

European industry shifts food marketing mix to children

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM: Independent data released yesterday, 15 September 2010, show how the world's biggest food brands have significantly changed the products they advertise to children. A major effort has been made to put advertising spend behind "better for you" products or to move out of children's airtime altogether. At the same time children are being exposed to significantly less advertising for all food products across all programming.



Comparing data from 2005 with 2010, Accenture Media Management found that companies representing nearly 70% of EU food advertising spend have either voluntarily stopped advertising foods to under 12s altogether or promoted only "better for you" options.

The audit has been released as part of the EU Pledge (www.eu-pledge.eu), a commitment made by 11 food manufacturers in December 2007 to change the products they advertise to children under 12 years. The commitments cover advertising on TV, print, the internet and communications in primary schools.

As part of the EU Pledge, the 11 food companies agreed to independent monitoring. This was designed to ensure both compliance with and to measure the market impact of their public commitment to the European Commission's Platform on Diet, Physical Activity and Health.

High compliance rate

Accenture's analysis of more than 580 000 TV spots in six sample markets - Greece, Hungary, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal and Spain - found a compliance rate of 98.9%. In the same markets, analysis of online advertising across nearly 50 websites identified as targeting under-12s by Accenture found just one case of non-compliance. Monitoring of print advertising in children's magazines in France, Spain, Portugal and the UK found 100% compliance.

Overall the independent audit shows that children are seeing 36% less advertising for all food products in all TV programmes on all channels at all times.

A number of the companies no longer advertise any of their products to children, while the majority have adopted nutritional criteria to define healthier products within their portfolios.

The same data demonstrate a 60% decline in advertising for these products all TV programmes on all channels at all times.

In addition, signatory companies honoured their commitment not to engage in any commercial communications related to food and beverage products in primary schools, except where specifically requested by or agreed with the school administration for educational purposes. BDRC Continental surveyed a representative sample of 400 schools in Belgium, Italy, Slovakia and the UK and the results showed that food advertisers were 92% compliant with their commitment.

Scheme to be extended

The scheme will be dramatically extended with Cadbury and Wrigley joining by virtue of their takeovers by Kraft and Mars respectively. In addition five major snack manufacturers - Procter & Gamble, Intersnack, Lorenz Snack-World, Unichips-San Carlo and Zweifel Pomy-Chip - have come on board and will be monitored for the first time in 2011. The EU Snacks Association is also actively promoting the scheme to other members.

Said Stephan Loerke, WFA managing director: "Voluntary action can often be more effective and delivered in a shorter timeframe than government regulation. These independent audits show how self-regulation can help deliver on public policy objectives and why it should not be discounted from the policy mix."

The EU Pledge was facilitated and endorsed by the World Federation of Advertisers and is a joint industry commitment to the EU Platform on Diet, Physical Activity and Health set up by the European Commission in 2005.

The full EU Pledge Monitoring Report can be downloaded at www.eu-pledge.eu.

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