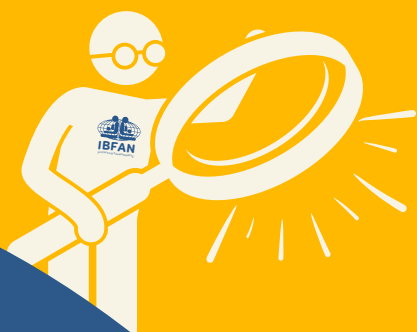


# LOOK WHAT THEY ARE STILL DOING

A SUMMARY REPORT ON THE MONITORING  
OF DIGITAL MARKETING OF PRODUCTS THAT  
INTERFERE ON BREASTFEEDING

2025



# A SUMMARY REPORT ON THE MONITORING OF DIGITAL MARKETING OF PRODUCTS THAT INTERFERE ON BREASTFEEDING

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# A SUMMARY REPORT ON THE MONITORING OF DIGITAL MARKETING OF PRODUCTS THAT INTERFERE ON BREASTFEEDING

## INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this work was to document, in an updated, fast, and global way, the presence on the internet of various forms of commercial promotions of products that interfere with the practice of breastfeeding and that are prohibited by the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes. To this end, IBFAN members from different regions of the world carried out a quick and simultaneous monitoring in one month of these unethical promotional practices, covering the period from December 13, 2024, to January 12, 2025.

From their computers or mobile devices, members searched for violations online in the following product categories:

- Commercial infant formula up to six months
- Commercial infant formula from six months to one year
- Commercial infant formula with special needs
- Bottles
- Teats
- Complementary foods

Upon finding a violation, a screenshot was taken for evidence and the record was entered into a Google form developed by IBFAN Brazil, available in four languages: Portuguese, Spanish, English, and French.



**Monitoreo de las violaciones del marketing digital/ Monitoramento de violações do marketing digital/Digital marketing violation monitoring/ Surveillance des violations du marketing numérique**

Estimado(a), completará un formulario que está disponible en cuatro idiomas (español, portugués, inglés y francés). Nombre y foto registrados según la cuenta de Google al subir la foto. Sin embargo, su correo electrónico no será registrado.

Prezado(a), você irá preencher um formulário que está disponível em quatro idiomas (espanhol, português, inglês e francês).

Figure 01. Reproduction of the initial page of the form for recording violations.

## RESULTS

### Participating Countries

This International Monitoring involved the participation of 31 countries, as shown in the figure below:



Figure 02. Representation of the 31 participating countries.

### Violations Records

A total of 266 records were received, which were analyzed according to the location of the observation, product category, manufacturer, and type of commercial promotion.

Regarding the **location**, the majority of the submitted records were observed on social media (56.8%), followed by websites (27.8%) and educational material/unsolicited messages (9.4%). Other forms of online commerce and advertising, such as apps and targeted advertising (pop-up ads), comprised 6% of the records (Figure 03).

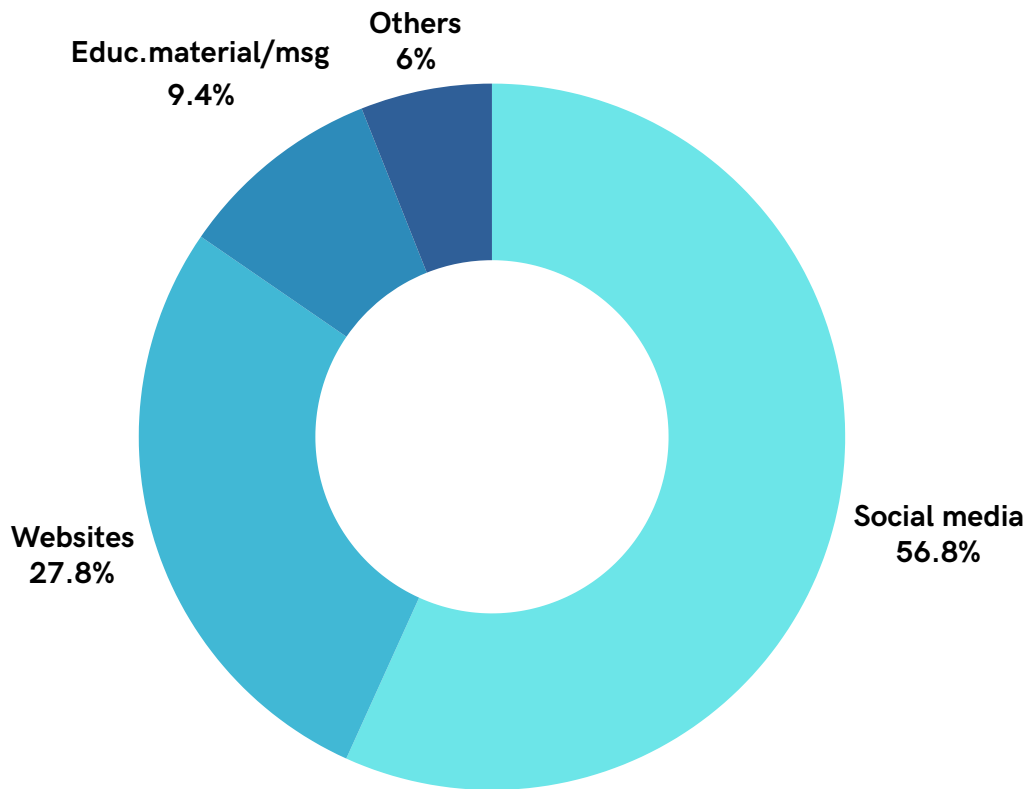


Figure 03. Percentage distribution of records in digital marketing according to the location of the violation.

In this sample, social media stood out within digital marketing, with more than half of the records. Among the social networks, Instagram ranked first (50.3% of social media violations), followed by Facebook (37.6%), YouTube (4%), and TikTok (2.7%). The remaining 5.4% correspond to regional apps.

Most sales websites have a local reach in each country. However, one large sales platform stood out: Amazon, with mentions in different countries.

After analyzing the submitted records, the **product category** with the highest number of violations was infant formula for infants (0-6 months), followed by follow-up formula for infants (6-12 months). The percentage results can be seen in the following figure (Figure 04).

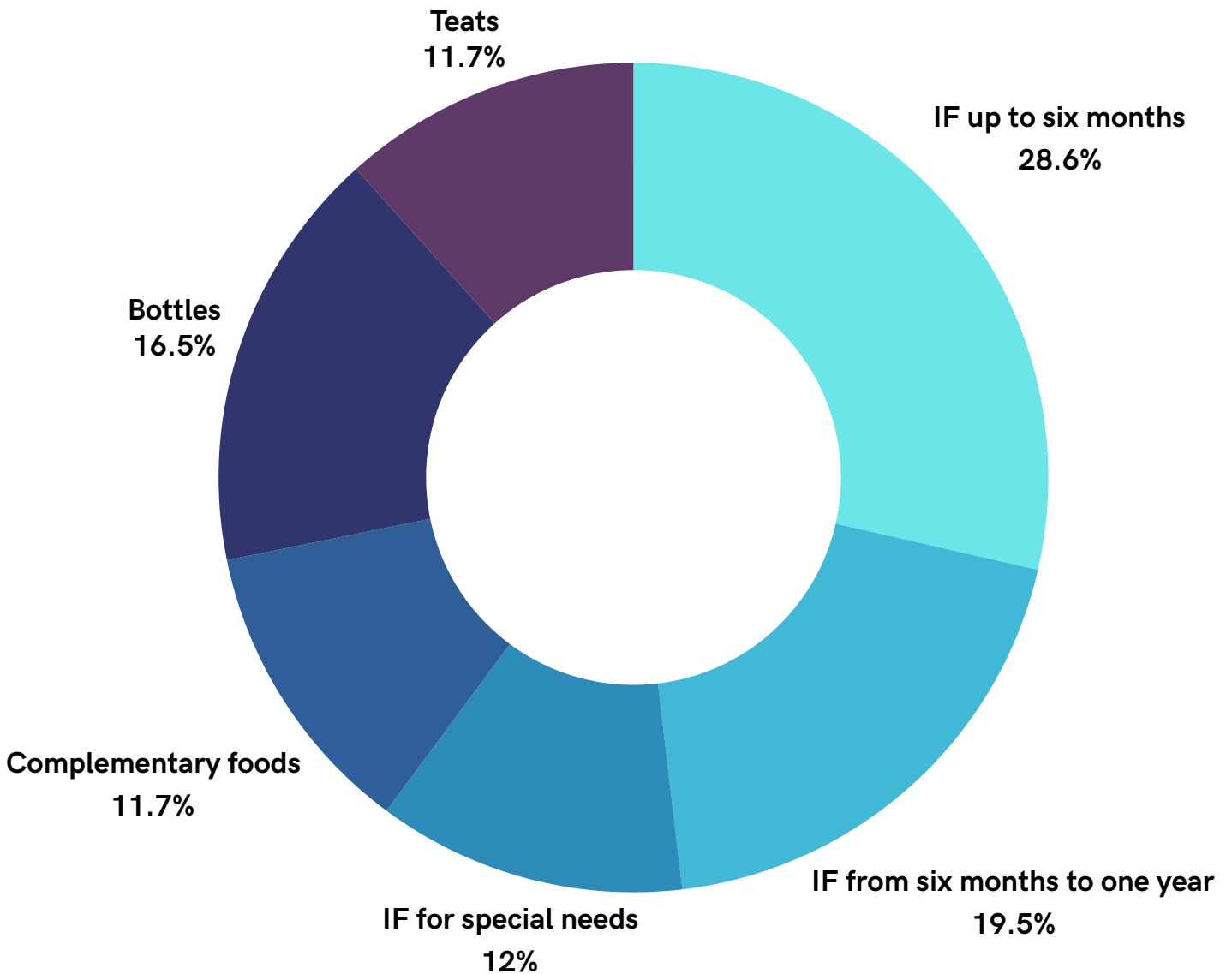


Figure 04. Percentage distribution of violations in digital marketing according to the product category. IF: infant formula.

These results show that the highest number of violations occur in the promotion of commercial infant formulas targeted at babies up to 6 months old, when breastfeeding should be exclusive. This competition with breast milk at such an early stage can hinder the initiation and establishment of breastfeeding, leading to early weaning and lower immune protection. This has immediate consequences, such as a higher risk of infectious diseases and, in the long term, reduces the proven protection that human milk and the practice of breastfeeding provide to the child and mother.

The products that compete with breastfeeding are mainly manufactured/distributed by multinational companies, being reported in the different countries participating in this Monitoring. The top 10 most mentioned **manufacturers** can be seen in the figure below (Figure 05).



Figure 05. Word cloud with the 10 most mentioned manufacturing companies. The larger and more prominent words represent the most cited companies, indicating their predominance in the analyzed list. (Note: Danone and Nutricia, cited separately in some countries, were combined in the figure since Nutricia is a division of Danone).

As a consequence of the global activities of manufacturing companies, the same products were recorded in different countries with little or no change in their commercial names. The 10 most mentioned **products** can be seen in the following figure (Figure 06).

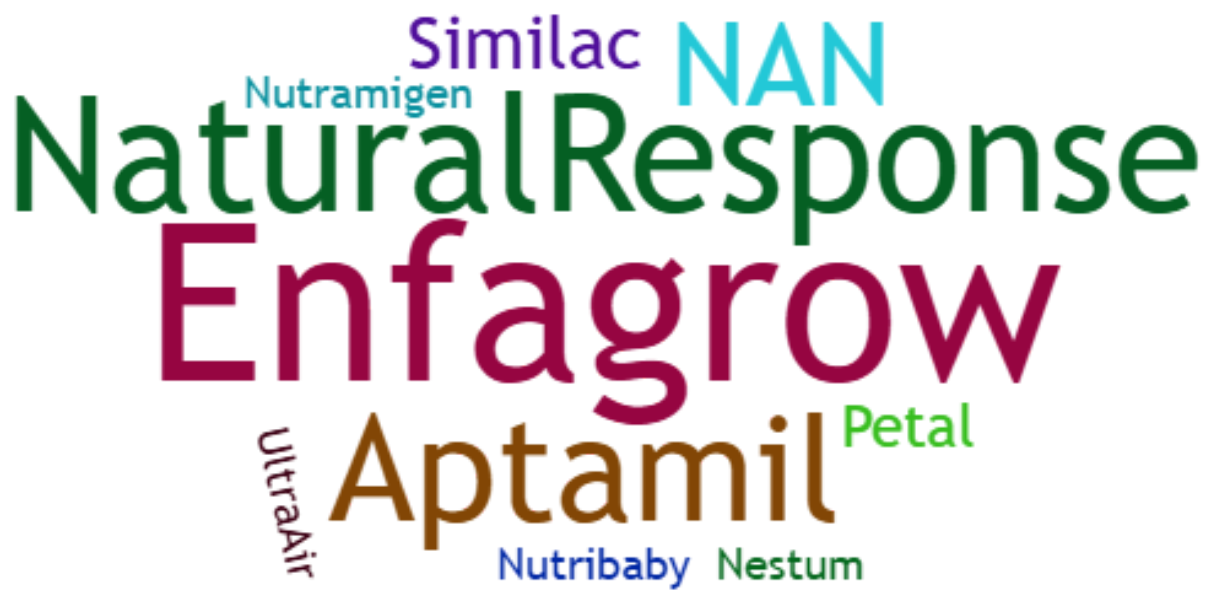


Figure 06. Word cloud with the 10 most mentioned products. The larger and more prominent words represent the most cited products, indicating their predominance in the analyzed list

Regarding the highlighted products above, they are commercial infant formulas: Enfagrow, Nutramigen (both from Mead Johnson), Aptamil (Danone/Nutricia), NAN (Nestlé), Similac (Abbot), and Nutribaby. Nestum, on the other hand, is a transitional food (cereal) from Nestlé. Ultra Air is a brand of teats by Philips-Avent, and Petal and Natural Response are lines of baby bottles also by Philips-Avent.

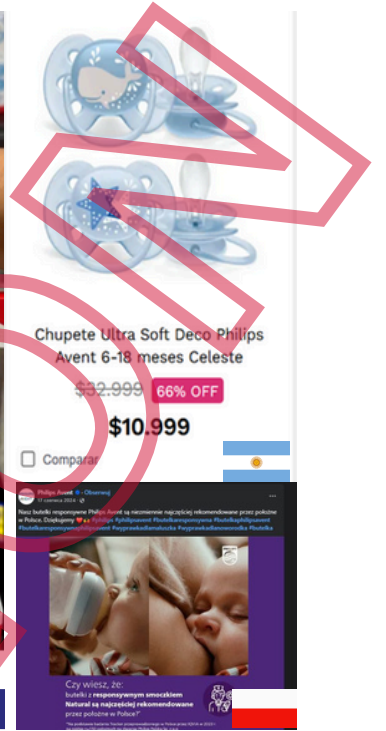
### Images of Violations

The following pages show examples of violations obtained by the participating countries in an online environment (websites, social networks, and other digital marketing strategies), divided according to product category. The flags indicate the country where the violation was founded.





Figure 08. Collage of images of violations in infant formulas and complementary foods.



211 likes, 7 comments, 34 shares. **bebesito\_variedades** Set de biberones ideal para iniciar una alimentación con biberón, libre de cólicos \$1...

Like Comment Send Share



Curtido por cupcake, shenanigans e outras pessoas. **thenest.tt** Nurture Your Baby's Natural Rhythm with Philips AVENT Natural Baby Bottles!

Comotomo, Biberón Rosa, 8 oz, 2... \$575.04. Precio de lista: \$625.34 (8% de descuento). Recibelo el miércoles 25 de diciembre.

Muestra tu apoyo. Carlosdbl04 y Mamá de jeremy. Los días parecen largos, pero lo año... más.

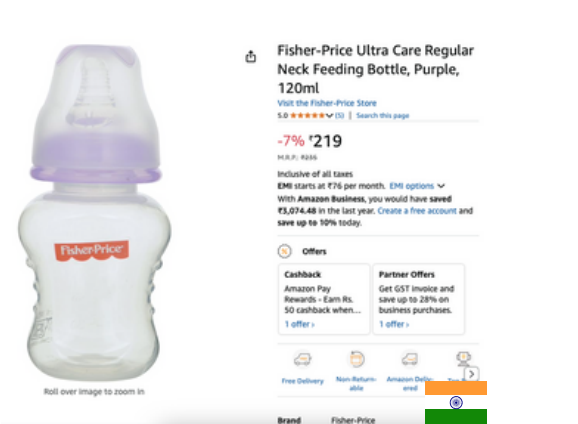
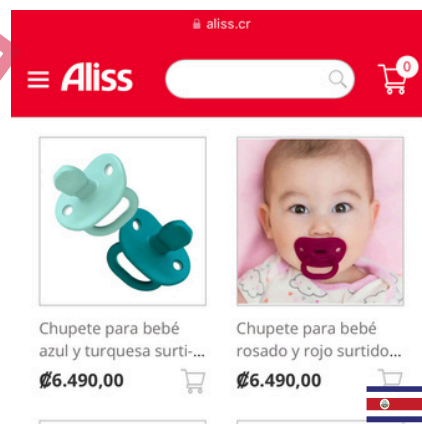


Figure 09. Collage of images of violations in baby bottles and pacifiers/teats.

## FINAL REMARKS

We know that the commercial promotions documented here represent just the tip of the immense iceberg that constitutes today's digital marketing of products that interfere with breastfeeding. The limitations of this quick data collection are evident—since it was restricted to only a few countries in Africa, Asia, and Europe, but included a large number of countries in the Americas (which was good!). However, we know that the internet crosses borders and is everywhere, so our "snapshot" of the situation helps to show the presence of this marketing worldwide.

We also emphasize that we limited ourselves to products used for babies in the first year of life only, knowing that this is an extremely important phase in the child's life, aiming to highlight the seriousness of this period where abusive marketing can influence and change the correct, healthy, and WHO-recommended forms of infant feeding. We did so, aware of how much companies have engaged in abusive practices such as cross-promotion of products intended to replace breastfeeding beyond the first year of life, when breastfeeding is still recommended.

The internet is a vast field for product purchases, service dissemination, and commercial promotion, constituting what is called digital marketing. This monitoring, in a short period, showed how violations of the Code occur in this environment, increasingly and chaotically. There is an urgent need to regulate digital marketing to protect mothers and their babies, and breastfeeding

***“Curbing harmful marketing should not be too difficult once a strong law is in place – governments can and must allocate specific legal tasks to social media platforms as they do for tobacco, alcohol etc.”***

– Katherine Shats



**International Baby Food  
Action Network**

Founded in 1979, the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) is a global coalition of nearly 200 citizen groups in more than 100 countries.



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