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INTRODUCTION

Brazil experienced a large increase in the consumption of ultra-processed food products (UPP) (high in sodium, fats and sugar) in detriment to the consumption of more natural and traditional diets (DUARTE *et al.*, 2012; BRAITHWAITE *et al.*, 2013). This pattern of consumption is related to excessive weight gain, obesity and noncommunicable diseases (NCDs).

The marketing (especially advertisements (ads)) of these unhealthy foods is one of the central causes of this change in food consumption pattern (VEERMAN *et al.*, 2009). Thus, the regulation of this marketing becomes an important part of a set of actions to combat obesity (WHO 2010; 2013). Food marketing surveillance, especially in mass communication channels (such as television), is imperative for the establishment of appropriate measures in the area.

OBJECTIVE

To describe nutrition-related ads broadcasted in Brazilian television, and to determine the potential exposure of individuals to unhealthy food advertising in Brazil.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The food marketing – television monitoring protocol created by the International Network for Food and Obesity/Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs) Research, Monitoring and Action Support (INFORMAS) (KELLY B *et al.*, 2013) was applied for the data collection. Three free-to-air channel (most popular networks) programming was recorded from 6am to 12am, for eight days (four week days and four weekend days, excluding holidays), randomly spread during the month of April 2018. All commercial ads broadcasted were selected and those related to food and beverages were identified and classified based on the NOVA system (MONTEIRO *et al.*, 2010). Five additional ad categories were also included: traditional restaurants and bars, fast food restaurants, dietary supplements, and supermarkets. Alcoholic beverages were not included. The total number of ads was identified. Ads from UPP and from fast food restaurants were considered unhealthy advertisement. The participation of each category in the total number of ads was identified.

RESULTS

A total of 432 hours of Brazilian television programming was analyzed. A total of 7,991 nutrition-related ads were identified (9.73% foods and beverages (n=801), 1.48% restaurants (n=110), 1.27% supermarkets (n=99), and 3.07% dietary supplements (n=246)). UPP responded for over 90% of all nutrition-related ads (90.51%), while fresh and minimally processed items (mostly meat and coffee) responded for less than 10% (7.85%). Fast food restaurants ads were over four times more frequent than those from traditional restaurants and bars (1.2% (n=89) vs. 0.27% (n=21)).

Table 1. Frequency of ads identified on the three most popular free-to-air channel on Brazilian television.

Advertisement type	n	%	CI 95%	
Nutrition-related ads				
Food or drink product - food company/brand	801	9.73	9.06	10.43
Food or drink company or brand (no retailer) without food or drink product	21	0.31	0.20	0.48
Food or drink retailer (supermarket or convenience store) with food or drink product	40	0.62	0.45	0.84
Food or drink retailer (supermarket or convenience store) without food or drink product	59	0.66	0.50	0.86
Food or drink retailer (restaurant, takeaway or fast food) with food or drink product	94	1.25	1.01	1.54
Food or drink retailer (restaurant, takeaway or fast food) without food or drink product	16	0.23	0.14	0.38
Non-nutrition related ads	6960	87.21	86.41	87.97
Total	7991	100,00		

CI: confidence interval.

Table 2. Frequency of nutrition-related ads identified on the three most popular free-to-air channel on Brazilian television, according to the NOVA systems.

Food product category	%	CI 95%	
Unprocessed or minimally processed foods	7.85	6.12	10.01
Processed culinary ingredients	1.01	0.47	2.14
Processed foods	0.63	0.24	1.67
Ultra-processed food and drink products	90.51	88.15	92.44
Soft drinks	24.78	22.02	27.75
Dietary supplements	21.63	19.03	24.47
Nuggets, cold cuts and other ultra-processed meat products	8.70	6.99	10.77
Other sweetened beverages	5.58	4.29	7.25
Fast food	12.03	8.42	17.39
Others	17.80	12.31	27.34
Total	100,00		

CI: confidence interval.

CONCLUSION

Most nutrition-related ads broadcasted on the three most popular free-to-air channels in Brazil are related to unhealthy food and beverage consumption. In this scenario, television advertisement regulation must be considered in the healthy eating promotion agenda.

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