

BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

7 Minute English

Should fast food sponsor sport?

Neil

Hello. This is 7 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Neil.

Sam

And I'm Sam.

Neil

The Olympic Games happen every four years and the most recent games were held in Tokyo this summer. Did you watch them, Sam?

Sam

Yes, I saw British swimmer, Adam Peaty, win a gold medal and - my personal favourite - 13-year-old, Sky Brown, competing in an exciting sport which was added to the Olympics this year: skateboarding.

Neil

Olympic athletes inspire people around the world to take on new challenges, eat healthily and get fit. So it seems strange that some of the companies that sponsor – or pay for, the Olympic Games also sell food and drink which is linked to obesity, heart disease and diabetes.

Sam

Tobacco advertising was banned from international sport in 2000 because of the harmful effects of smoking. But other companies selling less-than-healthy products still sponsor big sporting events.

Neil

These could be sugary drink companies, or others who sell fast food – hot food, like hamburgers, that is quick to cook and serve but which is often unhealthy.

Sam

In this programme we'll be asking whether it's right for companies selling unhealthy products to sponsor sporting events.

Neil

But first it's time for my quiz question, Sam. McDonalds had a long history with

the Olympic Games until the company ended the partnership ahead of the 2024 games in Paris. But why did McDonalds choose to quit? Was it because:

- a) they wanted to change the name of French fries to McFries?
- b) they didn't want to call their hamburger, 'Le Big Mac'? or,
- c) they wanted to be the only company selling cheese for cheeseburgers?

Sam

Hmm, I think maybe it's a) because they wanted to call French fries, McFries.

Neil

OK, Sam, we'll find out the answer later in the programme.

Sam

Someone who is worried about the relationship between fast food and sport is Dr Sandro Demaio. He worked for the World Health Organisation specialising in obesity before starting his own public health agency in Australia.

Neil

Here is Dr Demaio speaking with BBC World Service programme, The Food Chain, about the problem with unhealthy brands and food products:

Dr Sandro Demaio

By having their brand alongside a young person's favourite sporting hero, on the chest of their national team, it does two things. First of all, it creates brand attachment, so if you're a young child you built the connection in your mind that basically fast food equals success. At the same time it also gives a health halo to that brand. Then you start to think in your mind, even subconsciously, that it can't be that bad...

Sam

You've probably heard of 'brand loyalty', where people have a favourite brand they always buy, but Dr Demaio is concerned about brand attachment.

Neil

Brand attachment is the emotional connection between humans and brands. It goes deeper than loyalty so that people mentally connect a particular company with feelings of winning, being healthy and success.

Sam

The problem comes when these feelings attach to companies that aren't healthy at all. Dr Demaio says this creates a health halo – the belief that something is good, like an angel's halo, even though there is little evidence to support this.

Neil

On the other hand, fast food and fizzy drink companies invest large amounts of money in sport, over £,0 billion dollars since the 2016 Rio Olympics, much of it supporting athletes around the world.

Sam

Yes, with travel, training and equipment the cost of being an Olympic athlete can be huge. And depending on your country and your sport, there may be little financial help.

Neil

Many athletes are desperate for any sponsorship they can get - but does that make it right to promote unhealthy eating in return?

Sam

Not according to Dr Demaio, who thinks people should worry about the nutritional value of fast food, as he explained to BBC World Service's, The Food Chain:

Dr Sandro Demaio

When we think about foods and beverages of public health concern, we tend to start by talking about highly-processed foods, particularly ultra processed foods. These are foods that have been really broken down to their basic elements and then built up – they're more products really than foods – they're made in a laboratory not a kitchen.

Neil

Dr Demaio mentions unhealthy foods and beverages – another word for drinks.

Sam

He's concerned about the public health risk of ultra-processed food – foods containing extra ingredients like chemicals, colourings and sweeteners that you wouldn't add when cooking homemade food.

Neil

A potato, for example, is natural - minimally processed. Bake a potato and it becomes 'processed'. Make French fries and it's 'ultra-processed'.

Sam

And speaking of French fries, Neil, what was the answer to your quiz question?

Neil

Yes, I asked Sam the reason behind the decision McDonald's made not to sponsor the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Sam

I said it was, a) because they wanted to call French fries, McFries.

Neil

Which was... the wrong answer! In fact, McDonald's wanted to be only company allowed to advertise cheese so it could boost cheeseburger sales.

Sam

This didn't go down well with officials in France, a country with over a thousand different types of cheese! OK, let's recap the vocabulary from this programme starting with fast food – hot food that is quick to cook but may be unhealthy.

Neil

Companies that sponsor sports events, pay for them to happen.

Sam

Brand attachment is a psychological connection between someone and a brand.

Neil

A health halo is the perception that something is healthy for you, even if it's not.

Sam

Ultra-processed foods are foods containing added artificial ingredients like colourings and preservatives.

Neil

And a beverage is another word for a drink.

Sam

That's all from us, but if you'd like to find out more about the business, science and culture of food, why not download The Food Chain podcast! – it's updated weekly and available now.

Neil

Join us again soon for more topical discussion and vocabulary here at 7 Minute English. Bye for now!

Sam

Goodbye!

## **Vocabulary**

### **sponsor**

pay for an event or tournament in order to advertise a company or brand in return

### **fast food**

hot, often unhealthy, food such as hamburgers or pizza that is quick to cook and serve

### **brand attachment**

a deep emotional connection between humans and brands

### **health halo**

the perception that something is healthy for you even though there is little evidence to support this

### **ultra-processed food**

foods containing added artificial ingredients that you wouldn't add when cooking homemade food

### **beverage**

any type of drink