



Save the Children

DIGITAL MARKETING OF BREASTMILK SUBSTITUTES

How social media and influencer marketing undermine informed choice

WHAT IS ALREADY KNOWN:

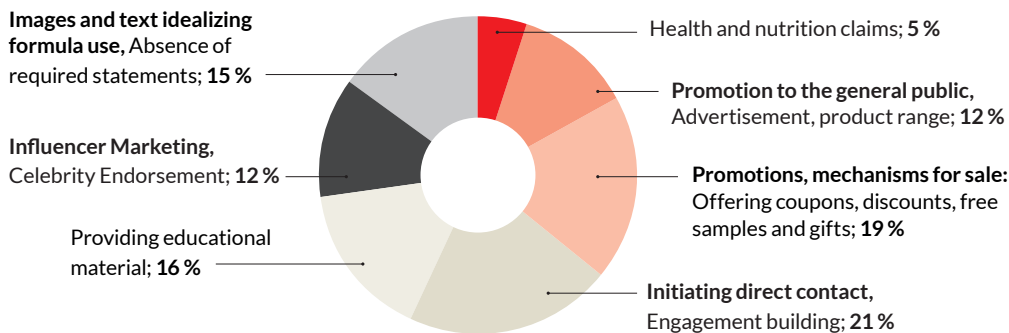
Breastfeeding is the best source of nutrition for infants, offering significant benefits for both infants and mothers. The use of infant formula has increased globally, partially due to powerful marketing by the formula industry.

WHAT THIS REPORT ADDS:

This report examines the latest social media marketing strategies used by the breastmilk substitute (BMS) industry, based on a review of 12 peer-reviewed research articles. These studies documented 5183 instances of digital marketing that violate the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes, illustrating how such practices undermine parents' informed choices.

To gain access to mothers and influence their decision-making, the formula industry capitalizes on the credibility and trust of health professionals and social media influencers, portraying their brands as promoting children's healthy development.

Chart describing the distribution of different BMS marketing strategies found in this review:



RESEARCH GAPS AND ADVANCEMENTS:

- This report identifies gaps in research on BMS social media marketing, highlighting the need for updated methods and AI-based monitoring tools. Examples like VIVID Technology showcase how to detect and analyse marketing violations more effectively.
- The report emphasizes studying emerging video marketing content on social media platforms to ensure comprehensive data collection on new BMS marketing strategies.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Drawing on the WHO 2023 Guidance on regulatory measures aimed at restricting digital marketing of breast-milk substitutes, the report calls for stricter national regulations on BMS social media marketing.
- It urges resource allocation for monitoring and enforcement, and international collaboration to update the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes at the 78th World Health Assembly in 2025.