as "pure" (e.g. O'Hagan, 2020) and uncovered forgotten fads, such as radium-infused products (e.g. Eriksson and O'Hagan, 2021).

Independently, similar transhistorical work has also been carried out at the University of Lille (France), led by Simona De Iulio. Focusing on food advertisements, De Iulio has explored the discursive strategies used to construct fun (2010), represent risk (2013) and signal trustworthiness (2019). More recently, De Iulio and Kovacs (2022) have investigated "eating knowledge" from a transhistorical perspective in a comprehensive edited volume that explores "the strategies and logics underlying food knowledge circulation and mediatisation" (2). Other scholars with a growing interest in transhistorical approaches to the study of food marketing include Ruth Gamble and Emma Robertson (2023), Michal Salamonik (2023) and Beth M. Forrest (2023), who presented early research findings on the evolution of rice, cannabis food products and Spanish cuisine, respectively, at the Third Conference on Food and Communication held at Örebro University in September 2023.

*Food Marketing and Selling Healthy Lifestyles with Science* takes further the arguments of Tagg and Evans (2020) and builds upon the growing body of work that explores food marketing transhistorically, offering the first concentrated volume on the topic. Bringing together cutting-edge research by emerging and established scholars in the field, it specifically seeks to answer the following overarching questions:

- How do food and drink manufacturers capitalise upon scientific innovations to create new products or rebrand existing products?
- How is science employed to make claims about health and well-being and how are these claims manifested linguistically and semiotically?
- How are products made to appear as good and healthy choices?
- How have these marketing strategies changed or stayed the same across time?

By emphasising the multimodality of texts in particular (i.e. the use of more than one mode of communication in a text to create meaning), its chapters will provide crucial new insights into the significance of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a period of innovation in food and drink marketing and the long history of how it has shifted in response to developments in

scientific, medical and nutritional knowledge. They will also have practical implications for both consumers and policymakers, helping them to maintain a critical distance from their current experiences of marketing in order to reflect on the veracity of the scientific claims that they encounter in their everyday lives and the effectiveness of regulations in offering protection from false marketing.

## Marketing, Multimodality and Health

A significant question to pose at this point is why conduct research on marketing? With its obvious goal of selling a product, marketing might come across as a trivial phenomenon to study from a communicative perspective. However, even though its goal is evident in the way that messages are conveyed, marketing offers a good entry point to explore culture and everyday lives, both contemporary and historical. Marketing reflects contemporary ideas, norms and values, with marketers sensitive to ongoing trends and to what can make consumer products desirable (Clampin, 2014). Marketers are also attentive to people's everyday lives and, through idealised, recontextualised social practices, they can relate to consumers' aspirations and expectations, but also their fears and worries (Schudson, 2000).

While marketing can be artistic, creative, emotional and funny, as Jaworska (2020) warns, it can also be manipulative. It is this manipulative function that requires marketing to be critically investigated (cf. Saren et al., 2007; Tadajewski and Brownlie, 2008; Tadajewski et al., 2018). Manipulation is a form of asymmetrical interaction in which the advertiser attempts to alter the (potential) consumer's attitude or behaviour by convincing them to purchase a particular product. However, while the advertiser is likely to benefit from this purchase, it is not always certain that the consumer will reap such benefits. For this reason, Cook (1992) argues that advertisements are a "parasitic" form of discourse, a type of exploitation and deception that taps into consumer anxieties and convinces them to spend money on products that they do not necessarily need.

These concerns are particularly relevant to food marketing because it:

> creates the conditions for nutrition confusion, a dependence on nutrition experts, a susceptibility to food marketing claims, and a general sense of anxiety about what to eat. It contributes to the creation of new needs and to the idea that people are "in need" – in need of nutrition information, dietary advice, and nutritionally engineered foods.
>
> (Scrinis, 2013:43)

While some consumers may feel empowered or critically informed by such information, others suffer from an information overload, which can disturb them and force them to buy products that they do not really understand or need. Writing in 1899 about food, Stead (1899) claimed that no other form of marketing had such opportunities of "penetrating into the very sanctum

sanctorum of the consumer." Over 120 years on, it is clear that food marketing is fully immersed in the homes of today's consumers and is the primary means through which they access nutritional information (Scrinis, 2013). The danger of this is that consumers experience products as "wholes" in terms of "materiality, a physical presence and a design" (Ledin and Machin, 2018:3), which can make it challenging to separate out fact from fiction, product truths from advertising claims. Foods are increasingly performative devices used by companies to signal certain ideologies. Thus, it is evident that they can never be understood solely in terms of nutritional value and instead must be viewed within the notions of power, control and the reproduction of domination (Fairclough, 1995).

For these reasons, it is important to understand communication from a multimodal perspective (cf. Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, 2001; Kress, 2010), which is often neglected in historical food marketing research. Although the multimodal analyses that make up the chapters in this volume vary in detail, they all stress the importance of understanding the visual design of marketing. The multimodal perspective on communication is informed by the communications theory of social semiotics (cf. Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, 2001; Kress, 2010; Ledin and Machin, 2018, 2020b), which focuses on how communicative artefacts create meaning through the way they are designed. Design is, as Kress (2010:23) puts it, "prospective," that is, it is "a means of projecting an individual's interest into their world with the intent of effect in the future." This perspective, thus, emphasises the urge to consider the visual design of marketing and, in our case, to explore how the visual design works to relate to and associate products with science. It implies that we consider food and drink marketing as a result of a set of choices conducted to predict how potential consumers can connect to and come to think about certain products.

It is also relevant to ask why we have chosen to focus specifically on how science is used in food marketing to promote the health-bringing effects of food. We live in an era when governments and global health organisations are putting public health at the top of the agenda and are highly active in advancing food policies for healthier dietary habits (Slavin, 2015). Conscious of this push, food manufacturers are consequently increasingly marketing their products with a wide variety of health claims and well-being associations (Eriksson and Machin, 2020).

At the same time—and as pointed out by previous research in different areas—the notion of what healthy means in the context of food and drink consumption is far from unitary (de Ridder et al., 2017). Scholars within nutritional research can agree upon what *not* to consume too much of, such as sugar-sweetened drinks, trans-fat-based foods and salt, and most official dietary guidelines suggest a varied and balanced diet with a considerable amount of fruits and vegetables (de Ridder et al., 2017). Such advice, however, is provided in a context where the information regarding healthy diets is ubiquitous. Consumers access advice on healthy eating in newspaper articles reporting on research findings, in glossy magazines, in television shows and not least on

social media by (often) self-appointed experts. On top of this, there is the extensive marketing that people meet in various media, online, in public places and in supermarkets. This massive amount of information is often contradictory, full of commercial buzzwords and creates confusion regarding what is healthy or should not be consumed. This confusion, paired with the pressure on people to maintain a healthy lifestyle, is what the food industry can make use of and benefit from (Eriksson and Machin, 2020).

*Food Marketing and Selling Healthy Lifestyles with Science* will show that these issues are nothing new. For over 150 years, health has been a selling point for food and drinks, and science has been used to promote products as healthy and significant for a healthy lifestyle (O'Hagan, 2021a). Furthermore, the way that products are marketed can transform our "beliefs, values and practices around health, food traditions and culinary practices" (De Iulio and Kovacs, 2022:2), while knowledge circulation strategies and notions of health can shift over time according to sociocultural context and the circumstances of the era (Scrinis, 2013), as well as changing consumer understandings and the emergence of new needs.

## Cod Liver Oil: An Illustrative Example

To better illustrate these fundamental points that run throughout the edited volume, let us now briefly consider the history of cod liver oil. For centuries, cod liver oil was seen as an ill-tasting, unpleasant-looking and hard-to-sell product. However, the discovery of vitamin A (in 1913) and vitamin D (in 1922) suddenly offered scientific proof of its medicinal worth (Apple, 1996). The invention of new production techniques making the oil transparent and less smelly also improved the product's image, leading to a "cod liver oil boom" (O'Hagan and Eriksson, 2022) across many Western countries. Throughout the 1920s, newspaper articles emphasised the health benefits of cod liver oil and how it could support the maintenance of a healthy lifestyle, while extensive marketing took place across local and national newspapers, which was influential in constructing discourses of truth around the oil as a scientifically formulated healthy choice. Thus, cod liver oil producers, who had previously struggled to sell their product, were now able to trade with ease by stressing its proven health effects (O'Hagan and Eriksson, 2022). The market also saw a range of new cod liver oil products emerge, including chocolate, biscuits and cereal, all of which exploited the benefits of vitamins in their promotion (Apple, 1996). Across the board, advertisements claimed that cod liver oil did not just support general well-being, but also offered a cure for rickets, anaemia and bronchitis.

These cod liver oil advertisements often targeted women as those in charge of caring for the family and responsible for household purchases, using the strategy of "scientific motherhood" (cf. Apple, 1995), which positioned women as in need of expert intervention in order to look after their husbands and children properly. Marketing particularly tapped into women's fears about their children's health, with scaremongering headlines such as "Do you want

your children to be well?" or "Protect your children immediately!" The underlying message was that if women did not follow this marketed advice, they were irresponsible and risked placing their children in danger (O'Hagan and Eriksson, 2022).

However, this expertise was not just conveyed through language; advertisements also frequently used eye-catching images and illustrations, which subtly advised mothers on how to act to ensure the future health of the population (cf. Loeb, 1994:55). We see this in a 1925 advertisement for Möllers Cod Liver Oil (Figure 00.1), which carries the headline "The child's growth is a key issue for all mothers." Despite its monochrome graphics, the advertisement has a rather advanced visual construction, organised in a way that highlights certain aspects. The heading—"The child's growth"—is in italics and bold, thus stressing the urge to care for the children, while the brand name—Peter Möllers Fiskleverolja—is placed in the centre of the text, its larger bold font giving it a very salient position. It, thus, appears to have a logical connection to the heading, linking the child's well-being to the product. Below the brand name, the text continues, with an indented, italicised line stating that "High vitamin content is guaranteed" and this is why cod liver oil brings "health and strength."

On the left is an illustration reflecting a "slice-of-life" (Nelson et al., 2020) scene of a mother measuring her child against a wall. The smiling child holds a little glass in their hand, connoting the intake of cod liver oil and its effect on

*Figure 00.1* 1925 Advertisement for Möllers Cod Liver Oil

Credit: *Svenska Dagbladet*, 25 January 1925, p. 1

their growth. The illustration signals happiness and health through the child's willingness to consume the cod liver oil without any effort from the mother. Furthermore, the mother's stylish outfit associates the product with what at the time appeared as a modern and middle-class lifestyle (O'Hagan and Eriksson, 2022). The illustration also taps into the connection in the public consciousness between health and morality, suggesting that protecting children's health is a moral duty, and to neglect this disharmonises with notions of what constitutes a good mother. Such links between health and morality—in line with the neoliberal self-care agenda—are still prominent in today's food and drink marketing (Andersson, 2019; Chen and Eriksson, 2022).

The discovery of vitamins was a breakthrough in nutritional research and the marketing of products, such as cod liver oil, transformed the way that we now conceive of food and nutrition. It, therefore, stands as a clear example of how the food industry has long exploited nutritional science discoveries for its own commercial gain. Even in today's highly regulated environment, similar strategies still occur and rules can even be circumvented in canny ways, as we shall see below.

## Towards a Semiotic Approach to Food Marketing Regulation

Many of the advertisements under investigation in this edited volume were produced at a time when food marketing was still largely unregulated or regulations were still in their infancy. Although the United Kingdom was pioneering in passing a general food safety law in 1860, it was not until 1944 that the Labelling of Food Order was enacted, followed by the 1968 Trade Descriptions Act. Equally, in the United States, the Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906 sought to clamp down on adulteration, while the Federal Trade Commission Act of 1914 outlawed unfair acts or practices that affect commerce. However, the first proper regulation on food packaging did not come until 1966 with the Fair Packaging and Labeling Act. In other European countries, such as Sweden, it took until 1971 for a similar act to be passed. Throughout the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century, advertisements could, thus, make sweeping claims regarding a product's health effects and packaging was not required to feature a nutrition information panel.

Today's food marketing is widely regulated in order to help consumers make healthy dietary choices. Within the context of the European Union (EU), for instance, *Regulation (EC) No 1924/2006* seeks "to ensure a high level of protection for consumers and to facilitate their choice" and stipulates the nutritional claims that can be used for marketing purposes. Furthermore, *Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011* regulates the information that food producers provide on food packaging, ensuring that there is no "misleading labelling" and that claims like "natural," "traditional" and "fresh" are clarified. From a health perspective, a key element of this EU regulation is the mandatory nutrition information panel, which must contain evidence-based nutritional information. *Commission*

*Regulation (EU) No 432/2012* provides a list of permitted health claims that can be made on foods, related to specific nutrients. In other countries relevant to the edited volume, similar regulations are in place, albeit to varying degrees (e.g. Food Safety and Standards Act 2006 in India; Food Safety Law in China; General Health Law on Advertising in Mexico; Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance/Trade Descriptions Ordinance in Hong Kong).

Nonetheless, a major weakness in these regulations is their overwhelming focus on the use of written language and the need for evidence-based factual claims in food marketing, thereby paying considerably less attention to how visual design can be used to imply what cannot be overtly claimed in the text. Layout and composition, for example, can subtly convey healthiness through such techniques as salience, framing and visual hierarchies, while specific colour choices and shapes can also make products appear scientifically approved (Chen and Eriksson, 2019b). Although the EU decided in late 2022 to resolve some of the issues in its regulations, the proposed changes are linked to the setting of "nutrient profiles" to restrict health claims around foods high in saturated fat, sugar or salt, as well as health claims around "botanicals," particularly in reference to food supplements (Collins, 2022). This continues to leave the door open for consumers to be misled by visuals and potentially face similar misleading health claims to advertisements from more than 100 years ago. This surprising link between past and present marketing strategies—despite regulation now in place to protect consumers—makes this topic one of major importance. Engaging more with historical *and* multimodal insights could help policymakers cast a more critical eye over the way that semiotic resources continue to be exploited by food marketers and, therefore, develop more robust regulations that truly safeguard consumers from deceptive marketing and unfair practices.

## Themes

The chapters in this volume were chosen to illustrate the wide range of work that is being carried out by scholars across the world and across different disciplines. Although they represent such fields as Media and Communication Studies, Critical Food Studies, Linguistics, History and Sociology, there are overlaps in their theoretical orientation and the ways they approach how science is used to promote food and drinks as healthy. The 13 contributions demonstrate how products were sold as scientific innovations, often with references to their nutritional content and by stressing their superiority over other traditional products. They also show that marketing strategies employed today, in fact, have their roots in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These strategies seem to be independent of national borders and continental belongings and are not restricted to specific groups of products. Many, thus, come across as general, globally present and recurrent throughout various historical eras.

One such strategy found across many chapters in the book is "scientific motherhood" (Apple, 1996), which implies that advertisements largely address women as the primary household shoppers and in charge of caring for the family. Through this strategy, food producers position women as incapable of looking after their children without expert advice and advise them to purchase certain products in order to maintain their health (O'Hagan, 2021a). Scientific motherhood remains an effective marketing technique today, using scientific rationale to tap into women's fears of being "good" mothers and convincing them to listen to experts so as to avoid putting their children in danger (cf. Foss, 2010; Orland, 2023; Davis et al., 2019; Merrigan, 2022). In the current book, we see examples of this strategy in Saurabh Mishra's analysis of how hydrogenated oil was marketed in the context of late- and post-colonial India (Chapter 9). It is also present in the marketing of Ribena blackcurrant in post-war Britain, as Daniel Ewers shows (Chapter 6), and in the marketing of powdered milk in 1920s China, as demonstrated by Lo Shuk Ying (Chapter 5). There are also some links to this strategy in advertisements for coffee substitutes in late nineteenth-/early twentieth-century Sweden, as Leif Runefelt indicates (Chapter 7).

Another key strategy identified throughout this book is the paradoxical blend of science with tradition and/or nature (O'Hagan, 2022). This strategy serves to demystify modern science and cutting-edge technology by associating it with nature and (sometimes ancient) traditions. It dates back to the early 1900s and was, for instance, prominent in the marketing of radium products, where it aimed to link the "mysterious" and "natural" powers of radium to modernity and a modern lifestyle (Santos, 2020; Eriksson and O'Hagan, 2021). In the context of food marketing, this strategy promotes products as both natural and as a result of part of technologically advanced processes, as both ancient and modern (Hobart and Maroney, 2019). In doing so, it lends a mythical aura to the product in question, tapping into the quasi-nostalgic discourse of nutritional primitivism, while also obscuring the advanced processing of ingredients (Loyer and Knight, 2018; Andersson, 2019; Andersson and Smith, 2021). We find this strategy in Jessica Loyer's analysis (Chapter 11) of the marketing of chia seed products in contemporary Australia, Amber Hinde's study (Chapter 10) of Allinson's bread in early twentieth-century Britain, Andreja Veznovik's exploration of the growing cultured meat industry (Chapter 13) and Iben Bredahl Jessen's (Chapter 2) examination of the marketing of dairy products and plant-based alternatives in Denmark over the past 90 years. It is also apparent in the aforementioned chapter by Ying on the promotion of milk powder in China.

A third theme that runs across many chapters in this book is hygiene and cleanliness, particularly in relation to food safety and health values. These concerns date back to the late nineteenth century and are linked to the industrialisation of food production and the need for authorities to clamp down on the sale of illegally adulterated foods. In the United Kingdom, following the passing of the 1875 Sale of Food and Drugs Act, the term "pure" became

particularly drawn upon by marketers to showcase their products as safe and, therefore, healthy options (O'Hagan, 2020). In a bid to show transparency, companies offered consumers "behind-the-scenes" views into their factories, with images of workers in white lab coats to signal safety and transparency (McClintock, 1995; Santos, 2020; O'Hagan, 2023b). Companies also employed representatives to travel around the country and demonstrate products in stores, such as Heinz's "girl in the white cap" (Domosh, 2003). Today, with more stringent regulations in place on food safety, the need to promote hygiene and cleanliness has become closely tied up with environmental and ethical concerns instead and the need to reduce one's carbon footprint and protect natural landscapes (Smith-Howard, 2017; Collinson, 2023). In the current volume, Lucy Jane Santos' study of the development of "electric restaurants" in early twentieth-century London addresses this theme (Chapter 12), as do the previously mentioned chapters by Vezovnik on cultured meat, Bredahl Jessen on dairy products and plant-based alternatives, Hinde on Allinson's bread and Runefelt on coffee substitutes.

The final recurring theme is that of healthism and the medicalisation of everyday life (Crawford, 1980, 2006). Healthism is an ideology that situates health problems as an individual responsibility, viewing health as something that one achieves through a self-care regime (Eriksson, 2022). In doing so, it turns health into a type of "aesthetic labour" (Elias et al., 2017), concerned with working on and perfecting bodily appearance. Food marketing plays a crucial role in reproducing healthism and has done so since the late nineteenth century and the growth of the Physical Culture Movement (O'Hagan, 2021b). Increased focus on bodily appearance as a sign of "good" health has also led to what Eriksson (2022) terms "fitnessism," whereby consumers are encouraged to exercise self-discipline and work on their bodies through the consumption of particular foods and commercialised fitness programmes to achieve a fit body—an outward sign of good and responsible citizenship (Bordo, 1993; Dworkin and Wachs, 2009; Monson et al., 2016). While fitnessism is particularly apparent today in modern makeover television shows and the social media accounts of influencers, like healthism, it has its roots in the late nineteenth century and the Physical Culture Movement. We see this particularly in Chapter 1 by Conor Heffernan who examines the medicalisation of food and how the language of science was used to promote new nutritional substances, extracts and diets in early twentieth-century Britain and Ireland. This theme is also present in Veronica Mak's (Chapter 8) study of adult formula milk products in contemporary China, and how the "vulnerable" bodies of elderly people are at the centre of marketing campaigns aimed at both staying and looking healthy. It is also a key aspect of Pilar Zazueta's (Chapter 3) exploration of ultra-processed food marketing in Mexico, and how different actors have adapted and recontextualised ideas about nutritional science and healthy eating to legitimise their interests in the public sphere and try to shape consumption. Chapter 4 by Angela Smith, which offers a comparison of the branding of muesli in the United Kingdom through a case study of Alpen and Troo

Granola+, also demonstrates how consumers are made individually responsible for the health of their bodies, as does the aforementioned chapter by Hinde on Allinson's bread.

In the volume's afterword by Caroline Tagg, a critical discussion of the above themes is brought together and responses are given to some of the key arguments and issues raised by contributors. Tagg focuses also on the importance of transhistorical approaches to the study of food marketing, particularly incorporating multimodality, and the novel insights that this can lead to.

Overall, it is hoped that this volume will offer innovative ideas and approaches to the study of the long relationship between science, food and drink marketing and the promotion of healthy lifestyles, thus fostering new dialogue on this underexplored yet important area of research and acting as a springboard for further—and much needed—studies from a transhistorical and multimodal perspective.

## Note

1 The publication of *Message and Medium* and its warm response by scholars led to the founding of the Digital Correspondence Community Interest Group in 2023, which explores the linguistic and material facets of correspondence across the centuries and how they create meaning. For more information, see https://digitalhumanities-uk-ie.org/community-interest-groups/digital-correspondence/

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