

Continued disparities in food-related advertising targeted to Hispanic youth

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Restaurants, food, and beverage companies (food companies) continue to target Hispanic consumers with advertising for their least nutritious products, primarily fast food, candy, sugary drinks, and snacks. Exposure to food-related advertising by Hispanic children and teens likely contributes to or exacerbates diet-related health disparities affecting Latino communities, including obesity, diabetes, and heart disease.

Since our first targeted marketing report was published in 2015, food companies with the most targeted advertising have launched or expanded corporate responsibility commitments to support health and wellness. But this research shows that they have not improved their targeted advertising to support the health of Hispanic children and teens.

The research

Researchers analyzed 2017 Nielsen syndicated market research data to identify food-related TV advertising on Spanish-language TV targeted to Hispanic consumers of all ages, and exposure to those ads by Hispanic youth, including children (2-11 years) and teens (ages 12-17 years). Researchers also reviewed companies' public statements about their targeted marketing practices. The report examines 32 restaurant, food, and beverage companies that spent at least \$100 million on advertising in 2017 and/or participated in the Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative (CFBAI) industry self-regulatory program as of December 2017, including the 236 most highly advertised brands from these companies. These 2017 findings were compared to data from 2013 reported previously.

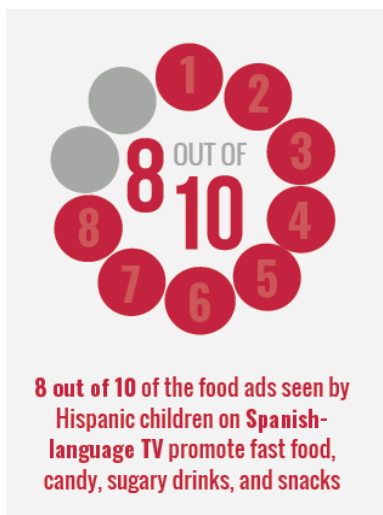
Key findings

Food-related ads on Spanish-language TV programming continue to almost exclusively promote fast food and unhealthy food and drinks

- Fast food and other restaurants accounted for 49% of Spanish-language TV ad spending in 2017.
- Brands in other unhealthy categories—candy, sugary drinks, and snacks—accounted for another 33%.
- Brands in the healthiest product categories—100% juice, plain water, nuts, and fruit—did not advertise at all on Spanish-language TV.

Food-related ads viewed by Hispanic children and teens on Spanish-language TV were highly concentrated among a few companies.

- Hispanic children and teens viewed on average more than 2 Spanish-language food-related ads per day (in addition to ads viewed on English-language TV) in 2017.



These findings show just how much the food and beverage industry values Hispanic consumers when it comes to encouraging them to buy unhealthy products. But if the industry really values Hispanic consumers, companies will take responsibility for advertising that encourages poor diet and related diseases. They can start by eliminating the marketing of unhealthy products to Hispanic youth and families.

- Amelie G. Ramirez, DrPH, MPH
Salud America!
University of Texas
Health Science Center at San Antonio

- Mars, Nestle, Yum! Brands (KFC, Pizza Hut, Taco Bell), McDonald's and General Mills were responsible for 4 of 10 ads viewed.
- From 2013 to 2017, Hispanic youth exposure to ads for Nestle brands more than doubled.

In 2017, fast food, candy, and sugary drink brands advertised the most to Hispanic youth on Spanish-language TV

- Candy brands from Hershey and Mars represented approximately 20 percent of food-related TV ads viewed by Hispanic children and teens on Spanish-language TV.
- The ten brands with the most advertising to Hispanic youth in 2017 included McDonald's, Subway, Wendy's, Little Caesars, Taco Bell, Burger King, Sonic, Coca-Cola Classic, M&Ms, and Big G Cereals.

In 2017 as in 2013, food-related advertising continues to disproportionately target Hispanic youth with unhealthy products and contributes to health disparities affecting their communities.

Recommendations

Key stakeholders within industry, including food and beverage manufacturers, restaurants, grocery retailers, and media companies, should improve their targeted marketing practices:

- CFBAI companies can address loopholes that allow them to continue to target marketing of unhealthy products to children, including raising the age of children covered by pledges to at least 14 years old. These improvements would have the greatest benefits for Hispanic youth.
- Media companies should establish nutrition standards for products advertised to youth, including on Spanish-language TV programming, to align with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
- Food and beverage companies should expand corporate health and wellness initiatives to address disproportionate marketing of unhealthy products to Latino communities.

Public health advocacy campaigns should also encourage companies to improve marketing that disproportionately targets Hispanic youth, and explore opportunities to engage youth of color in campaigns to address targeted food marketing as a social justice issue.

The Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity at the University of Connecticut is a multi-disciplinary research center dedicated to promoting solutions to childhood obesity, poor diet, and weight bias through research and policy. The full report, *Increasing disparities in unhealthy food advertising targeted to Hispanic and Black youth*, Harris JL, Frazier III W, Kumanyika S, & Ramirez A, is available at www.uconnruddcenter.org/targeted-marketing. Click [here](#) for examples of targeted advertising campaigns from companies included in this report.

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