

Market Strategies used by processed food manufacturers to increase and consolidate their power: a systematic review and document analysis

Unhealthy diets are a leading contributor to global disease, responsible for an estimated 11 million global deaths each year. For long, the public health community has been critical of powerful global food corporations that drive unhealthy consumption. Most public health research has looked at political strategies used by dominant food corporations to undermine public health, but less work has been undertaken on the use of market strategies and practices. To fill the research gap, this paper systematically reviews and integrates the market strategies and practices used by powerful processed food and beverage companies.

An initial database search returned 1115 results, reduced to 213 documents for final review. From this, 21 market strategies were identified. These were categorised into six specific strategic objectives specific to dominant processed food manufacturers:

1. Reduce intense competition with rivals of the same size, and maintain dominance over smaller rivals
2. Create market barriers to prevent entry from new competitors
3. Countering threat to the market and marketing to change consumption habits in favour of their products
4. Exercise power over the initial stages of the food supply chain eg. primary food processors
5. Exercise power over the last stages of the food supply chain eg. food retailers and distributors
6. Aggressive marketing strategies to consumers eg. particularly vulnerable consumers

The authors state that the categorisation framework can inform analysis of marketing strategies by powerful food companies. This can be used by public health organisations to understand and address how these companies undermine public health and dietary quality. The framework could also help identify ways to target marketing strategies through policy intervention. It concluded that the public health community should position itself as a competitive driver for policy reform for consumer welfare and public interest considerations.

Reference: Wood B, Williams O, Nagarajan V, Sacks G. Market strategies used by processed food manufacturers to increase and consolidate their power: a systematic review and document analysis. *Globalization and Health*. 2021;17(1). [doi:10.1186/s12992-021-00667-7](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12992-021-00667-7)