Mapping the digital food environment

The fast-changing pace of our digital environments has exacerbated some existing health-related challenges. This scoping literature review therefore aimed to define what a digital food environment is and understand what the consequences of the environment is on nutrition and health. The researchers explored the existing research on “food environments and digital technology.” It investigated the breadth of the research and explored the themes within the literature.

The review used the food environments conceptual framework that was developed by Turner et al and added a digital component to it. The framework situates a food environment as part of a ‘broader food system,’ and has an external and internal domain. The external domain included ‘food availability,’ ‘food prices,’ ‘food vendor and product properties’ and ‘food marketing and regulation.’ The internal domain included ‘food accessibility,’ ‘food affordability,’ ‘convenience (for preparing, cooking, and consuming food,’ ‘desirability- preferences, acceptability, tastes etc.’ These dimensions, alongside terms relating to digital technology, helped develop a search strategy.

The review found that no definition of the digital food environment exists in current literature. The goal was to map out the published academic literature on the digital food environment, and to ‘support the development of a definition and conceptual framework of the digital food environment.