

Conventional marketing techniques can increase children's vegetable selection

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AN UPSIDE OF MARKETING FOOD *to Children*



Food marketing aimed at children often entices them to eat fast food and sugary foods but what if marketing was aimed at getting kids to eat fruits and vegetables? Here's what we found when we used marketing techniques to get kids to visit the school salad bar...

90%
Decorating the salad bar with a fun, colorful, wrap featuring vegetable characters increased salad selection

239%
Adding a video depicting vegetable characters delivering health education messages near the decorated salad bar increased salad selection

PERCENT STUDENTS SELECTING SALAD FOR EACH MARKETING TECHNIQUE

34% 3 TIMES AS MANY STUDENTS SELECTED SALAD! (Video & Wrap)

24% (Banner Wrap)

8% (Without Marketing)



Credit: Cornell Food and Brand Lab

If you think it's too challenging to get young kids to willingly take vegetables, think again! The same methods that fast food and candy companies use to market food to children - colorful banners, exciting characters, and catchy video ads— can be used to increase the number of children that take vegetables in school cafeterias. In fact, Cornell researchers found that 239% more students lined up at the salad bar when it was decorated using colorful banners with vegetable cartoon-characters and fun, nutrition education videos.

In this new study published in *Pediatrics*, Cornell Center for Behavioral Economics in Child Nutrition Programs (BEN Center) researchers explore two marketing strategies to encourage more kids to take vegetables as part of their school lunch: 1) vinyl wrap-around banners that fasten to the lower portion of salad bars depicting vegetable cartoon characters and 2) nutrition education videos narrated by the same characters. "Choice is extremely important because, just like adults, kids are more likely to stick to their choice if they feel they made it freely. Therefore, kids who are nudged to choose vegetables using fun marketing campaigns are more likely to eat them than those who are forced to take them," explains co-author and co-director of the Cornell BEN Center, David Just, PhD.

For this six week study conducted at 10 elementary schools in a large urban school district, researchers used Founders Farm trademarked Super Sprowtz vinyl wrap-around banners, flat screen televisions, and video segments with the veggie cartoon characters explaining the benefits of healthy [food](#) choices. The characters are personified

vegetables including broccoli, carrots, spinach, peas and many others.

The researchers observed how many students served themselves from the [salad bar](#) before and after adding the banners and videos to the salad bar. In schools where just the banner was used, 90% more students visited the salad bar. In schools where videos were shown on TV monitors in addition to the banners, 239% more students selected vegetables from the salad bar!

These findings demonstrate how conventional marketing tools such as banners and videos can increase how many kids take [vegetables](#) - leading to more nutritious, balanced meals and ultimately to healthier students. "Vegetable marketing in schools is a low cost win-win solution for food providers, school meal programs, and students," says lead author Drew Hanks, PhD, now a professor at Ohio State University. He explains, "The results of this study highlight how the persuasiveness of marketing media can be leveraged in a positive way by encouraging [children](#) to make more nutritious choices."

More information: A. S. Hanks et al, Marketing Vegetables in Elementary School Cafeterias to Increase Uptake, *Pediatrics* (2016). [DOI: 10.1542/peds.2015-1720](https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2015-1720)

Provided by Cornell Food & Brand Lab

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