

Over the past few years, major food companies, like Coca-Cola, General Mills, and Hershey, signaled an interest in combating their images as junk-food giants—they've been introducing healthier products, cutting sugar, and promoting exercise.

However, these food giants haven't changed their advertising practices to match with those causes, according to a new report from the University of Connecticut Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity. In addition, their product promotion continues to disproportionately affect black and Hispanic children and teenagers, whom the companies target specifically with junk food ads. These groups are more likely to see more of these ads than their white counterparts.

“Companies say that they want to be part of the solution to obesity and the overconsumption of unhealthy foods,” says Jennifer Harris, report author and Director of Marketing Initiatives at the Rudd Center. “But they are still overwhelmingly using ads to push unhealthy stuff, and their disproportionately targeting black and Hispanic youth.”

Using market research data, the team examined advertising spending in 2017 in total, as well as advertising spending for Spanish-language and black-targeted television in 32 brands, including McDonald's, Hershey, Kellogg, and Domino's Pizza. They also looked at black, white, and Hispanic children and teen's exposure to food-related advertising.