

Food Advertising in the Age of Obesity: Content Analysis of Food Advertising on General Market and African American Television

VANI R. HENDERSON, MS; BRIDGET KELLY, MPH

Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

ABSTRACT

Objective: To document the types of foods advertised and weight-related nutritional claims made during advertisements appearing on general market and African American television programming.

Design: Content analysis of 553 food advertisements appearing during 101.5 prime-time television hours.

Outcome Measures: Advertisements were classified according to general category (fast-food restaurant, sit-down restaurant, packaged food), specific food type, and the presence of a weight-related nutritional claim.

Analysis: The type of foods advertised and nutritional claims made on general market and African American programs were compared using t and chi-squared tests.

Results: More food advertisements appeared during African American programs than general market programs. These advertisements were more likely to be for fast food, candy, soda, or meat and less likely to be for cereals, grains and pasta, fruits and vegetables, dessert, or alcohol. Of all of the food advertisements, 14.9% made a weight-related nutritional claim. More claims related to fat content appeared during African American programming, whereas more light and lean claims appeared in general market advertisements.

Conclusions and Implications: Practitioners and policy makers should be aware of the prevalence of food advertisements and their potential impact on knowledge and behavior and should consider working more closely with food manufacturers to encourage the creation and promotion of weight-friendly foods. Meanwhile, nutrition educators can help by teaching consumers critical thinking skills as may relate to food advertisements.

KEY WORDS: food and beverages, marketing, advertising, nutrition

(*J Nutr Educ Behav.* 2005;37:191-196.)

INTRODUCTION

In the last several years, the US obesity epidemic has reached unprecedented severity. According to the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), as of 2002, 65% of American adults over 20 years of age were overweight; of these, 30% were obese, and 5% were extremely obese. For African Americans, the prevalence of obesity is even higher: among black women over 20 years, 77% are overweight and 49% are obese, whereas among black men, 63% are overweight and 28% are obese.¹

It is generally recognized that obesity occurs from regular consumption of energy in excess of that used by the body; thus, one approach to weight reduction is to decrease the calories consumed. One barrier to reducing calorie consumption may be the intense marketing by producers of less healthful foods (eg, candy, soda) and insufficient counter-marketing of healthful foods.

A body of research has linked frequent television viewing with obesity, especially in women and children.²⁻⁵ Three mechanisms have been proposed to explain the link between obesity and television viewing: (1) television displaces exercise and other active pursuits, (2) television leads to increased food consumption while watching, and (3) exposure to advertising on television leads to subsequent consumption of advertised foods.⁶ This article focuses on the third theory: the potential of television ads to increase consumption of advertised foods.

There is a great deal of advertising of energy-dense or low-nutrient foods on television. An analysis of 2001 advertising spending found that US companies spent \$3.5 billion on fast-food advertisements and \$5.8 billion on the separate food, beverage, and confectionary category, including \$785.5 million for the top 5 soda brands.⁷ Other analyses of televised food references have also shown that many are for high-calorie or low-nutrient foods.^{8,9} Importantly, there is evidence of behavioral implications of exposure to food advertising. Consumption of advertised foods is higher than consumption of foods that are not advertised,^{2,10} and advertising expenditures are generally greatest for the most highly processed and packaged foods.¹¹ Children exposed to more food advertising have been found to choose the products advertised at significantly higher rates than children not exposed to the advertisements,^{12,13} and the time spent with television has been significantly associated with the pur-

Address for correspondence: Vani R. Henderson, MS, Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania, 3620 Walnut St, Philadelphia, PA 19104; Tel: (415) 568-6365; Fax: (215) 898-2024; E-mail: vhenderson@asc.upenn.edu.
©2005 SOCIETY FOR NUTRITION EDUCATION

chase-influencing attempts of children at the grocery store.¹⁴ Further, it stands to reason that food manufacturers are putting millions of dollars behind advertising campaigns because they are effective at promoting sales. Food companies could encourage better nutritional practices and perhaps play a role in countering the increase in obesity by creating more healthful foods and explicitly promoting the foods on the basis of weight-friendly nutritional properties, such as being low in fat, low in calories, or otherwise contributing to a healthful diet.

The extent to which obesity-related health claims are included in televised food advertisements has not been established. A number of studies have documented the prevalence of different categories of foods advertised on television and in magazines, and content analyses of print advertisements have found that nutritional claims are in the minority.¹⁵ Other recent research found that food advertisements aired on African American television are typically for less healthful foods.¹⁶ However, less is known about the types of nutritional claims that appear on television, the most important medium used for food advertising.¹⁵ The present study sought to document the presence of nutritional claims in food advertisements aired during popular television programs and, more specifically, to compare advertising on shows targeted to African Americans with advertising during programming aimed at a general audience.

DESCRIPTION OF STUDY

Sample

Television is the primary medium used for food advertising¹⁵; therefore, television advertisements were sampled in this study. Advertisements aired during and around popular prime-time television shows during October and November 2003 served as the sample because prime-time shows garner the largest viewing audience. All shows appeared on 1 of 5 national networks: NBC, ABC, CBS, Fox, and UPN. One-time and special event programming, such as sports events, were excluded from analysis. A list of the season's 20 television programs with the highest viewership between September 15 and October 7, 2003, served as the basis for the selection of general market programs.¹⁷ Nineteen programs (the 20th program was a one-time sports event) were selected from the list for inclusion to represent the general market.

In addition, Nielsen Media Research's weekly list of the top 10 shows among African American viewers was used to select shows for that audience.¹⁸ Shows that appeared on the weekly top 10 list for more than 3 consecutive weeks between September 15 and October 7, 2003, and that were not sports or special event programming were selected for inclusion (a slightly different methodology was used in selecting the African American programs because of the availability of weekly reports of the top 10 African American shows rather than a midseason summary). Nine regularly scheduled programs appeared consistently. Two programs

appeared as top shows on both the general market and African American lists. It was determined a priori that if the African American audience comprised less than 10% of the viewing audience of the duplicate show, the show would be counted as a general market program, and if it comprised more than 10%, the show would be excluded from the analysis. Using this criterion, the 2 shows that appeared on both the general market and African American lists were counted as part of the general market.

All commercials aired during and after the target programs until the beginning of the next program were included. A total of 101.5 hours of television programs (32 hours of African American and 69.5 hours of general market) were analyzed.

Coding Procedures

Each advertisement identified as promoting a food product was analyzed for content, whereas nonfood advertisements were simply counted to assess the percentage of food commercials as a proportion of all advertisements aired. Food advertisements were coded in 3 ways: general type of product advertised, specific food category, and obesity-related nutritional claim.

The general type of product advertised included fast-food restaurant, sit-down restaurant, or packaged food. Also, we coded for a specific food category. We developed a coding scheme based on that used by Ippolito and Pappalardo¹⁵ but adapted to identify food categories that might, as per a recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report, contribute to energy imbalance (ie, foods high in fat and sugar, high in energy density, and low in fiber).¹⁹ Thus, although any food eaten in sufficient quantities can contribute to overweight, we were particularly interested in categories of foods that were likely to be high in fat, "empty" calories, and refined and other processed sugars and/or low in fiber, such as soda, candy, desserts, salty snacks, and pizza. Final coding categories included dairy, meat/eggs/mixtures, poultry/fish/mixtures, cereals/breads/pasta, salty snacks, pizza, fruits/vegetables/100% juice, candy/sweets, desserts/sweet breads, soda, coffee/tea/other drinks, alcohol, fats/oils, condiments, and advertisements for multiple items or meals.

Third, we coded any advertising claims related to the nutritional content of the food product on dimensions that have been shown to be related to weight loss. We were particularly interested in claims related to fiber, fat, calories, sugar, and (given the recent increase in the popularity of low-carbohydrate/high-protein weight loss diets) protein and carbohydrates, as well as claims around weight management or dieting. Manifest content analysis was used, that is, only explicit claims, whether stated verbally in the voiceover, superimposed in text over the visual, or included as part of a visual, were coded,²⁰ and coders did not attempt to interpret implicit or latent meanings of words or images. All distinct claims in each advertisement were recorded, so an advertisement could have multiple claims.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/10314948>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/10314948>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)