

Deceptive Beverage Industry Marketing to Communities of Color

African-American and Hispanic children are more highly targeted by sugary drink companies

African-American Youth:

From 2010 to 2013, African-American children and teens saw more than twice as many television ads for sugary drinks and energy drinks than their white peers.¹

Hispanic Youth:

From 2010 to 2013, spending on Spanish-language TV advertising for sugary drinks and energy shots increased by 44 percent. In this same time period, Hispanic preschoolers and children saw 23 percent and 32 percent more unhealthy drink ads on Spanish-language TV and Hispanic preschoolers saw one-third more of these ads than either Hispanic children or teens.¹

Sugary drink companies' targeted marketing practices extend beyond TV advertising

In the neighborhood:

Lower-income African-American and Hispanic neighborhoods have more outdoor ads for sugary drinks than lower-income and higher-income white neighborhoods.²

At entertainment/recreational events:

Sugary drink companies promote music and sporting events and sponsorships to resonate with multicultural youth and they spend more on this promotion than any other type of food company.³ Some sugary drink companies have even noted that this approach helps to bolster the “coolness” of their products.⁴

On the internet:

Sugary drink companies are increasingly using Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other social media or online outlets to engage with young people and foster a personal connection to their brand.⁵ Some of the strategies companies use to target young people may be considered deceptive, which could also raise privacy concerns.⁶

Sugary drink companies most often used smartphone applications, text messaging, and banner ads on websites to reach young people on their mobile devices.⁷

On average, African-American youth are 34 percent more likely and Hispanic youth are 93 percent more likely to visit sugary drink company websites compared with all youth.¹



Top: Beverage companies often work with high-profile celebrities to promote their products to key audiences, including black and Latino youth.

Sugary drink consumption leads to health disparities

Chronic diseases are regressive:

In addition to seeing more advertising for sugary drinks, African-American and Hispanic communities have disproportionately high rates of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and other chronic diseases that are brought on, in part, by consuming sugary drinks.^{8,9}

Sugary drink taxes reduce consumption and improve health:

African-American and Hispanic communities spend a greater percentage of their money on sugary drinks than people from higher-income communities. When the price of a product increases, people generally spend less on that product. A tax on sugary drinks would help decrease consumption, so people from low-income communities and communities of color would spend less money on beverages that make them sick providing disposable income for other purchases.¹⁰



Top: A Coca-Cola campaign celebrates National Hispanic Heritage Month by placing transferable temporary tattoos of common Latino family names on cans of Coca-Cola.

Sugary drink taxes benefit community programs:

Revenue raised from a sugary drink tax can be reinvested in low-income communities. For instance in Berkeley, California revenue from an existing sugary drink tax has been allocated for spending on school and community programs, several with a focus on low-income or minority populations, to promote healthy eating, diabetes, and obesity prevention. Similarly in Philadelphia tax revenues are being allocated for early care and education community recreational programs.

Endnotes

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