Nutrition in a digital world: opportunities and risks


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The Role of Digital Technology in Addressing Food and Nutrition Issues

• Digital technology alone cannot solve global food and nutrition challenges.

• It is a valuable tool for transforming food systems and improving nutrition.

• Essential for designing and delivering food and nutrition solutions.

• Southeast Asia is a vibrant emerging market with over 400 million internet users and a booming digital economy.

• The internet penetration rate in Southeast Asia is as high as over 70 percent in all countries except for Laos, Myanmar, and Timor-Leste.

• Southeast Asia is home to many successful startups and is looking to expand its internet economy.
Digital technologies: Better nutrition outcomes

The potential of the digital world: food-system perspectives:

- Food production, transformation and distribution to digital food marketing and retail;
- Behavioral change and capacity-building, including through social media;
- Protection of vulnerable groups to issues of inequality and human rights;
- Generation, to processing and use of data.
Examples of innovative tools

Count me in
- E.g Vietnam
- good positioning
- safe feeding skills-building
- social development

PLUS
- award-winner
- school-meal programs
- Health and nutrition
- usage of local
- commodities

DALILI
- smartphone-based
- affordable, nutritious food
- 250 staple foods in
- local shops

CLICK
- monitors
- advertisements and marketing
- support and protect
- children’s rights
Examples of innovative tools

**Mbiotisho**
- “our health/nutrition”
- report their own and their children’s consumption and health status

**Food2Share**
- ↓ hunger and food insecurity and food waste.
- Food-insecure individuals with food establishments individuals willing to engage in helping those in need.

**Anganwadi Shiksha**
- interactive eLearning training platform
- self-paced learning content
As well as relevant insights

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can and should use digital technologies such as smart supply chains based on blockchain, digital microfinance and eLearning to make their operations more nutrition-sensitive.

The use of innovative AI tools is required to push population nutrition research and action beyond current boundaries. The potential of AI in the field of population nutrition science will continue to evolve apace, so we must be ready to harness its potential to garner more effective and equitable action with a view to healthier diets from sustainable food systems.
As well as relevant insights

It is common for dietary trends to appear in online discussions: social media often confusing the picture, contradicting evidence found a solid research E.g. microbiome and nutrition linkages: Interesting advances in microbiome research and its role for good nutrition, however, the social-media hype around the issue, which is not evidence-based, is confusing the picture. This is also the case for various other nutrition-related issues over the internet.

Rights holders should have mechanisms available to report receipt of goods or services to which they are entitled in order to hold duty bearers to account. India’s Aadhaar system, for example, could be adapted to report on the realization of the right to food.
Challenges and intrinsic risks associated

Overall risks

1. Increased inequality due to unequal access to digital technologies and digital literacy.

2. Cybersecurity breaches and, crucially, ethical and human rights concerns about data privacy and the ownership of health data, biometrics, consumer preference data, tracking, and other personal information.

3. Weak internet networks and outdated equipment, and a lack of policy infrastructure, such as regulatory and data-protection frameworks, disproportionately effecting low- and middle-income countries.

4. Methods and tools are not foolproof. The limitations of tools such as self-learnir algorithms need to be considered as AI technologies evolve.
As well as relevant insights

Nutrition-related risks

1. Knowledge gaps and varying degrees of digital literacy among beneficiaries, nutrition practitioners and policymakers only serve to deepen the digital divide.

2. Political, regulatory and budgetary support are often lacking, while inadequate infrastructure can damp the potential of digital technologies to improve nutrition and leave no one behind.
Challenges and intrinsic risks associated

Nutrition-related risks

3. Digital channels are increasingly being used to disseminate general, tailored and personalized nutrition messages in an effort to bring about behavioral change. While these channels facilitate greater, faster and cheaper audience reach, widely shared misinformation and disinformation on food and nutrition over the internet is a major concern – and particularly worrying when targeted at children and young people.

4. Digital technology does not replace the emotional support and reassurance of human interaction, which has a pivotal role to play in nutritional counselling.
Conclusion

Once nutrition has been identified as a priority, digital technologies can help transform food systems and design and delivery of nutrition measures

Information and data are being produced, shared, used and consumed at an ever-faster pace.

At the same time, the widening, inequality-fuelled digital divide and the impacts of automation on employment have become major development challenges.

The digital world potentially helps address malnutrition in all its forms, but also affects not just its underlying and immediate causes, but also its root causes.

We need to be fully aware to leverage benefits and mitigate risks.
For examples analysing benefits and risks:


with 4 episodes of the webinar series.

Thank You!

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