

Brand Advertising Directed at Children and Teenagers

The Case of Sugar-Sweetened Beverages



Sugar-sweetened beverages are the **top source of added sugar** consumed by Canadians¹. **Young people** aged 9 to 18 are among the **biggest consumers** of these products².



There are over a **thousand different types of ready-to-drink sugar-sweetened beverages** on the Canadian market³.

In order to reach all consumers, sugar-sweetened beverages are produced in a wide variety of **colours, formats, and flavours**. They include:

- Soft drinks,
- Fruit drinks,
- Slush,
- Sports drinks,
- Energy drinks,
- Vitamin water,
- Iced teas and coffees,
- Flavoured milks and plant-based beverages.

Sugar-sweetened beverage consumption is associated with numerous **health problems**, such as increased risk of type 2 diabetes, obesity, fatty liver, cardiovascular diseases, and certain types of cancer, as well as tooth decay and dental erosion⁴⁻¹⁰.

These products also have a **negative impact on the environment**. Their production and consumption generate plastic and aluminum waste, greenhouse gases, and wasteful water consumption¹¹.

EFFECTS OF SWEETENED BEVERAGES

The infographic lists the following effects:

- Cardiovascular disease**: Represented by a heart and an ECG line.
- Tooth decay and erosion**: Represented by a tooth with a cavity.
- Hepatic steatosis (fatty liver)**: Represented by a liver with fat spots.
- Obesity**: Represented by a measuring tape and a scale showing 14.0.
- Cancer**: Represented by a yellow awareness ribbon.
- Type 2 diabetes**: Represented by a hand holding a glucose meter.
- Greenhouse gas emissions**: Represented by a red car labeled 'Cola' driving on a globe.
- Plastic and aluminum waste**: Represented by discarded cans and a plastic bottle.
- Water wastage**: Represented by a dripping faucet.

One out of **4 young Canadians aged 5 to 19** consume sugar-sweetened beverages **on a daily basis**¹².



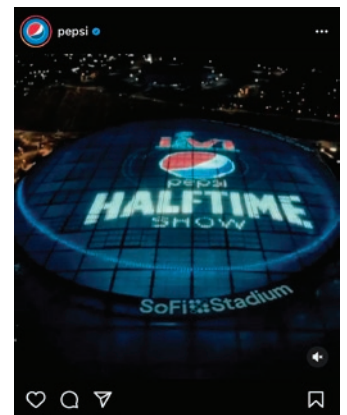
Intensive Marketing to Youth

Intensive promotion of sugar-sweetened beverages is often directed at young people. Sold affordably and often on sale, these products are accessible everywhere.

Brand advertising is one of the numerous marketing strategies used to reach young people. It focuses on attractive and distinctive features of a brand, such as logos, slogans, colours, and mascots.

Persuasive Brand Advertising

Sugar-sweetened beverage brand advertisement is relentless in young Canadians' daily lives and surroundings. **Online and on social media**, ads are everywhere. Sugar-sweetened beverages are also advertised through **stores, public transportation, sports venues, family events and television.**



Many **musical and sports events** are sponsored by beverage companies and transcend borders by worldwide broadcasting. Product placements and logos also appear in **interactive games and movies** aimed at children.



Source: gatoradecanada Instagram page, 2019



Visible everywhere, sugar-sweetened beverage companies work to associate their brands with sports, entertainment, and pleasure.

Almost 7 out of 10 adults in Quebec believe that the government should ban the promotion of foods and beverages high in fat, sugar, and/or sodium to children under the age of 13¹³.

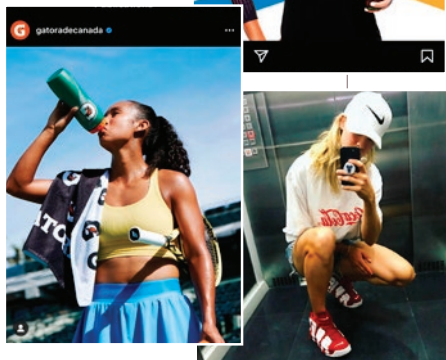
Sports and Sugar-Sweetened Beverages: A Harmful Association

The world of sports is filled with advertisements for sugar-sweetened beverages. This association gives sugar-sweetened beverages a false aura of healthiness and diverts focus away from their harmful health effects^{14,15}.

Star Athletes

Partnerships with athletes are a common strategy, especially for sports drinks companies. As symbols of excellence, performance, and determination, star athletes are seen as examples to follow¹⁶.

Source: page: Facebook guruenergie, 2020



Source: geniebouchard Instagram page, 2017

Source: SPORTSNET YouTube channel, 2022



Source: MLB YouTube channel, 2022



Source: canadасoccer Instagram page, 2022

Using star athletes gives products high visibility and creates an impression that sugar-sweetened beverages are healthy products. The popularity of star athletes among young people strongly contributes to maintaining a positive brand image.

And yet, consuming sports drinks in the context of physical activity is not recommended for

young people in the majority of cases¹⁷.

Advertisement featuring athletes or professional sports personalities is especially effective to attract pre-teens, in particular young boys¹⁸.

On social media, these athletes use branded objects, such as water bottles, shirts, and towels to promote sugar-sweetened beverages. Peer pressure, difficulty in identifying advertising, and heavy use of social media result in teenagers being particularly vulnerable to marketing on those platforms.¹⁹.

Sports Teams

Sugar-sweetened beverage companies also sponsor professional sports teams and leagues, often in exchange for brand visibility, such as their logo being displayed on the playing field of pro sports teams. These events have a large audience, including many youth.

Sports sponsorships are not limited to professional sports, they also extend to children and youth sports teams.

For example, a soccer tournament for teenage players might feature Gatorade's logo and colours on jerseys, displays, banners, and trophies.

Source: Rachel Provise, 2017 and Slush Puppie Instagram page, 2019



Sports Facilities

Recreational sports facilities are not exempt from brand advertising. Far from being discreet, sugar-sweetened beverage brand logos are featured on boards around the field, on menus, on doors, on recycling bins, and on scoreboards. **Mascots** also sometimes make appearances.

In Canada, sports facilities can even be named after sugar-sweetened beverage companies.



Source: Collectif Viral, 2022



Source: Grande Prairie Website, 2022

A Branded Consumer Item for Every Taste

Sugar-sweetened beverage companies develop **branded consumer items** to further promote their brands.

According to a survey, **75% of Canadian parents** reported that their children own at least one item featuring a brand or mascot²⁰.



Source: Crémère Slush Puppie Joliette Facebook page, 2021



Source: Canadian Tire Website, 2022

Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Packaging

Popular among children and teenagers, **reusable slush containers featuring brand logos or mascots are popular among children and teenagers.** Upon purchasing **branded reusable containers**, some companies even offer discounts or free refills. These containers are often promoted directly to young people, notably by featuring their peers in photos.

Sugar-sweetened beverage logos and mascots can also be found on **disposable containers** offered by some restaurants, venues, and family events.



Source: slushpuppiemascot Instagram page, 2021

Source: slushpuppiemascot Instagram page, 2018



Brand mascots foster an emotional attachment with the brand, promote brand loyalty, and influence children's preferences²¹.



Source: Walmart Website, 2021 and 2022

Children's Toys

Fun and attractive for kids, toys with sugar-sweetened beverage branding come in various styles: dolls, miniature trucks, stuffed animals, and figurines. The brand's colours and logos are featured.

Clothing and Makeup

Clothes featuring sugar-sweetened beverage logos and brands are sold at stores frequented by young people. For teenagers, social identity and peer approval are central to consumption habits. Clothing is used as a way to identify with their peers through special and recognizable brands²².

Some sugar-sweetened beverage companies develop **makeup** products sporting the brand's logo and colours, some of which are particularly attractive to children, such as soft drink scented lip balm.



Source: Jean CouduWebsite, 2021, Walmart Website, 2021 and Sephora Website, 2021

Source: ArdeneWebsite, 2021

Source: ArdeneWebsite, 2021



Source: slushpuppiemad Instagram page, 2021

Source: cocacolaquebec Instagram page, 2021

Contests

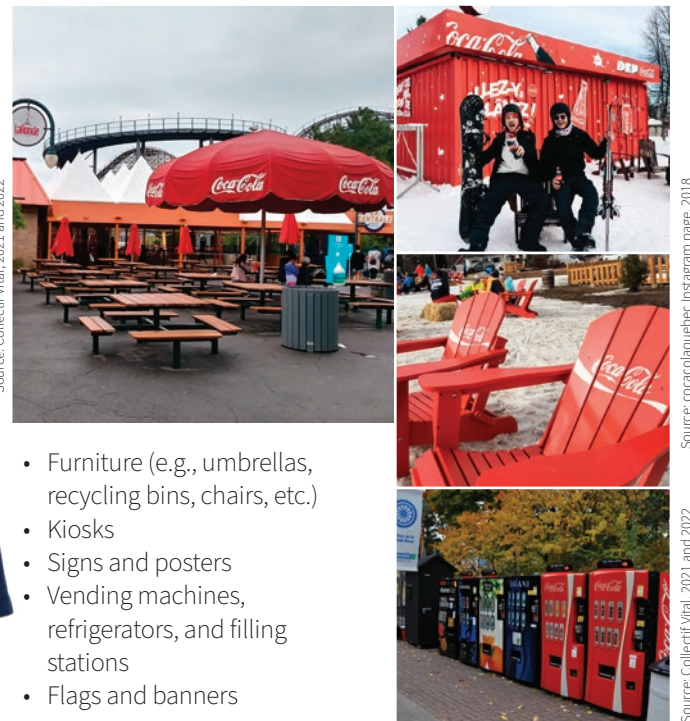
Common on social media, contests give participants a chance **win various objects** sporting the sugar-sweetened beverage brand's logo, colours or mascot, such as beach towels, bicycles, dart games, earphones, and reusable bags

Sugar-Sweetened Beverages and Fun: A Powerful Association!

Family-Friendly Activities

Brand advertising is often found in **zoos, museums, movie theatres, theme parks, water parks, outdoor recreation centres, and ski resorts**, which are places appreciated by children and teenagers.

This type of advertising, which reinforces the association between brands and fun, can take different forms.



Source: Collectif Vital, 2021 and 2022

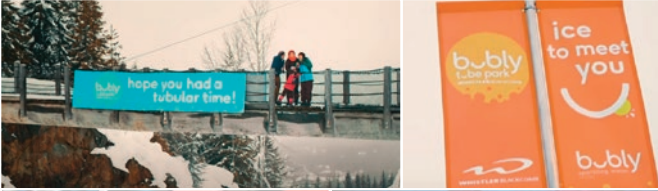
Source: cocacolaquebec Instagram page, 2018

Source: Collectif Vital, 2021 and 2022

- Furniture (e.g., umbrellas, recycling bins, chairs, etc.)
- Kiosks
- Signs and posters
- Vending machines, refrigerators, and filling stations
- Flags and banners



Source: Whistler Blackcomb Webpage, 2021



Source: cocacola_coliseum Instagram page, 2019 and 2021



Some family venues are **named after sugar-sweetened beverage brands**, such as the bubly™ Tube Park and the Colisée Coca-Cola. Brand logos and colours are featured everywhere and associate with the positive and fun emotions that children and families experience there.



Source: cocacolaquebec Instagram page, 2022



Source: site partagezlamagie.ca, 2022

Attractive Events for Children

Brand advertisement is also present in **children's events**. The Coca-Cola Holiday Truck Tour is a good example. Driven by Santa Claus, a truck branded with Coca-Cola's colours, logo and slogan travels throughout Canada and exploits the holiday magic.



Source: Coca-Cola Québec Facebook page, 2015



Source: pepsicanada Instagram page, 2014

Concerts and Music Festivals

The sugar-sweetened beverage industry also participates in concerts and music festivals, which are popular among teenagers. Companies promote their brands creatively, using displays, giant bottles, temporary tattoos, games, and giant cassette tapes.

Always a Sugar-Sweetened Beverage on Hand: A Constant Brand Reminder

In grocery stores, convenience stores, drug stores, and department stores, brand advertisements manifest in the form of **stickers on doors and windows**, as well as **branded refrigerators** strategically placed close to cash registers.

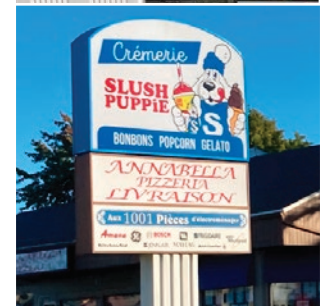


Some stores **affiliate** with brands and feature them on their storefront.



Source: Human Environments Analysis Lab, 2019

In Quebec, "dépanneurs" are the #1 location where youth purchase energy drinks, followed by grocery stores²³. Almost 2 out of 3 public schools have at least one dépanneur within 750 metres²⁴. ■



Source: Collectif Vital, 2021

Learn More About Brand Advertising in Canada

The food industry uses creative techniques and strategies to attract young people. In the face of persistent and widespread food and beverage advertising directed at Canadian children and teenagers, the Collectif Vital has conducted an overall survey of brand advertising and produced specific case studies focused on sugar-sweetened beverages, energy drinks, children's cereals, and fast food restaurants.

To find out more, visit
collectifvital.ca/marketing-to-kids.



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