

Beverage companies have reduced total sugary drink advertising to youth on TV and the internet, and many have improved reporting of nutrition information. However, the overall nutritional content of sugary drinks has not improved, companies continue to target marketing for sugary drinks and energy drinks directly to children and teens, and newer forms of marketing popular with youth have increased.

In recent years, major beverage companies have taken steps to address public health concerns about the harmful effects of sugary drinks and position themselves as partners in solving the obesity crisis.¹ The American Beverage Association (ABA) and its member companies have promised to reduce beverage calories consumed by 20%, including by offering more low- and no-calorie drinks, offering sugary drinks in smaller-sized containers (e.g., 8-ounce cans), and providing consumers with more information about calories in sugary drinks (e.g., by labeling calories per serving or container on product packaging).² ABA member companies also promise that they will only advertise water, juice, and milk-based drinks to audiences that are predominately under age 12. Beverage companies participating in the Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative (CFBAI) also agreed to lower maximum sugar content of drinks advertised in child-directed media, implementing new category-specific uniform nutrition standards by the end of 2013.³

However, noticeably absent from beverage companies' promises has been any mention of reducing marketing of sugary drinks to consumers aged 12 and older. In fact, while PepsiCo and Coca-Cola Co. promised to reduce beverage calories consumed, they also promised their shareholders to invest \$1.5 billion (combined)^{4,5} to address declining sales of their core businesses (including sugar-sweetened beverages). Despite public health concerns about higher rates of obesity and other diet-related diseases within communities of color,⁶ PepsiCo, Coca-Cola Co., and Dr Pepper Snapple Group have publicized their intent to focus on multicultural millennials as a key to growing their businesses.^{7,8,9,10} Further, energy drink companies, including Red Bull, Monster Energy, and Rockstar, continue to defend their marketing practices that target adolescents,¹¹ even though the American Academy of Pediatrics has concluded that these products can be dangerous and should never be consumed by youth under age 18.¹²

Objective and transparent data are necessary to evaluate changes in the nutritional content of sugary drinks and the amount of marketing aimed at child and teen audiences, as well as marketing targeted to black and Hispanic youth. This report measures the industry's progress in improving the beverage marketing environment that surrounds young people and encourages them to consume products that can harm their health.

Progress in sugary drink nutrition

Major beverage companies have largely fulfilled their promises to develop lower-sugar versions of their sugary drink brands and provide more information to consumers about calories in these drinks. PepsiCo launched reduced-sugar versions of Pepsi (Pepsi NEXT) and Mtn Dew (Kickstart). These products contain 10 grams of sugar and 40 calories per 8-ounce serving (15 gr of sugar and 60 kcal in a 12-oz can). Dr Pepper Snapple Group also introduced 10-calorie versions of its most popular soda brands, including Dr Pepper Ten, 7UP Ten, and Sunkist Ten (these products are categorized as diet products in our analysis). Coca-Cola also devoted 1% of its advertising to promote its smaller-sized cans.

Sixty-three of the 162 children's drinks in our analysis also contained 40 calories or less per serving to qualify as reduced-sugar beverages. In addition, both Sunny D and Hawaiian Punch (all varieties but two) reduced the sugar content of their drinks by 3 to 15 grams per serving since 2011. Although the majority of reduced-calorie children's drinks contain sugar and artificial sweeteners, two children's brands (Apple & Eve Waterfruits and Vita Coco Kids) offered products with less than 40 calories per serving and no artificial sweeteners. These products also contained 10% and 50% juice content, respectively. Although they do contain added sugar and should not replace regular water and milk in children's diets, products such as these represent an improvement in the nutrition of children's drinks.

Companies supported their diet soda and reduced-sugar products with increased advertising in 2013. Total advertising spending for diet soda increased by 17% from 2010 to 2013, while advertising spending for regular soda declined by 4%. PepsiCo devoted 24% of its advertising spending for Pepsi sugar-sweetened soda to promote Pepsi NEXT and approximately one-half of Mtn Dew spending on Kickstart. Kraft Foods also largely replaced advertising to children for Capri Sun and Kool-Aid fruit drinks with advertising for Capri Sun Roarin' Waters (8 gr of sugar and 30 kcal per 6-oz pouch) and Capri Sun Super V 100% fruit and vegetable juice blend.

ABA members Coca-Cola Co., PepsiCo, and Dr Pepper Snapple Group reported calorie information on the front of the majority of product packages and provided easily accessible nutrition information for most products on their websites. In addition, energy drink companies substantially increased their reporting of caffeine in these products. In 2014, 100% of energy shots and 92% of energy drinks disclosed their actual caffeine content, a major improvement over 2011 when only half of energy drinks and one-third of energy shots reported caffeine.

The most notable evidence of progress was a substantial reduction in sugary drink and energy drink advertising to children and teens on TV. Compared with 2010, preschoolers (2-5 years), children (ages 6-11), and teens (ages 12-17) saw 33%, 39%, and 30% fewer of these ads, respectively. There was a steady decline in TV advertising to preschoolers and

children from 2010 to 2013, while sugary drink advertising to teens increased from 2010 to 2012, and then declined by 28% from 2012 to 2013. Among product categories, TV advertising for children's fruit drinks (including Capri Sun, Kool-Aid, and Sunny D) and other fruit drinks declined the most (-43% or more). Regular soda TV advertising to children and teens went down by approximately 30%, with declines of 24% or more for Sprite, Coca-Cola, and Dr Pepper.

There was also progress in marketing on the internet. The number of display ads for sugary drinks and energy drinks on third-party websites declined by 72% from 2010 to 2013, and ads on youth websites represented just 5% of all sugary drink ads compared with 11% in 2013. Further, the number of youth (2-17 years) visiting beverage company websites in 2013 declined by 20% or more for over half of the websites evaluated both years. In addition, four of the top-20 websites in 2010 had been discontinued or did not have enough youth visitors to report in 2013, including Kraft Foods' website for Capri Sun and PepsiCo's RefreshEverything.com (supporting its Pepsi Refresh promotion).

Continued reasons for concern

Despite evidence of progress, youth continue to consume too many sugary drinks. In 2013, three-quarters of high school students consumed at least one can of sugar-sweetened soda in the past week, and one-quarter consumed one or more daily.¹³ U.S. households spent \$6.4 billion on sugar-sweetened soda in 2013, and another \$3.3 billion on sugary sports drinks, iced tea and coffee, and flavored water; \$2.6 billion on fruit drinks; and \$1.9 billion on energy drinks. In contrast, they spent less than one-half this amount on 100% juice (\$3.5 billion) and plain water (\$3.0 billion). From 2010 to 2013, the amount of soda (including diet) and fruit drinks sold declined by 7% and 3%, respectively, and bottled water sales increased by 15%. Yet at the same time, the volume of sports drinks and ready-to-serve teas and coffees increased, while energy drink sales rose 41%.

Although companies introduced some reduced-sugar and diet sodas, there were no changes in overall nutritional content for products offered by sugary drink brands from 2011 to 2014. In addition, the majority of children's drinks remained high in sugar and their packaging featured nutrition-related messages that might mislead parents into believing these products are healthier choices for children.

Further, we found considerable evidence of increased marketing directly to children or teens for some sugary drink brands and energy drinks overall. We also found increased usage of non-traditional forms of marketing with strong appeal to young consumers, including brand appearances in prime-time TV programming (i.e., product placements), marketing in social media, and mobile marketing. In addition, many sugary drink and energy drink brands increased their marketing to black and Hispanic youth.

Children's drinks

Children's drinks remain a large segment of the sugary drink market, totaling \$850 million in sales in 2013 and representing 34% of sales of all products in the fruit drink and flavored water categories. We examined 15 brands of children's fruit drinks and two flavored water brands. One 8-ounce serving of a sugar-sweetened children's fruit drink has a median sugar content of 20 grams (i.e., 5 tsp), which exceeds the maximum amount of added sugar recommended for children under age 9 to consume in an entire day.^{14 15} Further, just 38% of children's fruit drinks contain any juice (a median of 5%) and 36% also contain artificial sweeteners. Compared with other fruit drinks, children's fruit drinks have fewer calories, but they are less likely to contain any juice and more likely to contain artificial sweeteners.

Despite the poor nutritional quality of the majority of children's drinks, these products are often marketed to parents using messages that imply they are healthy choices for children. For example, children's fruit drinks averaged 4.5 nutrition-related messages on product packages. These products often highlighted reduced-calorie claims, such as "25% less sugar than other leading children's drinks," as well as claims about vitamins and the absence of artificial flavors, preservatives, or high fructose corn syrup. The nutrition-related messages on children's drinks are technically accurate, but they can create a health halo that leads parents to infer that these products are nutritious options for children, despite high levels of added sugar.¹⁶ Of note, we could not obtain complete ingredient information for many of the fruit drink products, including children's fruit drinks, in our analysis.

The common use of nonnutritive sweeteners in children's drinks also raises concerns about potentially misleading parents. Although one-third of children's drinks contained artificial sweeteners, their inclusion was never highlighted on the front of product packages, even on packages that touted no artificial flavors or preservatives. Artificial sweetener content could only be determined by careful reading of ingredient lists and knowledge of the chemical names of sweeteners (ingredient lists rarely indicated the better-known brand names of sweeteners, such as Splenda or Equal). Although one could argue that nonnutritive sweeteners allow companies to offer lower-calorie children's drinks, they also were found in fruit drinks that contained high amounts of sugar, such as Happy Drinks (27 gr of sugar), Hawaiian Punch (13-29 gr), and Sunny D (14-15 gr). Further, research has shown that the majority of parents do not want to serve their children drinks that contain artificial sweeteners,^{17 18} which could explain why they were not highlighted on product packages. In addition, the Institute of Medicine has concluded that zero-calorie sweetener consumption by children has not been adequately studied, and further research is needed to determine whether these drinks are a healthy part of children's diets.¹⁹

As noted, there were some positive changes in marketing of children's drinks, but many high-sugar children's drinks continued to be marketed directly to children. At the same time that Kraft Foods improved the products advertised to children on TV, the company also introduced a Capri Sun Big Pouch fruit drink with 130 calories and 33 grams of sugar per 11.2-ounce pouch and just 10% fruit juice. This product is aimed at older children, and each pouch contains as many calories as most 12-ounce cans of soda. In 2013, Kraft Foods placed ads for Kool-Aid and Capri Sun fruit drinks on children's websites, and continued to offer child-targeted advergame mobile apps for these products in 2014. From 2010 to 2013, Kraft Foods also doubled the number of display ads for Capri Sun (including both Roarin' Waters and fruit drinks) placed on youth websites. In addition, companies that do not participate in the CFBAI continued to advertise sugary children's drinks directly to children on TV (Sunny D) and the internet (Tum E Yummies).

Advertising for sugary drinks directed at youth

While there was an overall decrease in TV advertising to youth, not all beverage companies contributed to this positive trend. Notably, PepsiCo increased TV advertising of its sugary drink brands to preschoolers by 39%, and by 25% to children and 10% to teens. In contrast, Dr Pepper Snapple Group and Coca-Cola Co reduced TV advertising for its sugary drink brands to all youth age groups by one-quarter or more. Further, beverage companies have not made any commitments to reduce advertising to children aged 12 and older, and several sugary drink brands increased their advertising to teens from 2010 to 2013, including three PepsiCo brands (Pepsi regular soda, Mtn Dew, and Gatorade) and two Dr Pepper Snapple Group brands (Snapple and Sun Drop). Of note, TV ads viewed by teens for regular soda increased 146% and Snapple ads (including iced tea and brand-level ads) increased four-fold. Sun Drop was not advertised in 2010, but ranked ninth in TV advertising to teens in 2013.

We also found evidence that several sugary drink brands targeted TV advertising to teens directly. Teens saw more ads for Sun Drop, Gatorade, Mtn Dew Kickstart, Vitamin Water, and Sprite, compared with adults. As teens spend 30% less time watching TV than adults do, the companies placed their ads on programs watched disproportionately more often by teens than by adults, which indicates that the companies likely intended to reach teens disproportionately more often with this advertising. Of note, teens saw 2.3 times as many ads for Sun Drop soda compared with adults, the highest teen-targeted ratio for any product in our analysis. Mtn Dew Kickstart was launched in 2013 with advertising that featured youth-oriented themes (e.g., skateboarding) and youthful actors. This reduced-sugar soda contains 5% juice and 96 mg of caffeine per 16-ounce can and has been coined a "breakfast soda" by media outlets.²⁰ Two additional Mtn Dew Kickstart varieties were added in 2014 (and therefore not included in this analysis) and are marketed as nighttime drinks with the tagline "Kickstart Your Night."²¹ Another highly

caffeinated Mtn Dew product, Mtn Dew Game Fuel, was not advertised on TV in 2013, but was promoted on the internet as a drink for young "gamers."

Another indicator of advertising targeted to teens is placement of display ads on third-party websites visited disproportionately more often by youth under 18 (e.g., FanFiction.net, DeviantArt.com). Three sugary drink brands placed more than one-quarter of their display ads on these youth sites: Hawaiian Punch fruit drink, and Jarritos and Crush sodas. CFBAI companies also placed more than 46 million ads for sugary drinks not approved for advertising to children on children's websites (e.g., Nickelodeon sites, Roblox.com, Disney Online), including Coca-Cola, Powerade, Pepsi NEXT, and NOS energy drink. Although these sites may not meet CFBAI definitions of child-directed media, they nonetheless are visited disproportionately more often by children than by adults.

However, not all sugary drink brands with the most advertising to teens appeared to target them directly. Despite increases in total TV ad exposure for some of these brands, in 2013 teens saw one-half as many ads for Pepsi, Dr Pepper, and Coca-Cola regular sodas compared with adults and 10% to 20% fewer TV ads for Snapple brand and iced teas. In addition, some sports drink and regular soda brands with the most TV advertising to children did not appear to target them directly (including Gatorade, Pepsi, Mtn Dew, Dr Pepper, and Coca-Cola) as children saw less than half the number of ads that adults saw.

However, as brands attempt to increase their share of the declining soft drink market by increasing advertising to adults, children and teens will also likely be exposed to greater numbers of ads. Especially troubling is the finding that the increase in TV advertising for PepsiCo sugary drink brands affected preschoolers (who had the greatest increase in exposure among youth age groups) more than older children or teens, as preschoolers may be more likely than older children to be exposed to adult television while playing in the same room their caregivers are watching TV.²² These trends are expected to continue as Coca-Cola has promised to step up its traditional media advertising.²³ These findings support the need to reduce advertising for sugary drinks on television programs viewed by large numbers of children and teens, not just advertising during programming where children make up 35% or more of the audience (i.e., the current definition of child-directed media according to the CFBAI).²⁴

Energy drink advertising to youth

As sales of energy drinks have climbed over the past three years, so has energy drink advertising. Total advertising spending for energy drinks and shots rose 9% from 2010 to 2013 to reach \$175 million; only the regular and diet soda categories in our analysis spent more on advertising in 2013. TV advertising spending for energy drinks increased 13% and radio advertising more than doubled. Moreover, teens saw

20% more TV ads for energy drinks and shots compared with adults. Energy drinks and shots represented one out of three TV ads for sugary drinks viewed by teens and one out of four ads viewed by preschoolers and children.

Energy drink brands with the most traditional advertising to youth included 5-hour Energy shots – advertised more to children and teens on TV than any other brand in our analysis – and Red Bull, which ranked fourth in TV advertising to teens and sixth for children. Teens also saw 30% more TV ads for Red Bull compared with adults and 20% more 5-hour Energy ads, indicating that this advertising was targeted to a youth audience. Although 5-hour Energy reduced its TV advertising to youth by approximately one-third from 2010 to 2013, Red Bull increased advertising to youth by 59% or more. One new product, SK Energy, spent over \$20 million in advertising in 2013. This energy shot contained 250 milligrams of caffeine per 2.5-ounce container, more caffeine than any other drink in this report and more than three times the median caffeine for the energy drink category as a whole. Of note, this product was only advertised on radio and Spanish-language TV.

On the internet, energy drink websites were among the most popular sites in our analysis for children and teens. 5HourEnergy.com was visited by twice as many teens compared with all other beverage company websites, and ranked second in visits by children. Child and teen visitors to the site increased by 600% and almost 800%, respectively, from 2010 to 2013. RedBull.com, RedBullUSA.com, and MonsterEnergy.com also ranked in the top-ten beverage company websites visited by youth, and teen visitors to Red Bull's six websites almost quadrupled from 2010 to 2013. Red Bull also ranked fifth in display ads placed on youth websites. In social media, Red Bull ranked among the top-three sugary drink brands on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and Vine. 5-hour Energy had the most-viewed YouTube video with 46 million views, while Red Bull's channel featured 4,200 different videos. Monster Energy and Rockstar also ranked among the most active brands in social media.

These findings of aggressive energy drink marketing, much of it targeted to youth under 18, are particularly problematic given the evidence that highly caffeinated drinks can be harmful to young people's health. The American Academy of Pediatrics has stated that "energy drinks have no place in the diets of children and adolescents" and recommends that they never be consumed by those under 18.²⁵ However, consumption by youth is increasing and documented adverse effects, as reported by poison control centers and hospitals, occur disproportionately in young people.²⁶ The ABA, which counts Red Bull, Rockstar, and Monster Beverage Corporation as members,²⁷ has issued guidelines regarding marketing to children and youth for member companies in the *ABA Guidance for the Responsible Labeling and Marketing of Energy Drinks*.²⁸ Through this commitment, member companies pledge not to market their products to children 12 and under, but companies maintain that their products are safe and appropriate to market to teens.²⁹

Increases in newer forms of marketing

At the same time that most beverage companies have reduced traditional advertising on TV and the internet, many have stepped up other forms of marketing – including product placements, social media, and advergame apps for mobile devices. Although much of this marketing is aimed at a broad audience (including adults), these media and the messages used strongly appeal to youth.

Brand appearances

Brand appearances (primarily paid product placements) by sugary drinks and energy drinks have become more prevalent on prime-time TV – compared with 2010, they appeared on 33% more telecasts in 2013 and the total amount of screen time devoted to these drinks almost tripled. The average length of these appearances was 25.7 seconds-per-telecast, comparable to a 30-second TV commercial. Although our data cannot determine whether these appearances were paid product placements by companies, appearances for other types of beverages (including 100% juice and plain water) declined during the same period. However, it appears that most programs that included brand appearances did not have large child and teen audiences, with some exceptions. Three TV programs were responsible for over three quarters of the appearances viewed by children and teens: American Idol (Coca-Cola), America's Got Talent (Snapple), and The Big Bang Theory (Sprite, 7Up, Monster Energy, Red Bull). It is interesting to note that Coca-Cola was responsible for three-quarters of sugary drink brand appearances viewed by youth in 2010, but Snapple appearances viewed approached Coca-Cola levels in 2013 due to the popularity of America's Got Talent with young viewers.

Social media

The use of social media to promote sugary drinks, especially energy drinks and soda brands, also grew exponentially from 2011 to 2014, and newer platforms have emerged to reach young people. The number of Facebook likes for the brands in our analysis more than tripled, compared with a 21% increase in active Facebook users (in North America).³⁰ Twitter followers of sugary drink brands increased even more dramatically, from approximately 1 million in 2011 to 10.8 million in 2014 – a growth rate of more than 1000%, compared to a 160% increase in Twitter users overall over the same period.³¹ Of note, in 2013 one-quarter of online teens used Twitter, up from 14% in 2011.³² Sugary drink brands also have been early adopters of Instagram and Vine, new social media platforms popular with youth. Instagram has many tween and teen users.^{33 34} In 2014, 30% of teens reported Instagram as their preferred social network, an increase of 13 percentage points from the previous year, while preferences for Twitter and Facebook declined.³⁵

Compared with brands in all product categories (including technology, fashion, and other food brands), sugary drinks are among the most popular brands on social media. Red Bull ranks first in followers of all corporate brands on Facebook and Coca-Cola ranks second, and both are in the top-ten most viewed YouTube brands.³⁶ While these two brands were also the top sugary drink brands in our 2011 social media analysis, Pepsi joined the list of top-three social media sugary drink brands in 2014, with exponential growth in Facebook and YouTube followers. Red Bull, Coca-Cola, and Pepsi also led in YouTube views and Vine followers in our analysis. On Instagram, Red Bull had the most followers, and Gatorade and Coca-Cola ranked fourth and fifth behind two other energy drink companies (Monster Energy and Rockstar). Another energy drink brand, 5-hour Energy, ranked fourth in YouTube views.

The popularity of these brands on Facebook and YouTube is likely driven in part by extensive advertising of sugary drinks and energy drinks on these sites. In 2013, there were almost 2 billion sugary drink display ads viewed on these two sites, 31% of all display ads in our analysis. Coca-Cola placed the most display ads on Facebook: almost 26 million ads viewed in 2013, representing 18% of all its display ads. In addition, Sunkist soda placed 89% of its display ads on Facebook, Gatorade placed 59% of ads, and NOS energy drink placed 42% of ads on the site. 5-hour Energy dominated in advertising on YouTube, placing over 52 million ads on the site in 2013, 73% of all its display ads viewed. Mtn Dew and Red Bull also placed one-quarter of their display ads on YouTube.

Highly engaging social media content also likely has contributed to brands' success in this medium. For example, Red Bull maintained separate social media accounts for Red Bull X-Fighters, Red Bull Air Race, Red Bull Flugtag, and Red Bull Music Academy. On YouTube, Red Bull offered 4,200 different videos that had been viewed over 900 million times. Red Bull's videos and posts focused on entertaining users with youth-oriented music, sports, and stunts, with the product being a subtle part of the message (i.e., just the Red Bull logo).³⁷ The newer social media platforms with short video options (15 seconds on Instagram and 6 seconds on Vine) now allow brands such as Red Bull to bring shortened versions of their popular YouTube videos to reach even more viewers. Similarly, Coca-Cola maintained separate accounts for My Coke Rewards and Coca-Cola Freestyle machines; Rockstar maintained accounts for its music festivals (Rockstar Mayhem and Rockstar Uproar) and its sexy models on Instagram; Mtn Dew maintained social media accounts for its Mtn Dew Green Label music sponsorship.

Sugary drink brands create posts and messages to engage their followers daily and encourage them to share these branded messages with their friends. Engagement devices such as hashtags, favorites, retweets, regrams, and revines further increase these brands' social media reach. Our analysis of tweets showed that some brands tweeted as much as 60

times per day and most of the top brands had high retweet rates of 50% or more. Brands' content is also well-integrated across all social media platforms, so users simply click a link on one platform to be directed to another to increase engagement with the brand and introduce users to the newest social media platforms.

Our examination of social media posts for sugary drink and energy drink brands found many examples of messages likely designed to appeal to a teen audience, including teen-targeted posts for Sun Drop, Mtn Dew, Fanta, and Gatorade, as well as black-targeted Sprite posts. In 2013, Coca-Cola announced its Ahhh all-digital campaign directly aimed at the teen market.³⁸ Some social media campaigns also featured messages with themes that appeal to children. For example, Capri Sun supported its Capri Sun Big Pouch on both Facebook and Twitter. Mtn Dew utilized an animated superhero at a breakfast table in some posts. Lipton posts included links to videos of the Muppets suggesting that iced tea makes a meal less boring than meals with water. Fanta's Facebook and YouTube pages linked to advergame apps on its Facebook page and animated videos on its YouTube channel.

Mobile marketing

As the use of social media marketing has exploded, so has brands' ability to reach young people on their mobile devices. Sixty-five percent of time spent with social media occurs on mobile devices.³⁹ Much of the branded content on social media was also available as downloadable apps on mobile devices, including 15 different Red Bull apps, apps for Monster Energy and Rockstar music and sports events, and a Coca-Cola app to find Freestyle machines. Most troubling was the wide variety of smartphone apps that integrated sugary drinks as part of the game play (i.e., advergames) utilizing cartoon-style animation and simple game play that would appeal to children, including Capri Sun tattoos, Kool-Aid Man photo bomb, Fanta Fruit Slam, Fanta Fun Tap, Snapple Spiny Lobsters in Snaplantis, Mtn Dew Baja or Bust, Lipton Cool Cubes, Sierra Mist Must Haves, and Red Bull Kart Fighters.

Exposure to these newer types of marketing promoting sugary drinks and energy drinks raises additional concerns as young people (and even adults) have more difficulty recognizing and counteracting marketing disguised as entertainment (e.g., a TV program, game or video, event sponsorship) or a message from a friend on social media.⁴⁰ Most parents are not aware that companies attempt to influence their children directly through these non-traditional forms of marketing that did not exist ten years ago.⁴¹ Further, these types of marketing are more difficult for parents to monitor, especially marketing that reaches young people on their smartphones (i.e., social media, mobile apps) virtually everywhere they go. Research with parents also shows that they are highly supportive of policies that would restrict social media and mobile marketing to youth under age 18.⁴²

Marketing to black and Hispanic youth

Although beverage companies pledge to be part of the solution to high rates of obesity, they are noticeably silent about the public health impact of marketing practices promoting sugary drinks to communities of color – the same communities where greater consumption of these products contributes to higher rates of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and other diet-related diseases.^{43 44} On the contrary, Coca-Cola Co., Dr Pepper Snapple Group, and PepsiCo have all publicized their intent to grow their businesses by focusing marketing of their core brands (including sugar-sweetened sodas) on multicultural youth. These companies also discuss utilizing black and Latino celebrities and themes with crossover appeal to make their products appear cool and increase their appeal to all youth.⁴⁵⁻⁴⁸

Overall, black children and teens saw more than twice as many TV ads for sugary drinks and energy drinks compared with their white peers, and this disparity grew from 2010 to 2013. As black youth watch approximately 60% more television than white youth watch, a portion of this higher exposure to advertising was due to differences in television viewing. However, some brands appeared to target their advertising directly to black youth. For example, black teens saw four times as many ads for Sprite and three times as many Coca-Cola ads compared with white teens. Black teens also saw 2.0 to 2.5 times as many ads for Vitamin Water, Sun Drop soda, Snapple, 5-hour Energy, Sunny D, Red Bull, Capri Sun Roarin' Waters, and Mtn Dew. In contrast, black teens saw 50% to 70% more TV ads for plain water, diet soda, and 100% juice compared with white teens, comparable to the additional time that black youth spent watching TV.

Positively, two companies eliminated virtually all advertising for sugary drinks on Spanish-language TV in 2013 – Kraft Foods and Red Bull – while Coca-Cola Co. and 5-hour Energy reduced their Spanish-language advertising by 38% or more. However, total spending to advertise sugary drinks and energy shots on Spanish-language TV increased by 44% from 2010 to 2013, and many companies greatly expanded their promotion of sugary drinks on Spanish-language TV. PepsiCo and SK Energy did not advertise on Spanish TV in 2010, but each spent \$17 million in 2013. Dr Pepper Snapple Group almost tripled its Spanish-language advertising to become the largest beverage advertiser in the medium, and Sunny D increased its advertising by 18%. Notably, both companies reduced their English-language TV advertising spending but allocated one-third of their TV advertising budgets to Spanish-language advertising in 2013, compared with 14% of TV budgets for all companies. Dr Pepper Snapple Group's 7UP brand, as well as SK Energy, devoted their entire TV advertising budgets to Spanish-language TV.

In 2013, five sugary drink brands spent more than \$9 million each in advertising on Spanish-language TV. In contrast, all beverage companies spent \$9.1 million in Spanish-language advertising for all diet drinks and 100% juice brands combined

(plain water brands did not advertise on Spanish-language TV). Further, Hispanic preschoolers and children saw 23% and 32% more Spanish-language TV ads for sugary drinks and energy shots in 2013 than they had in 2010, while Hispanic preschoolers saw more ads than either Hispanic children or teens saw.

Recommendations

These findings confirm that major beverage companies have delivered on their promises to develop lower-sugar versions of regular soda and children's drinks and to provide consumers with more information about the calories and caffeine in their products. However, at the same time, companies continued to extensively market their high-sugar and highly caffeinated drinks to youth. Companies invest in marketing to enhance positive attitudes about their brands and increase product sales and consumption. They cannot market unhealthy products directly to children and teens and then put the onus on consumers (especially more vulnerable youth) to select the healthier options – especially when those products receive less than one-quarter the marketing support.

Beverage companies should do much more to ensure that youth consume fewer of the sugary drinks and energy drinks that can harm their health:

- Stop marketing sugary drinks and energy drinks to children and teens;
- Do not target sugary drink marketing to communities that suffer disproportionately from diet-related diseases, including Hispanic and black youth;
- Strengthen CFBAI self-regulatory pledges to cover children up to age 14, ensure that companies' self-regulatory policies cover all forms of marketing, and increase company participation in the program (notably absent are Dr Pepper Snapple Group and Sunny Delight Beverages);
- Establish reasonable CFBAI definitions to identify "child-directed" marketing – current definitions exclude more than one-half of TV food advertisements that children see and obvious child-targeted websites such as Nickelodeon and Disney sites;
- Discontinue marketing practices that disproportionately appeal to teens, including advertising and product placements on television programming with large numbers of youth in the audience and youth-oriented social media, celebrities, and sponsored events;
- Further improve transparency and consumer access to ingredient information, such as providing ingredient lists on websites and disclosing nonnutritive sweeteners on product packaging; and
- Replace marketing of high-sugar beverages to youth with marketing of reduced-sugar drinks, plain water, and 100% juice.

Public policy options

Given companies' obligations to their shareholders to maintain market share and grow sales of their core businesses, government intervention may be necessary to enable companies to reduce marketing of high-sugar products to youth. Currently, companies that choose to reduce marketing for their unhealthy brands risk losing business to their competitors who do not do the same. Regulation and legislation can help counteract marketing by lessening the appeal of sugary drinks to youth and leveling the playing field among companies.

Policy makers should:

- Require straightforward and easy-to-understand labeling requirements, such as compelling companies to highlight calories, added sugars, and nonnutritive sweeteners on the front of product packages. Regulators could also require products featuring nutrition-related claims on product packaging meet minimum nutrition standards;
- Provide funding to regularly update the Federal Trade Commission's reports on food and beverage industry expenditures on marketing directed to children and adolescents;
- Monitor and enforce children's privacy protections under the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), including in social and mobile media; and
- Prohibit the sale and marketing of energy drinks to children under age 18.

Advocates, researchers, and parents

Others can take action to encourage beverage companies to reduce marketing of sugary drinks and energy drinks to children and teens.

Advocates can play an important role by serving populations that often have a limited voice in the policy process:

- Support policy measures that can help reduce consumption and marketing of sugary drinks;
- Educate policy makers about the negative impact of marketing sugary drinks and energy drinks to children and teens and how it is contributing to overconsumption of these products;
- Educate shareholders about specific company marketing practices to fuel demand for responsible marketing practices;

- Pressure beverage companies with public relations and letter writing campaigns demanding they improve their marketing practices; and
- Develop community-based solutions and share success stories.

Researchers can help build critical evidence to support policy maker and advocacy actions:

- Evaluate strategies to reduce health disparities associated with consumption of sugary drinks;
- Measure the impact of sugary drink marketing targeted to populations vulnerable to health disparities;
- Examine how newer forms of marketing (e.g., social media, product placements, internet advertising) may differentially affect youth;
- Establish ongoing measures of youth consumption of energy drinks, as well as other sugary beverages;
- Evaluate the efficacy of any new policies implemented to reduce consumption or limit marketing of sugary drinks; and
- Continue to monitor industry progress in reducing marketing of sugary drinks and energy drinks to children and teens.

Parents can also take steps to let beverage companies know that they must change their practices:

- Ignore the claims on the front of children's drink packages, and check ingredient lists for artificial sugars, artificial sweeteners, and juice content;
- Contact beverage companies and let them know they must stop marketing their unhealthy products directly to youth; and
- Learn more about the nutrition of sugary drinks and how they are marketed to children and teens by visiting www.sugarydrinkfacts.org.

In 2011, we asked beverage companies to reduce the enormous amount of marketing for unhealthy sugary drinks and energy drinks that children and teens were exposed to daily. The facts presented in this report confirm that some companies have improved some marketing practices. However, they also show that significantly more improvements are necessary and that any one company may not be able to sustain progress if the entire industry does not follow. Policy makers, advocates, and parents should demand that beverage companies do the right thing for the health of our children.