Observatorio (OBS*)

Received: 2026-06-09 | **Accepted:** 2026-11-04 | **Published:** 2026-11-13 | **DOI**: 10.15847/OBS20262930

Mediatization of motherhood: audiovisual discourses of affection and responsibility in Danoninho commercials

Adriana Fogel
Health Communication Lab Epidemiology Research Unit (EPIUnit) University of Porto
Porto, Portugal

Juliana Alcantara
Media and Communication Department
Erasmus University of Rotterdam
Rotterdam, Netherlands

Abstract

Children's food choices are shaped by multiple voices, not always congruent, that mobilize scientific, emotional, and moral discourses, often mediated by advertising. This article examines *Danoninho* commercials to analyze how advertising constructs representations of motherhood. Drawing on Television Analysis, it identifies audiovisual elements that position the mother as a mediator between the child's desire and the responsibility for their health. The analysis shows that the product is framed as a solution capable of addressing both demands. To achieve this, questionable health claims are mobilized through the appropriation of scientific discourse and presented as responses to parental anxieties, particularly maternal ones. The commercials also promote a narrow and homogeneous model of family life that contrasts with Brazilian social realities.

Keywords: advertising, motherhood, nutrition, consumption, food

1. Introduction

Although the media may not control readers' or viewers' actions, it can shape their minds to a certain extent and thus operates as both a symbolic and persuasive force (van Dijk, 2017). One domain where this influence becomes particularly visible is children's nutrition, which occupies a privileged symbolic position in disputes surrounding health, care, and parental responsibility (Zivkovic et al.,2010). The construction of maternal scripts is also mediated by different media, such as magazines, films, and advertising (O'Donohoe et al., 2013), which can reinforce and normalize motherhood archetypes.

Thus, advertising for children's foods does not merely promote products; it also produces social meanings about who cares, who decides, and who assumes responsibility for everyday food choices, a role that remains largely associated with the maternal figure (Davis et al., 2018).

This article analyzes *Danoninho* commercials to understand how advertising for this dairy product constructs representations of motherhood. Commercials broadcast in Brazil at separate times were selected to examine how the brand articulates science, affection, and a duty of care to construct a morally responsible, informed, and vigilant maternal figure. The study investigates whether, in these advertisements, the maternal figure appears not only as a character or target audience, but also as an identity under tension. This refers to the person upon whom the authority and the responsibility for deciding on nutrition falls, making her responsible for the child's future, a characteristic observed in other countries where the brand was studied (Coutant et al., 2011).

By discussing these representations of motherhood in the Brazilian context, this article addresses a gap identified in recent literature reviews: studies on motherhood representation in the media and on motherhood and consumption remain insufficiently centered on countries of the Global South, thereby pointing to an Anglo-American and European hegemony in these fields (Freitas et al., 2024; Mary et al., 2025).

2. Literature Review and theoretical considerations

Teun van Dijk (2017) conceptualizes discourse as a manifestation of power, particularly the power structures operating within social groups and institutions. These structures are reproduced and legitimized through language and media representations. Within the global food system, large food corporations exercise substantial economic and political influence. They shape public discourse, policy debates, and consumer perceptions of ultra-processed foods, which are associated with poor diet quality and noncommunicable diseases such as obesity, coronary heart disease, and type 2 diabetes (Swinburn et al., 2019).

In this context, examining food advertising requires attention to its underlying messages, recurring persuasive strategies, and the accuracy of the information conveyed. Rather than helping consumers make healthier choices, such strategies may create confusion or reinforce misleading interpretations of food and health (Gracia Arnaiz, 2001).

This issue becomes particularly relevant in a highly mediated environment, where understandings of what it means to "be healthy" are shaped not only by cultural norms but also by media representations of health (Marinescu & Mitu, 2016). As a major source of health information (Bates & Ahmed, 2016), media representations of diseases, patients, and health practices influence individual and collective behaviors, including eating habits that are strongly affected by advertising (Kline, 2011; Lyons, 2000; Marinescu & Mitu, 2016; Seale, 2003). Over time, these meanings become deeply embedded in social life, making them difficult to resist (Lyons, 2000).

In this scenario, the use of scientific discourse and nutritional arguments in advertising becomes particularly persuasive. Such claims often convey incomplete or decontextualized information, encouraging the consumption of products presented as healthy even when they are associated with adverse health outcomes, such as ultra-processed foods (Gracia Arnaiz, 2001; Louzada et al., 2021).

These concerns underscore the importance of regulatory mechanisms to protect consumers from potentially misleading advertising, particularly vulnerable audiences such as children and adolescents. In Brazil, advertising regulation combines statutory legislation with industry self-regulation. The Brazilian Advertising Self-Regulation Council (CONAR) establishes ethical standards and restricts certain advertising practices. Over the years, CONAR has also revised its guidelines in response to evolving advertising practices and regulatory concerns, including those related to food marketing, children, and digital advertising (CONAR, n.d.). These developments have taken place within a broader context of pressure from civil society organizations advocating stronger consumer protection, often in conflict with industry interests (Valente, 2014). Nevertheless, the effectiveness of self-regulation in protecting children and adolescents from unhealthy food marketing remains questionable. A longitudinal analysis of complaints submitted to CONAR between 2010 and 2020 found that 74.8% of food-related complaints concerned ultra-processed products,

while only 53.3% resulted in sanctions. The study also identified inconsistencies in decision-making, with consumer-initiated complaints being more frequently dismissed than those submitted by CONAR or industry actors. These findings highlight the limitations of a self-regulatory framework that may prioritize industry interests over public health concerns (Matos et al., 2023).

When examining health-related messages, it is also necessary to consider the gendered nature of media discourse. Health discourse has historically been intertwined with expectations surrounding femininity, reinforcing norms about women's bodies, responsibilities, and forms of care (Alcantara & Simões, 2023). Feminist scholarship has further argued that women's experiences of health should not be understood as direct consequences of biological differences alone, but as socially constructed through cultural, political, and institutional processes that shape meanings attached to the female body (Annandale & Clark, 1996). As noted by Beauvoir (2014), becoming a woman involves learning socially prescribed roles that are continuously reproduced through cultural representations.

Medical discourse has often reinforced stereotypical portrayals of women as emotional, passive, subjective, or unreliable. In contrast, the male body has historically been treated as the normative reference for health. Within this framework, women's bodies are often portrayed as deficient or unstable, which positions women as more vulnerable to illness and biological disorder. According to White (2002), such judgments are linked to the social regulation of women's reproductive capacity within patriarchal systems.

From this perspective, gendered representations in advertising can be understood as part of broader discursive processes that construct femininities and masculinities. Advertising operates as a social technology embedded in regimes of representation that not only reflect but also produce and circulate social norms. As a semiotic apparatus, it positions subjects in relation to culturally available codes of gendered meaning and shapes the interpretation of femininity and masculinity within consumer culture (Perez & Peruzzo, 2018). The understanding of advertising as a site where gender norms are (re) produced and circulated has a longer history in media and cultural research. In Gender Advertisements, Goffman (1979) demonstrated how commercial imagery draws on recurring visual conventions, including differences in bodily positioning, relative size, touch, and patterns of interaction, to represent femininity and masculinity in culturally recognizable ways. These representations do not simply depict gender contrasts, but they can also naturalize particular expectations concerning gender identities, relationships, social roles, and then stereotypes.

Moving to the field of health, the intersection between patriarchy and capitalism has historically contributed to naturalizing women's association with care, affection, and responsibility for others' well-being. Women are thus positioned as protectors, caregivers, and maternal figures responsible not only for their own health but also for that of family members, especially children. These expectations are frequently internalized as part of women's social identities (Mary et al., 2025; White, 2002).

Within this framework, media representations of motherhood reveal an important contradiction. While women are often portrayed as seductive figures in advertising, maternal identities tend to be mediatized differently, frequently depicted as subservient, nurturing, fragile, and asexual (de Mendonça & Cesarotto, 2019). Despite this portrayal of vulnerability, mothers are simultaneously assigned a central responsibility for safeguarding children's health and development.

In contemporary societies, food has become a particularly prominent site of socially constructed risk and anxiety, especially regarding children's nutrition and growth (Gram et al., 2010; Ridgway et al., 2026). Decisions about what to feed children are therefore shaped by multiple, sometimes conflicting, discourses that draw on scientific, emotional, and moral arguments, often mediated by advertising. As Mary et al. (2025) point out, driven by consumerist objectives, advertising privileges challenges that are amenable to consumer solutions while marginalizing structural, emotional, and social difficulties that lie beyond the reach of branded products.

In this context, advertising often mobilizes mothers struggling to provide healthy nutrition for their children and then presents the promoted product as a reassuring solution. Such communication strategies transform maternal concerns into a persuasive resource, reinforcing both the expectation of intensive maternal responsibility and the authority of brands as providers of care and expertise (de Mendonça & Cesarotto, 2019; Gram et al., 2010).

3. Methodology

The study is structured according to the Television Analysis framework proposed by Becker (2012), applied to *Danoninho* commercials displayed in Brazil across different decades[1]. The corpus consists of the commercials *Aviãozinho* [Airplane] (1974)[2], *Me dá, me dá* [Gimme Gimme] (1989)[3], *Brincar é coisa séria* [Play is serious work] (2012)[4], *Danoninho, Diga Sim!* [Say Yes!] (2016)[5] and *Danoninho Bom Dia* [Good Morning] (2024)[6].

The corpus was assembled from widely propagated and culturally salient advertisements within Brazilian advertising memory. They were selected not for statistical representativeness but for their exemplary role in shaping discourses on children's nutrition, care, health, and motherhood across historical time.

These advertisements were chosen for the brand's prominence in the children's food market and its recurrent use of scientific and emotional arguments, enabling a focused examination of discursive operations commonly present in the sector's advertising (Davis et al., 2018).

While a previous study analyzed how these commercials appropriated Food and Nutrition Education discourse (Fogel, 2018), the present study re-examines the material through the lens of motherhood, investigating how maternal identities, responsibilities, and ideals are constructed in advertising narratives. In addition, a commercial released in 2024 was incorporated into the corpus to extend the analysis.

The following sections are structured according to the phases of Television Analysis (TA) proposed by Becker (2012), with emphasis on the analytical stage itself. The first phase consists of segmenting the advertisements into six categories: (a) text structure; (b) thematic; (c) enunciators; (d) visuality; (e) sound; (f) edition. The second evaluates the effects of fragmentation, dramatization/role play, and the definition of identities and values in the symbolic construction of advertising narratives. This is followed by the

[1] All translations of the commercial's titles are by the authors.
[2] Available at youtu.be/paJj9TFutL8 Accessed on 13 Feb. 2026.
[3] Available at youtu.be/ZZ7w8RIKt6M Accessed on 13 Feb. 2026.
[4] Available at youtu.be/R9cN0Fc0I34 Accessed on 13 Feb. 2026.
[5] Available at youtu.be/EjPfrc2Fft4 Accessed on 13 Feb. 2026.
[6] Available at youtu.be/9Ob1YWhRi2c Accessed on 13 Feb. 2026.

interpretation and comparison of the commercials, as well as the discussion. Finally, the concluding remarks are presented.

4. Audiovisual Composition of *Danoninho* Commercials

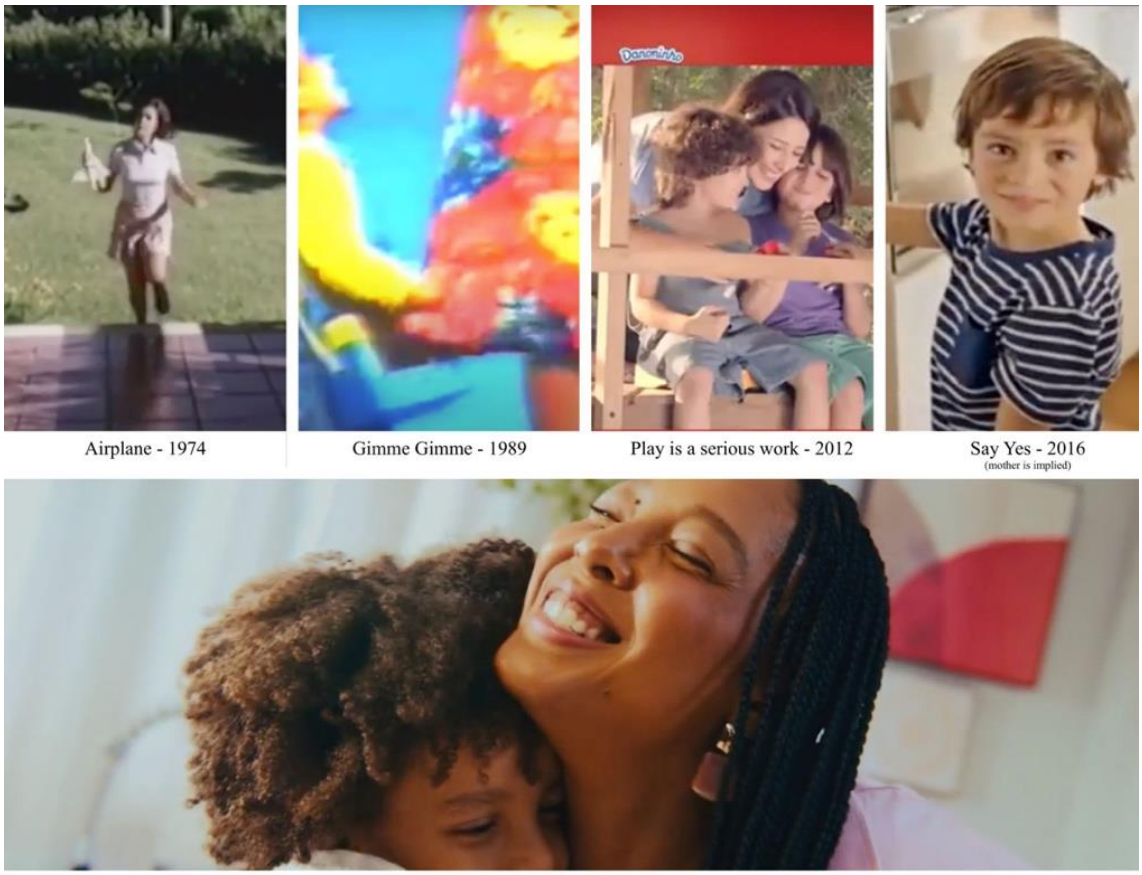
The table below (Table 1) presents the advertisements divided into Becker's (2012) six categories, and Figure 1 illustrates portrayals of mothers in the studied *Danoninho* commercials.

Table 1 - Audiovisual Composition of *Danoninho* Commercials

	1974 Commercial (Airplane)	**1989 Commercial (Gimme Gimme)**	**2012 Commercial (Play is serious work)**	**2016 Commercial (Say Yes)**	**2024 Commercial (Good Morning)**
Text Structure	45 seconds-length. Sales arguments are presented by a boy who demonstrates considerable knowledge.	40 seconds-length. Sales arguments mediated through the repeated plea "give me," sung by children in chorus.	45 seconds-length. The brand presents its worldview through a "window" frame; first 15 seconds address parents; children appear playing; product shown in final seconds; mother appears embracing children; three legal disclaimers.	30 seconds-length. Children's voices dubbed; female voice-over adopts friendly tone; multiple legal notices (six total).	One minute 40 seconds-length. Available on the brand's YouTube channel. Features presenter Sabrina Sato and singer Negra Li with her son Noah. One legal disclaimer appears.
Thematic	Nutrients, palatability, sharing, tradition, French origin, flavor variety, the boy's wisdom contrasted with parental ignorance, and maternal subservience.	Nutrients, sharing, health and play, intelligent eating, demanding child, maternal subservience.	Value of play in childhood, critique of excessive parental pressure, freedom, energy, nutrients, affectionate mother, brand longevity.	Critique of prohibitive parenting; risks inherent to childhood; *Danoninho* as healthier alternative to sugary snacks; creaminess and taste.	Brand and its mascot as family members; child autonomy; commensality; healthy ingredients; child-centered; spontaneity and energy.
Enunciators	Son, father, mother, voice-over narrator.	Children, parents (implied), narrator.	Children, mother, male and female voice-overs, father (absent).	Children, parents (implied), female narrator, mascot (Dino).	Mothers (Sabrina Sato and Negra Li), boy (Noah), father (absent), teenager sibling (supporting character).
Visuality	Large house in a wooded area; clothing with colors that allude to the brand; white family; body language reinforces roles; close-ups emphasize the product creaminess; packaging highlighted; Danone brand seal as quality endorsement.	Children whining while singing "give me" (*Danoninho*); product close-ups; creamy texture emphasized; exclusively white children; adults appear faceless; packaging and brand highlighted.	Red brand bars framing scenes; no Black children represented; outdoor unsupervised play; affectionate mother appears at end; father is absent; legal notices small and discreet.	White children in risky play scenarios; sugary snacks contrasted with *Danoninho*; sugar cubes (associated with the snacks) visually compared to glasses of milk (representing *Danoninho*'s ingredients); large, animated text distracts from small legal notices; final "SAY YES" message.	Large house in a wooded area; clothing with colors and prints that allude to the brand; Black family interacting with a female presenter of Asian descent; omnipresent Dino mascot; breakfast table with sugary and salty treats but healthy options as well; *Danoninho*'s ingredients displayed in large white letters with a red outline; the product is the only item consumed with pleasure by the child; emphasis on family affection; final highlight of the packaging.
Sound	Soundtrack oscillates between suspense and mischief, evoking cartoons and aligning with the child universe. Dialogues between father and child emphasize *Danoninho*'s origin, ingredients, and nutrients, mother's voice is heard only at the end, in a subservient speech.	Lively rhythm; children's chorus; repetition linking "*Danoninho*" and "give me"; melody interrupted by the child starring in the advertisement, who verbally emphasizes the name (*Danoninho*, ok?) and makes a subtle reference to an old and very famous campaign that compared *Danoninho*'s benefits to those of a piece of meat, and was punished for being deceptive.	Male voice-over introduces brand; rhythmic music; children's chorus; references to calcium and strong bones; female voice announces brand signature.	Children's voice-over asking parents for permission. Female voice-over emphasizing product benefits; soft but rising brand melody; "hummm" at tasting moment.	Upbeat and cheerful soundtrack; friendly dialogues around the table; presenter (Sabrina Sato) emphasizes *Danoninho*'s ingredients and health benefits (e.g., digestive wellness, healthy growth).
Edition	Alternation between wide shots and close-ups enhances dramatic effect; strategic product close-ups; final brand card with packaging.	Adults appear only partially (hands, skirts); alternation between child and product close-ups; final brand highlight.	Brand window always present; maternal endorsement; product revealed at the end; yogurt lid-opening sound effect linked to smile motif.	Risk scenes in wide shots; children seek adult approval to take risky attitudes through gaze at camera; contrast between large promotional text and small disclaimers; brand endorsement concludes.	Opening wide shot of house; close-up embrace reinforcing kid's growth narrative; strategic product close-ups; small legal notice contrasted with large promotional claims; final brand display.

Source: Created by Adriana Fogel

Figure 1: Portrayals of mothers in the studied *Danoninho* commercials



Source: Created by the authors

5. Verbal and Nonverbal Enunciations in *Danoninho* Advertising

The enunciative principle of **fragmentation** (Becker, 2012) is characterized by rapid cuts, dynamism, and a multiplicity of audiovisual stimuli that favor immediate and partial readings of the themes portrayed. In journalism, fragmentation can hinder a comprehensive understanding of social reality because events are often presented as disconnected pieces, limiting audiences' ability to grasp their complexity and the broader social relations that give them meaning. In the analyzed advertisements, this principle manifests through close-ups, rapid dialogue, and a dense succession of visual and sound elements competing for viewers' attention. Such editing not only makes the legal notices difficult to read but also directs attention toward carefully selected aspects of the product and the lifestyle associated with it. Milk and fruit, which are in natura foods naturally linked to vitamins, minerals, and health, are prominently featured, as is the pleasure associated with consuming the product, while flavor enhancers and other additives present in the ultra-processed dairy product remain absent from the narrative. At the same time, the advertisements consistently portray spacious homes, green outdoor spaces, and environments marked by comfort and security, evoking middle- and upper-middle-class lifestyles that do not reflect the living conditions of many Brazilian families. Through the rapid succession of these idealized images, health, maternal care, leisure, and proper consumption appear naturally intertwined.

The principle of **dramatization/role play**, present in a wide range of audiovisual narratives, relies on fictional and emotional strategies to engage audiences. By progressively unfolding narrative events and using audiovisual techniques that intensify dramatic tension, these texts blur the boundaries between reality and fiction. As a result, viewers are encouraged to establish emotional connections with the characters and themes portrayed, generating responses such as empathy, identification, or affective engagement (Becker, 2012).

In the first advertisement, fictional elements and dramatized interactions between the characters construct a narrative in which the parents' ignorance is contrasted with the child's apparent perspicacity, supposedly nurtured by "the best of France." Notably, the father appears relaxed and conversing with his son on a balcony, demonstrating greater intelligence by tasting the advertised dairy product and learning from the child. The mother, on the other hand, is absent for most of the scene and only appears at the end, in a submissive role, running upstairs to retrieve the toy airplane the child left behind. The boy immediately corrects her, emphasizing that it is not just any airplane, but a special one (a "Phantom"). The choice of an airplane, instead of another toy like a car or a ball, seems intentional and can be interpreted as a metaphor for the conventional feeding ritual, in which the caregiver playfully simulates an airplane to encourage the child to eat. In this sense, the scene not only dramatizes family interactions but also subtly casts maternal care practices as a domain of ignorance, which the child demonstrates by overcoming and redefining. Implicitly, this dynamic suggests a pedagogical inversion in which the child becomes the holder of knowledge about proper nutrition, while the parents occupy a position of learning and correction. The unspoken subtext can therefore be interpreted as the idea that parental competence depends on adopting the child's food choices, as if parents could only be "correct" or knowledgeable by aligning themselves with the consumption practices the boy promotes and presents during the narrative.

In the second commercial analyzed, adults appear in supporting roles and are largely represented as faceless or partially obscured figures, although certain visual cues (e.g. skirts) suggest a feminized presence. Their function is reduced to the execution of care tasks and the immediate fulfillment of children's demands, who are consistently positioned as competent agents who already "know" what is best for themselves. Within this configuration, children request *Danoninho*, which is presented as a complete food product containing macro- and micronutrients associated with physical and cognitive development.

From the 2000s onwards, commercials increasingly highlighted a narrator whose authoritative voice plays a central ideological role. On the one hand, this legitimizes children's desires; on the other, it subtly shifts responsibility and blame onto caregivers, particularly mothers, for the supposed excesses in routines, demands, and childcare practices. At the same time, broader public health concerns, mainly the rise in obesity, framed as one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century (Mainland et al., 2015), are mobilized as a narrative backdrop that reinforces the need for intervention through consumption.

More specifically, the 2012 advertisement constructs a moralized discourse on childhood activity, advocating for increased playtime through scenes of children running, jumping, and moving continuously in spacious, beautiful environments. Within this framing, the narrator suggests that daily obligations can be deferred, while dramatization presents *Danoninho* as a convenient nutritional solution, reinforcing the idea that care can be efficiently outsourced to a packaged product enriched with vitamins and minerals. In this sense, "healthy childhood" is not merely described but actively produced as a matter of consumption choices, in which caregiving is redefined as product selection.

The 2016 advertisement further intensifies this logic by positioning *Danoninho* as a mediating device that resolves tensions experienced by caregivers. These tensions are constructed both in relation to children's physically risky play and to anxieties surrounding high-sugar diets. Rather than addressing structural conditions of care, the narrative individualizes responsibility and resolves it through consumption, reinforcing the idea that maternal management of risk and nutrition can be achieved through branded solutions.

The most recent film (2024) presents *Danoninho* Bom Dia as a healthy way to "start the day well," extending this logic into the realm of everyday rituals. The scene emphasizes calm, conviviality, and family affection at breakfast, yet *Danoninho* is positioned as the central and almost indispensable element of this idealized routine, the only product consumed with visible enthusiasm despite multiple alternatives on the table. In line with the increasing centrality of gut microbiome discourse in contemporary health narratives (Salvadori & Rosso, 2024), the advertisement expands previous nutritional claims by emphasizing digestive well-being. However, this normalized vision of a balanced and harmonious morning routine obscures the material conditions of many families, for whom breakfast is frequently skipped due to time constraints and broader socioeconomic pressures, including restrictive dietary trends (de Sousa et al., 2020).

The principle of the **Definition of Identities and Values** (Becker, 2012) allows us to analyze the values that advertisements ascribe to *Danoninho*, children, fathers, and mothers. It also allows us to evaluate personal or social characteristics that are absent or stereotyped in these figures.

In all the films studied, the child occupies a central position: sometimes as a subject who knows more than the parents, sometimes as an appealing protagonist, and sometimes as a fearless figure in a world presented as risky. Adults, in turn, orbit around this child's protagonism: initially uninformed, then almost anonymous and subservient, and later restrictive and protective, potentially replacing physical absence in daily life with a symbolic presence of constant care. Regardless of the case, *Danoninho* appears to be a solution, whether it be to provide more knowledge, presence, care, or affectionate responsibility.

Gender representations reveal striking continuity. The mother is still associated with the responsibility of feeding and the moral dimension of care. Even when her presence is discreet or mediated only by her voice, it is to her that the promise of relief is directed, whether from guilt, doubt, or fear, through the choice of dairy product. The father, when highlighted, appears linked to playfulness or a complicity less burdened by daily responsibility. The alternation between male and female voices in the narrations symbolically reinforces this division: the masculine tends to anchor the universe of the brand or playfulness; the feminine, nutritional authority or institutional endorsement. In no case do such choices seem fortuitous.

The construction of childhood is also permeated by stereotypes. Strength is usually associated with boys and charm with girls. There is also a distinction between "boys' games" and "girls' games," with girls more often portrayed as occupying protected spaces. Certain scenes suggest that outdoor activity is more permitted for boys, while girls are more restrained. An emblematic case occurs in the 2016 advertisement, where a boy and a girl find themselves in a risky situation: while the boy wants to ride a bicycle, which suggests freedom, the girl wants to climb a steep ladder to reach the treehouse, which connotes shelter and a delimited space for action.

From a social and ethnic standpoint, the family portrayed follows a recurring pattern: white, living in a comfortable, wooded, and wide environment, with little representation of the diversity that characterizes Brazil. Although the diversity of children in the cast increases slightly over time (with the inclusion of children

with Asian features) and a Black family is the protagonist in the last commercial analyzed, ethnic, socioeconomic, and family configuration plurality (same-sex parent families, single-parent families, multi-ethnic families, and others) remains underrepresented, contributing to the consolidation of a homogeneous family ideal that does not address cost or income issues and does not represent or take into account the diversity of families in Brazil.

The product's identity keeps its core proposition: to be an ally to families through its nutritional composition, with subtle shifts in its values. Initially legitimized by European tradition and its differentiated nutritional composition, it has come to include elements such as sociability, then nostalgia, naturalness, and well-being associated with outdoor life, and more recently, scientific credibility, reduced sugar content, and digestibility, despite its status as an ultra-processed food product.

6. Discussion

Analysis of these advertisements over time reveals that, although occasional updates occur, historical continuities outweigh differences. Core elements remain stable over time, including messages about the nutritional benefits of *Danoninho* and the problems it allegedly solves, as well as brand identity features such as colors, soundtrack, packaging visibility in the closing credits, mascots, and an emphasis on childhood pleasure and conviviality. The persistence of these elements, particularly the soundtrack and the appeal to play, evokes nostalgia among parents who were children in the 1970s and 1980s, reinforcing intergenerational emotional bonds and sustaining a long-standing discourse of healthiness constructed by the brand.

After the 2000s, a noticeable shift occurred from the use of the child's voice to the presence of an announcer or presenter, possibly in response to regulatory guidelines issued by the Brazilian Council for Advertising Self-Regulation (CONAR), which discourage the direct use of children to persuade other children to consume (Pieri, 2006). While this change reflects adaptation to the regulatory environment, it does not alter the underlying narrative structure of the campaigns.

This structure is consistently organized around the articulation of motherhood and infant feeding. Across the corpus, responsibility for children's nutrition, emotional development, and social well-being remains predominantly attributed to mothers, in line with sociological literature on motherhood (Davis et al., 2018, 2022; Ridgway et al., 2026). Although newer health concerns, such as sugar intake, calcium consumption, and the promotion of outdoor play, are incorporated over time, they do not reduce maternal centrality. Instead, they expand the domains through which maternal responsibility is expressed. In this sense, contemporary health discourses intensify rather than replace earlier expectations, framing parents as managers of present and future health risks and embedding physical activity and leisure within moralized parenting practices (Mainland et al., 2015). Consequently, campaigns continue to reproduce an asymmetrical distribution of caregiving roles between mothers and fathers, while also reinforcing narrow representations of family life and Brazilian identity, a pattern similarly identified in studies conducted in Anglo-American countries (Freitas et al., 2024; Mainland et al., 2015). As such, rather than dismantling traditional stereotypes, these narratives reconfigure them through contemporary idioms of health, risk prevention, and intensive motherhood.

Within this context, maternal guilt and anxiety emerge as structural effects of an ideal of constant care, in which food choices are persistently problematized and associated with risk. This dynamic is not locally bounded and has been documented across different sociocultural and economic contexts (Coutant et al., 2011; Gram et al., 2010).

At the same time, scientific discourse plays a vital role in stabilizing these meanings. Children's nutrition occupies a privileged symbolic position in contemporary disputes over health, care, and responsibility, where decisions about feeding are shaped by overlapping scientific, moral, and emotional discourses, often mediated by advertising (Brasil, 2019). Scientific language confers an aura of truth and safety (Gracia Arnaiz, 2001; Pitrelli et al., 2006), functioning less as technical support than as symbolic legitimation of consumption practices. It reinforces the positioning of mothers as mediators between children's desires, which are constructed as spontaneous and difficult to refuse (Castronuovo et al., 2016), and the moral imperative of ensuring health. In the advertisements analyzed, this mediation is resolved through the promise that *Danoninho* reconciles taste and nutrition, thereby reducing potential tensions between care and pleasure and allowing consumption to be integrated into domestic routines as something natural, easy, and harmonious. Nevertheless, this articulation continues to rely on the persistent absence of the paternal figure in caregiving roles.

Although health claims are presented as solutions to parental anxieties, *Danoninho* remains an ultra-processed dairy product. In light of evidence of the potential negative impacts of ultra-processed foods rich in additives and preservatives (Louzada et al., 2021), this framing warrants critical scrutiny, particularly regarding the minimization of legal warnings in advertising contexts. However, encouraging such critical engagement may also intensify the burden already placed on mothers, who are disproportionately responsible for food purchasing and label interpretation within households (Poquet et al., 2019), thereby amplifying existing pressures rather than alleviating them.

The reduced presence of fathers in advertisements for childcare products, also observed in this study, has been widely problematized in the literature, which highlights the importance of a more equitable distribution of caregiving roles and recognizes advertising as a key site for the reinforcement of symbolic representations (de Mendonça & Cesarotto, 2019; Sá Martino & Tonussi, 2022; Wottrich & Cassol, 2012).

Although advertising is embedded in cultural contexts, it keeps the capacity for strategic transformation (Sampaio, 1995). Without such transformation, it risks perpetuating simplified and restrictive representations of social roles (Sá Martino & Tonussi, 2022). In this regard, the limited diversity of family configurations represented in the campaigns further underscores the need for future research to include broader intersections of ethnicity, social class, and family structure, including same-sex, single-parent, and intergenerational households (Freitas et al., 2024).

7. Final Considerations

This study shows that advertising does more than promote a food product: it constructs normative understandings of childhood, family, health, and consumption through representations that make particular lifestyles desirable while marginalizing alternative social realities.

An investigation into the identities and values constructed in these advertisements shows that, across different historical periods, they build a relatively stable narrative about family, childhood, and food, even as they update discursive strategies and symbolic emphases. The findings highlight the tension and moral positioning directed at caregivers, particularly mothers, recur, in contrast to the representation of children as wise, joyful, and energetic figures.

In the advertisements analyzed in this study, fragmentation functions not merely as an aesthetic, but also as a persuasive strategy that selectively foregrounds desirable meanings. By emphasizing natural ingredients and idealized family settings while marginalizing both the product's ultra-processed nature and the social inequalities absent from these representations, it constructs a discursively sustained image of healthfulness that is difficult to critically interrogate within the accelerated flow of audiovisual communication.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that greater attention be given to the education of communication professionals, particularly on the role of advertising in reproducing or challenging social stereotypes. At the intersection of communication and public health, strengthening media and food literacy emerges as a key strategy to support more critical engagement with health-related advertising claims. As this study focuses on the analysis of televised advertisements, it does not examine how audiences interpret or respond to the narratives identified. Future research should therefore include audience studies to better understand how mothers, fathers, and children interpret and negotiate these narratives in everyday life.

Acknowledgements / Funding
The author(s) received no financial support for this research.

Conflict of interest
The author(s) declare no conflict of interest.

Ethical statement
This study was conducted in accordance with the principles of scientific research and did not require additional ethics committee approval.

Declaration of AI usage
Generative AI tools were used for assistance with writing and editing.

Data availability
The data and/or supplementary material supporting the findings of this study are publicly available in the article.

Author contributions

	Adriana Fogel	Juliana Alcantara
Conceptualization	X	X
Data curation	X	
Formal analysis	X	X
Investigation	X	X
Methodology	X	
Validation	X	X
Writing - original draft	X	X
Writing - review & editing	X	X

References

Alcantara, A., & Simões, R. B. (2023). Só para ela: a feminização da vacina contra o HPV na cobertura midiática brasileira. *Estudos Em Comunicação*, 2(37), 116–130. https://ojs.labcom-ifp.ubi.pt/ec/article/view/1176

Annandale, E., & Clark, J. (1996). What is gender? Feminist theory and the sociology of human reproduction. *Sociology of Health and Illness*, *18*(1), 17–44. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.ep10934409

Bates, B. R., & Ahmed, R. (2016). Communicating health through mass media: An overview. In B. R. Bates, & R. Ahmed. (Eds.), *Health Communication and Mass Media* (pp. 29-44). New York and London: Routledge.

Beauvoir, S. (2014). *O segundo sexo*. Nova Fronteira.

Becker, B. (2012). Mídia e jornalismo como formas de conhecimento: uma metodologia para leitura crítica das narrativas jornalísticas audiovisuais. *Matrizes*, *5*(2), 231. https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.1982-8160.v5i2p231-250

BRASIL, M. da Saúde. (2019). *Guia alimentar para crianças brasileiras menores de dois anos.* https://www.gov.br/saude/pt-br/assuntos/saude-brasil/eu-quero-me-alimentar-melhor/Documentos/pdf/guia-alimentar-para-criancas-brasileiras-menores-de-2-anos.pdf/@@download/file

Castronuovo, L., Gutkowski, P., Tiscornia, V., & Allemandi, L. (2016). Las madres y la publicidad de alimentos dirigida a niños y niñas: Percepciones y experiencias. *Salud Colectiva*, 12(4), 537. https://doi.org/10.18294/sc.2016.928

Conselho Nacional de Autorregulamentação Publicitária. (n.d.). Nossa história. https://www.conar.org.br/nossa-historia

Coutant, A., de La Ville, V.-I., Gram, M., & Boireau, N. (2011). Motherhood, Advertising, and Anxiety: A Cross-Cultural Perspective on Danonino Commercials. *Advertising & Society Review*, *12*(2). https://doi.org/10.1353/asr.2011.0017

Davis, T., Hogg, M. K., Marshall, D., Petersen, A., & Schneider, T. (2018). Intersectional research stories of responsibilising the family for food, feeding and health in the twenty-first century. *European Journal of Marketing*, *52*(12), 2273–2288. https://doi.org/10.1108/ejm-06-2018-0394

Davis, T., Hogg, M. K., Marshall, D., Petersen, A., & Schneider, T. (2022). The knowing mother: Maternal knowledge and the reinforcement of the feminine consuming subject in magazine advertisements. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 22(1), 40-60. https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540519889990

de Sousa, J. R., Akutsu, R. d. C. C. A., Zandonadi, R. P., & Botelho, R. B. A. (2020). Breakfast Characterization and Consumption by Low-Income Brazilians: Food Identity and Regional Food. *Sustainability*, 12(12), 4998. https://doi.org/10.3390/su12124998

de Mendonça, M. C., & Cesarotto, O. A. (2019). A maternidade na publicidade: Uma análise semiótica de anúncios brasileiros. In M. F. de Oliveira-Cruz (Ed.), *Publicidade e gênero: Representações e práticas em questão* (pp. 29–50). FACOS-UFSM.

Fogel, A. (2018). *Apropriações do discurso da educação alimentar e nutricional pela publicidade: uma análise audiovisual de anúncios da indústria alimentícia*. (pp. 1–159) [Dissertação]. https://www.unirio.br/ppgedu/dissertacoes/repositorio-de-dissertacoes/1f4c22018/dissertacao-ppgedu-adriana-aguiar-aparicio-fogel/view

Freitas, T. M. L., Leite, R. S., & Pinto, M. de R. (2024). Motherhood and consumption: A systematic review and directions for future research. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, *48*(4), Article e13071. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.13071

Goffman, E. (1979). *Gender advertisements*. Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.

Gracia Arnaiz, M. (2001). Nutritional Discourse in Food Advertising: Between Persuasion and Cacophony. *Anthropology of Food*, *13-14*(Issue 0). https://doi.org/10.4000/aof.989

Gram, M., de la Ville, V.-I., Le Roux, A., Boireau, N., & Rampnoux, O. (2010). Communication on food, health and nutrition: A cross-cultural analysis of the Danonino brand and nutri-tainment. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, *16*(1-2), 87–103. https://doi.org/10.1080/13527260903342803

Kline, K. (2011). *The Routledge Handbook of Health Communication* (T. L. Thompson, R. Parrott, & J. F. Nussbaum, Eds.; pp. 279–294). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203846063

Louzada, M. L. da C., Costa, C. dos S., Souza, T. N., Cruz, G. L. da, Levy, R. B., & Monteiro, C. A. (2021). Impacto do consumo de alimentos ultraprocessados na saúde de crianças, adolescentes e adultos: revisão de escopo. *Cadernos de Saúde Pública*, *37*(suppl 1). https://doi.org/10.1590/0102-311x00323020

Lyons, A. C. (2000). Examining Media Representations: Benefits for Health Psychology. *Journal of Health Psychology*, *5*(3), 349–358. https://doi.org/10.1177/135910530000500307

Mainland, M., Shaw, S., & Prier, A. (2015). Fearing Fat. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 47(2), 202–219. https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.2015.11950357

Marinescu, V., & Mitu, B. (2016). *The Power of the Media in Health Communication*. Routledge.

Mary, S. M., Duschinsky, R., Davis, L., Dunnett, S., & Coughlan, B. (2025). Representations of motherhood in the media: a systematic literature review. *Information, Communication & Society*, *28*(1), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118x.2024.2348020

Matos, J. de P., Gondo, M., Mota, L. S. E., & Horta, P. M. (2023). Publicidade de alimentos direcionada à criança e ao adolescente no Brasil: Análise longitudinal de denúncias no CONAR. *Ciência & Saúde Coletiva*, 28(7), 1959–1970. https://doi.org/10.1590/1413-81232023287.14752022

O'Donohoe, S., Hogg, M., Maclaran, P., Martens, L., & Stevens, L. (2013). *Motherhoods, markets and consumption: The making of mothers in contemporary western cultures*. Routledge.

Perez, C., & Peruzzo, A. L. S. (2018). Masculinidades em anúncio. *Tríade: Comunicação, Cultura E Mídia*, *6*(13). https://doi.org/10.22484/2318-5694.2018v6n13p69-84

Pieri, J. E. de V. (2006, December 11). *Novas normas para a Publicidade - Migalhas*. Migalhas. https://www.migalhas.com.br/depeso/33424/novas-normas-para-a-publicidade

Pitrelli, N., Manzoli, F., & Montolli, B. (2006). Science in advertising: uses and consumptions in the Italian press. *Public Understanding of Science*, *15*(2), 207–220. https://doi.org/10.1177/0963662506061126

Poquet, D., Ginon, E., Goubel, B., Chabanet, C., Marette, S., Issanchou, S., & Monnery-Patris, S. (2019). Impact of a front-of-pack nutritional traffic-light label on the nutritional quality and the hedonic

value of mid-afternoon snacks chosen by mother-child dyads. *Appetite*, *143*, 104425. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2019.104425

Ridgway, A., Spotswood, F., Weitkamp, E., Tapp, A., Ling, K., & Meredith, L. (2026). Navigating "proper food" and "good mothering" on social media. *Food, Culture & Society*, 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/15528014.2026.2622233

Valente, S. B. M. (2014). Movimentos sociais na publicidade: novos caminhos para a regulamentação da publicidade brasileira? *Comunicologia,* 6(1), 03-18. https://doi.org/10.31501/comunicologiaissn19812132.v6i1.5224

Sá Martino, L. M., & Tonussi, C. (2022). "Não basta ser pai, tem que participar"? Presenças e ausências do masculino no cuidado com os filhos em anúncios de produtos para bebês no Instagram. *Revista Contracampo*, *41*(3). https://doi.org/10.22409/contracampo.v41i3.53494

Sampaio, R. (1995). *Propaganda de A a Z: como usar a propaganda para construir marcas e empresas de sucesso*. Campus.

Salvadori, M., & Rosso, G. (2024). Update on the gut microbiome in health and diseases. *World journal of methodology*, *14*(1), 89196. https://doi.org/10.5662/wjm.v14.i1.89196

Seale, C. (2003). Health and media: an overview. *Sociology of Health and Illness*, *25*(6), 513–531. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.t01-1-00356

Swinburn, B. A., Kraak, V. I., Allender, S., Atkins, V. J., Baker, P. I., Bogard, J. R., Brinsden, H., Calvillo, A., De Schutter, O., Devarajan, R., Ezzati, M., Friel, S., Goenka, S., Hammond, R. A., Hastings, G., Hawkes, C., Herrero, M., Hovmand, P. S., Howden, M., . . . Dietz, W. H. (2019). The global syndemic of obesity, undernutrition, and climate change: The Lancet Commission report. *The Lancet,* 393(10173), 791–846. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(18)32822-8

van Dijk, T. A. (2017). *Discurso, notícia e ideologia: estudos na análise crítica do discurso*. Edições Húmus.

White, K. (2002). *A sociology of health and illness*. Sage Publications.

Wottrich, L. H., & Cassol, M. C. N. (2012). A publicidade que evoluiu com as mulheres? Um estudo de recepção sobre as representações de gênero. *Em Questão*, *18*(2), 229–244. https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/4656/465645975016.pdf

Zivkovic, T., Warin, M., Davies, M., & Moore, V. (2010). In the name of the child. *Journal of Sociology*, *46*(4), 375–392. https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783310384456