Snackable Stories: Exploring Food (Marketing) Narratives on Social Media

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Food content is ubiquitous on social media. Yet, despite its popularity, the narratives embedded within this content have received limited scholarly attention. This gap is striking, given the well-documented persuasive power of narratives and the demonstrated effectiveness of narrative approaches in food (marketing) communication. This study exploratorily examines food narratives circulating across ten social media platforms, analyzing the post formats through which they circulate, the types of senders who disseminate them, whether they refer to healthy or sustainable food, and the extent to which they are used for marketing and advertising. We employed a naturalistic convenience sampling approach in which research teams located in seven European countries documented food content encountered in their everyday social media environments on 12 separate days between August and November 2025. This process yielded a final sample of 759 posts, subsequently subjected to mixed-method content analysis. A typology of fourteen distinct social media food narratives was developed. Building on this overview, we outline implications for food advertising, marketing and communication, with a focus on healthy and sustainable eating.

Keywords: social media, narratives, food, content analysis, marketing