

**MONITORING AND  
RESTRICTING  
DIGITAL MARKETING**  
OF UNHEALTHY PRODUCTS  
TO CHILDREN AND  
ADOLESCENTS



Report based on the expert meeting on monitoring of digital marketing of unhealthy products to children and adolescents

Moscow, Russian Federation  
June 2018

# Digital marketing of foods to children

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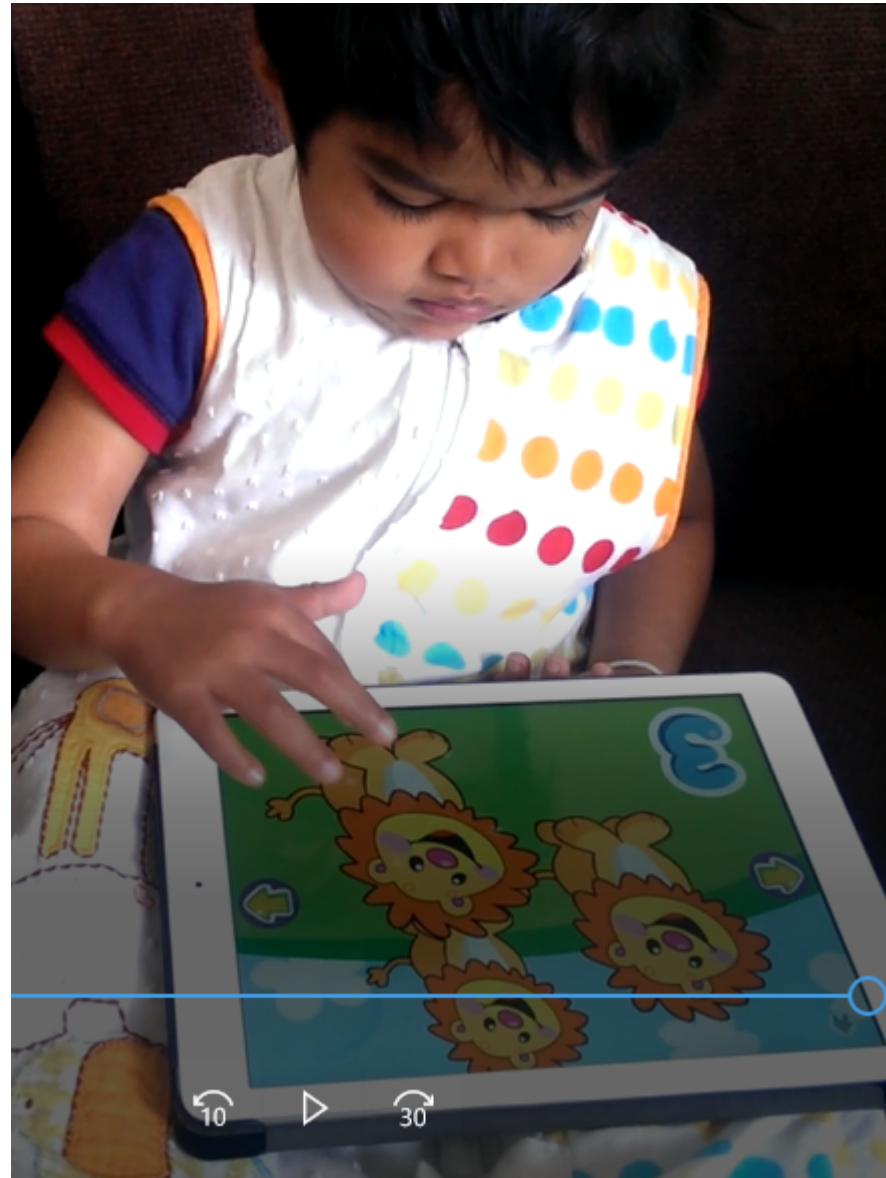
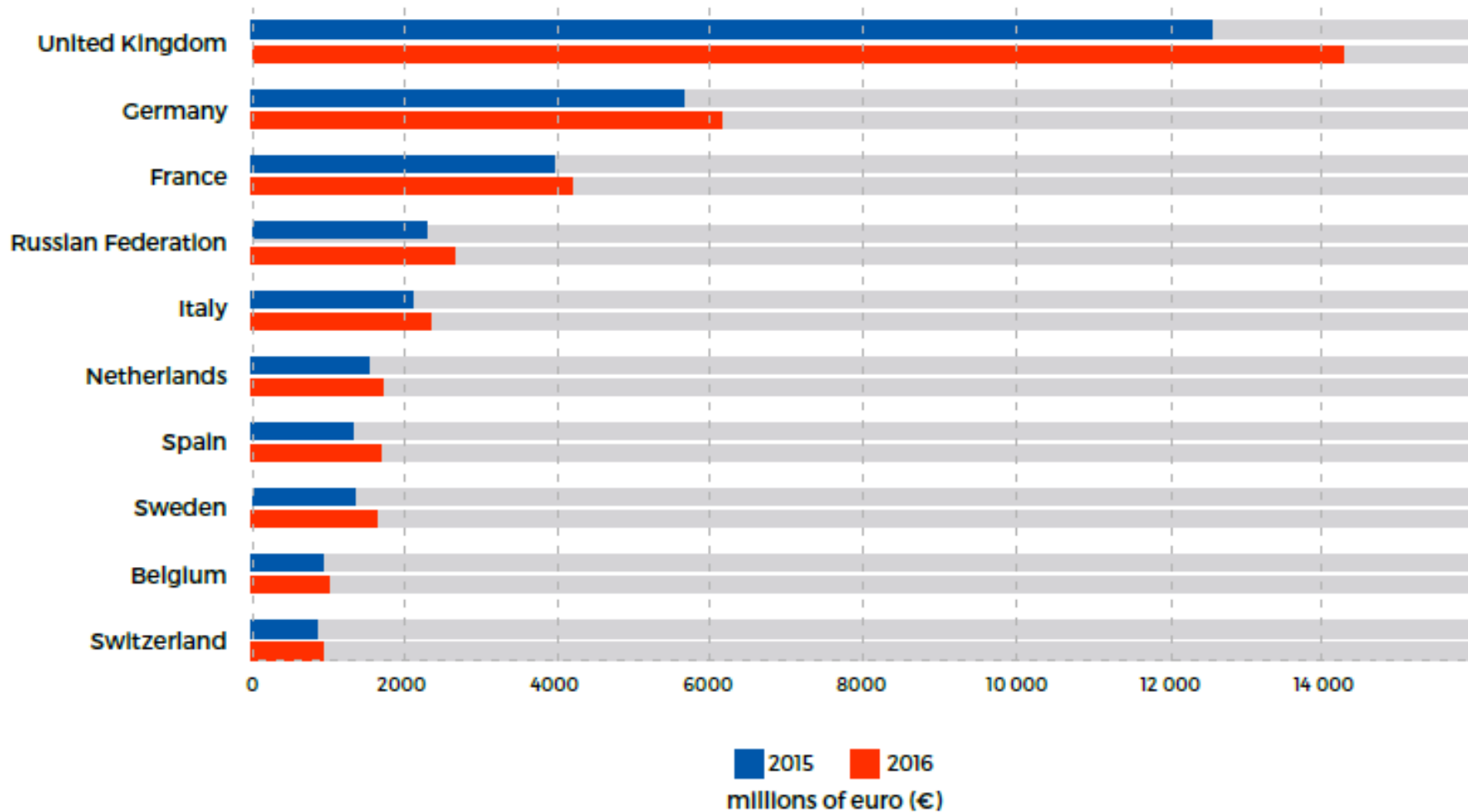




Fig. 2. Growth in digital advertising expenditure in EU markets, 2015–2016



Rapid growth in the digital advertising market

Source: House of Lords Select Committee on Communications<sup>28</sup>



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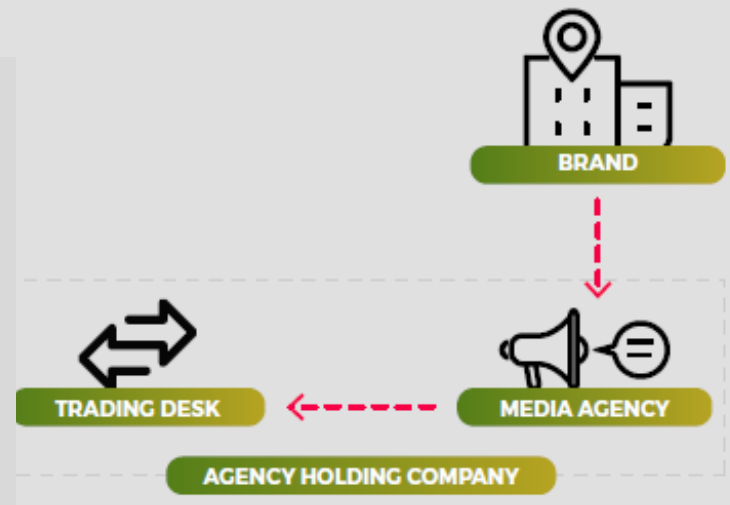
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# “programmatic” system of advertising

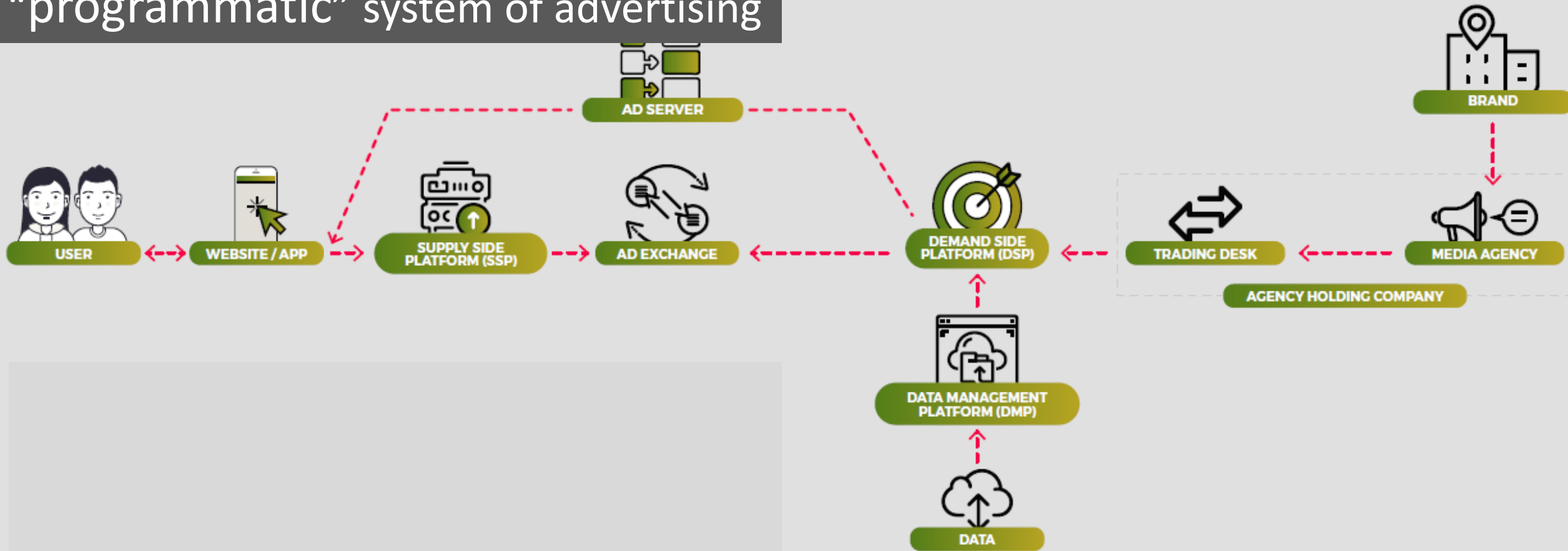


# “programmatic” system of advertising

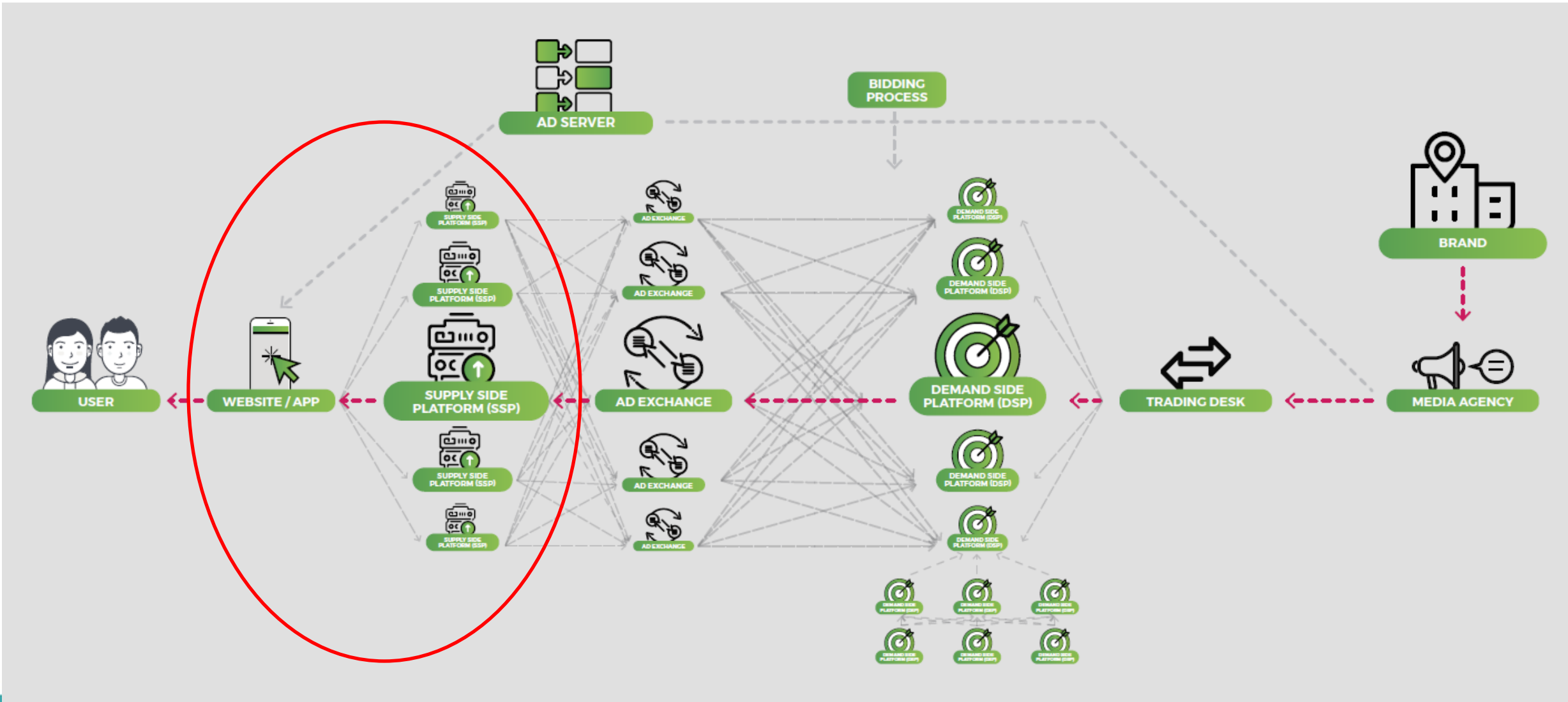




# “programmatic” system of advertising



# Complexity of advertisement ecosystem





**Voluntary regulation ?**

**The current ecosystem, would prevent companies making beneficial changes, even if they wanted**

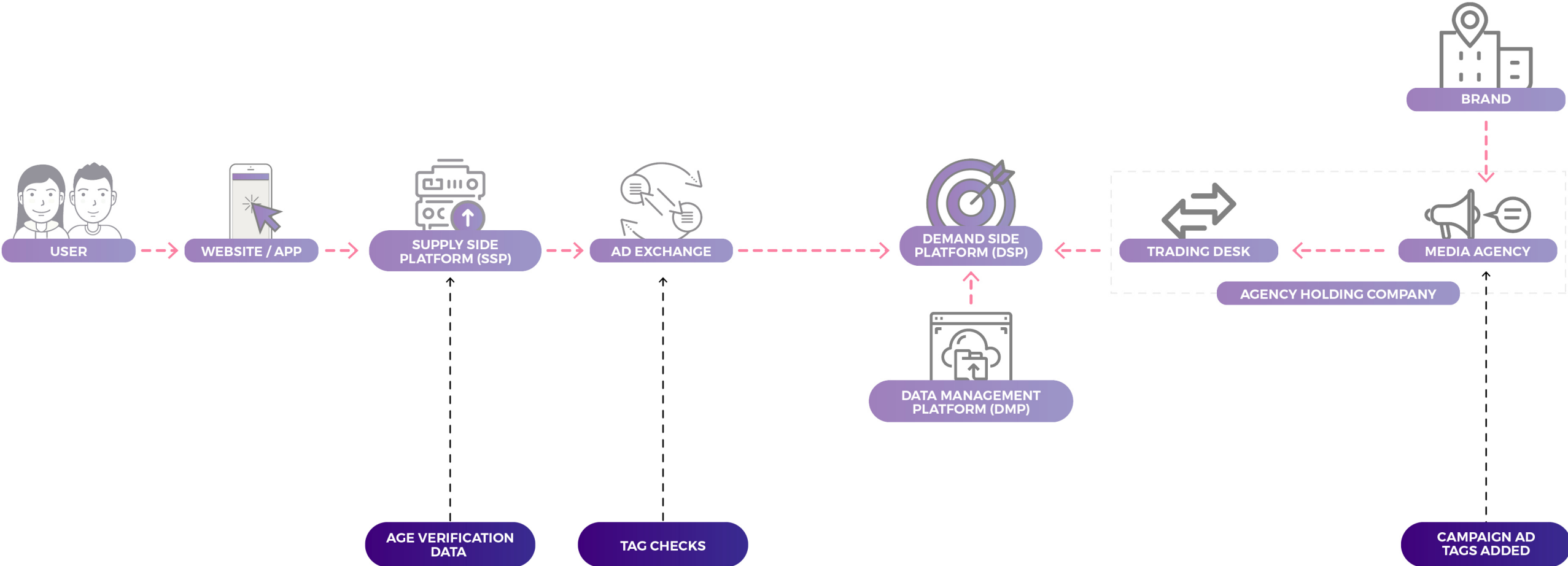
# Social media influencers



Zoella has 12 million subscribers on her main YouTube channel (Picture: MoreZoella/YouTube)



# Solution?



# GDPR and current status



- **Consent easier to gain within walled gardens**
- **A monopoly**
- **Regulatory approaches**

## Digital marketing of harmful foods to children: A global concern

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### ABSTRACT

Many countries have prioritized good nutrition and the prevention of non-communicable diseases in their efforts to meet the Sustainable Development Goals. While significant progress has been made, challenges remain in areas where policy initiatives are lacking, such as the digital marketing of high fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) foods to children. Both direct marketing through paid advertisements and indirect marketing through social-media influencers expose children to the promotion of unhealthy food. A dearth of clear laws governing international media publishers, coupled with weaknesses in monitoring systems, have left policymakers hesitant to take tangible action. This paper outlines the current landscape of digital marketing and a number of international policy measures that should be discussed to enhance child protection. Understanding the digital marketing ecosystem is key to identifying which organizations are involved in supplying and distributing digital advertisements and the brands being marketed. Effective identification can be hampered by the lack of a consistent system to tag HFSS advertisements. Current discussions on data privacy and how to protect children's privacy, in particular, provide an opportunity to explore new technological solutions, such as age-verification tools, that could be used to restrict children's exposure to digital marketing. Creating a common platform for the United Nations and its Members to foster dialogue and develop a coordinated policy response would further increase protection for children.

### SITUATIONAL OVERVIEW

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are responsible for 41 million deaths every year, equivalent to 71 percent of all deaths globally, according to estimates by the Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition (Global Panel, 2016). Each year, 15 million people between the ages of 30 and 69 die from an NCD, and 85 percent of those deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries. Cardiovascular diseases, cancers, respiratory diseases and diabetes account for more than 80 percent of all NCD-related premature deaths. The use of tobacco, physical inactivity, the harmful use of alcohol and unhealthy diets all increase the risk of dying from NCDs. Furthermore, the availability of unhealthy foods, such as sugared beverages, processed and ultra-processed foods, has increased dramatically (Global Panel, 2016).

Drastic changes to our food systems, including greater access to and availability of unhealthy foods, significantly raise the risk of people around the world developing obesity- and diet-related NCDs. Importantly, there is a growing body of evidence demonstrating that childhood overweight and obesity often lead to adulthood obesity, making overweight and obese young people more prone to developing NCDs (Simmonds et al., 2016).

Many countries have taken steps to address the inappropriate marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages to children. However, many rely on the self-regulation of the advertising industry and food manufacturers (WHO NCD Office, 2019), although this has been shown to be ineffective (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2018). Furthermore, evidence suggests that current policies to reduce children's exposure to marketing of energy-dense, highly processed foods and beverages

# Innovation

## CLICK: The WHO Europe framework to monitor the digital marketing of unhealthy foods to children and adolescents

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### OVERVIEW

This paper presents CLICK, a monitoring framework developed by the World Health Organization European Office for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases (WHO NCD Office), to support countries in monitoring the digital marketing of unhealthy products to children (WHO NCD Office, 2019). We summarize its comprehensive and innovative approach, identifying the progress achieved and further measures required to strengthen the monitoring of digital marketing to children.

et al., 2016; UNICEF, 2019a; WHO, 2016). In 2010, based on the strength of this evidence, the World Health Assembly unanimously adopted the WHO Set of Recommendations on the Marketing of Foods and Non-alcoholic Beverages to Children (WHO, 2010). A central recommendation of the WHO Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity (WHO, 2016) was that children's exposure to such marketing be reduced. Unhealthy food marketing infringes multiple rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989), including the rights to health and to freedom from exploitation (WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2016; UNICEF, 2018).

# Beyond Monitoring -

1. **Age verification of online users**
2. **Tagging of marketing campaigns**
3. **Submission of campaign information by industry**
4. **Regulation**

Role of multiple stakeholders, UN Agencies, Government, Academic and Civil Society



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# THANK YOU



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