

Source: The Advertising Education Forum

On March 28, 2007 the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) released a major study entitled 'Food for Thought: Television Food Advertising to Children in the United States' which combines a content analysis of TV ads with detailed data about children's viewing habits to provide an estimate of the number and type of TV ads seen by children of various ages. KFF state that it is the largest study of its kind, covering more than 1,600 hours of programming.

It is intended to provide an analysis of "current state of food advertising to children on TV and to help educate relevant stakeholders in politics and the food and media industries as well as provide a benchmark facility to monitor future developments". The study covers all genres of programming viewed by children.

Key findings:

Exposure to advertising:

"Given the amount of time they spend watching TV each day and the mix in programming and networks that they view, children ages 2-7 see an average of 17 minutes of advertising a day (17:32 min, 38 ads) for all products (toys, food, media, and so on).

For 8-12-year-olds, the comparable figure is 37 minutes a day of advertising (37:44 min, 83 ads).

For 13-17-year-olds, it's 35 minutes a day of advertising (35:47 min, 79 ads)."

"From an annual perspective, children ages 2-7 are exposed to an average of 13,904 TV ads a year for all products, while the comparable figures are 30,155 ads for 8-12-year-olds, and 28,655 ads for teens ages 13-17. This represents more than 106 hours (106:39 hr) a year of advertising for the 2-7-year-olds, nearly 230 hours (229:31 hr) a year for the 8-12-year-olds, and 217 hours (217:37 hr) a year for the 13-17-year-olds."

Exposure to food advertising:

Children ages 2-7 see an average of 12 food ads a day on TV. Over the course of a year, this translates into an average of more than 4,400 food ads-nearly 30 hours (29:31 hr) of food advertising.

Children ages 8-12 see an average of 21 food ads a day on TV. Over the course of a year, this translates into an average of more than 7,600 food ads-over 50 hours (50:48 hr) of food advertising.

Teenagers ages 13-17 see an average of 17 food ads a day on TV. Over the course of a year, this translates into an average of more than 6,000 food ads-over 40 hours (40:50 hr) of food advertising.

Half (50%) of all ad time on children's shows is for food.

Among all ads children see, food is the largest product category for all ages (32% for 2-7-year-olds, 25% for 8-12-year-olds, and 22% for 13-17-year-olds), followed by media and travel/entertainment.

Types of food products in ads targeting children and teens

34% are for candy and snacks, 28% are for cereal, and 10% are for fast food.

4% are for dairy products, 1% is for fruit juices, and none are for fruits or vegetables