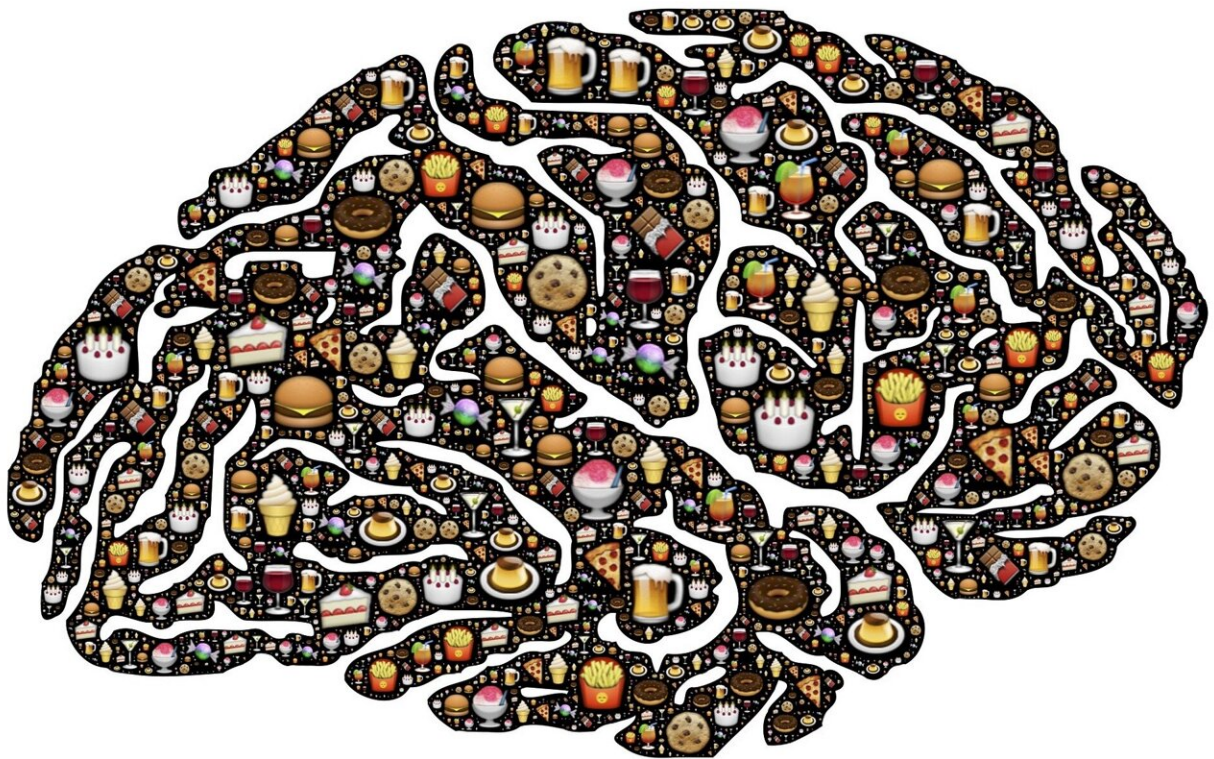


Study finds diet myths 'hidden' in social media

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A University of the Sunshine Coast researcher has called for social

media users to carefully evaluate any nutritional information shared through popular 'What I Eat in a Day' videos.

In a study published in the *Journal of Sociology*, UniSC digital sociologist Dr. Naomi Smith and Federation University sociology Ph.D. student Justine Topham found potentially dangerous health misinformation in the YouTube videos, such as repeatedly debunked myths about detoxing and cleansing.

Dr. Smith said data collected from 84 of the 'slice of life' diet videos across 59 accounts revealed nutritional commentary presented in ways that suggested expertise or scientific credibility through [personal experience](#).

"These types of 'wellness' videos also serve a broader role in public perceptions of health and [risk management](#), resulting in ongoing circulation of misinformation," she said.

"People may think health misinformation is easy to spot but this research shows it's quite difficult, particularly if you're seeking to look and feel your best and changing your diet is presented as a shortcut."

"What I Eat In A Day videos might be entertaining and seem commonsense or scientific, but they should not be taken as health advice."

Dr. Smith said the research provided insight into how easily misinformation spread in an online genre that mixed correct and incorrect information.

"Understanding how this occurs can help us teach better digital literacy skills, through which we can evaluate information online," she said.

In addition, the destabilizing environment of the rapidly changing COVID-19 pandemic had made the problem more apparent.

"YouTube was the focus of considerable effort by Google to moderate misinformation on the platform during the pandemic," she said.

"Google's policies define misinformation in relation to the 'serious risk of egregious harm'."

"However, this narrow scope allows 'softer' and more culturally normalized forms of misinformation (for example, detoxing) to continue to circulate on the platform."

More information: Justine Topham et al, One day of eating: Tracing misinformation in 'What I Eat In A Day' videos, *Journal of Sociology* (2023). [DOI: 10.1177/14407833231161369](https://doi.org/10.1177/14407833231161369)

Provided by University of the Sunshine Coast

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