



What can TikTok tell us about the food practices of the residents of tiny apartments?

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With continuing population growth and increased urbanisation, the prevalence of apartment living will also increase. The food practices and diet of apartment residents may differ to those in lower density, detached or semi-detached housing. Food practices may be impacted by physical constraints of apartment kitchens (size, storage, cooking facilities) and the influence of the surrounding community food environment, particularly in smaller apartments. High-rise apartment residents spend a larger proportion of their weekly household budget on eating foods prepared out of the home¹. This is concerning given meals prepared outside the home tend to be of lower diet quality² and are associated with higher body weight³. This study investigated how kitchens, residents' food practices and hypothesised barriers to healthy eating were portrayed on popular TikTok videos associated with hashtags denoting small apartments. Using the keyword 'microapartment', the top four most viewed hashtags relevant to the topic were identified: #studioapartment (190.5 million views), #smallapartment (152.5 million views), #tinyapartment (62 million views), and #microapartment/ #microapartments (4.9 million views combined). The most liked videos (n = 50) from each of these four hashtags and #apartment (as a comparator) were selected for investigation. Using a REDCap survey, two researchers independently coded a random sample of 15 videos, with comparison and discussion to tighten codebook definitions and reduce ambiguity. Subsequently over half of all videos were coded by at least two researchers, achieving acceptable inter-rater reliability (Cohen's kappa >0.8). Each video was coded for engagement characteristics, user profile, and characteristics of individuals appearing. Further coding included apartment size, kitchen features displayed or mentioned, and food practices (grocery shopping, cooking at home, and eating foods prepared out of the home). Videos were categorised as having positive sentiment if they depicted the apartment in an explicitly positive way, including promoting or encouraging an aspect of apartment living or indicating support for a behaviour. Conversely, videos were coded as being of negative sentiment where they depicted a clear negative position on an aspect of apartment living. Else, the video was coded as neutral sentiment. The majority of videos (87%) portrayed apartment living with a positive or neutral sentiment; with only 2% of videos portraying kitchen size or function negatively. The expected physical constraints of small apartment kitchens were not evident in the videos, nor were interactions with the food environment surrounding the apartment. Indeed, in the small number of videos portraying the food practices of cooking, shopping and eating, the videos highlighted the ability to undertake these practices despite limitations of size and facilities. As the food practices of residents of small apartments are not well researched, it is not known whether their portrayal on TikTok may indeed reflect reality, or may be a glamorisation.

Keywords: apartment; TikTok; kitchen; food practices

Ethics Declaration

Yes

Financial Support

This research received no external funding.

References

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