Ads Use SpongeBob, Shrek to Steer Latino Kids to Unhealthy Foods

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Food marketers are using popular cartoon characters such as SpongeBob and Shrek to promote junk food among Latino children, according to a study by the University of Arizona and reported by Forbes. After sampling 150 hours of kids' shows broadcast in English and Spanish, the study found that while both were packed with fast-food and junk-food ads, the products advertised on the Spanish shows were less healthy. Lead researcher Dale Kunkel, a professor of communications at the University of Arizona, found that 84 percent of food commercials aimed at Spanish-speaking kids promoted foods ranked in the worst three food categories devised by federal health officials. In addition, less than 1 percent of the ads promoted fruits, vegetables, whole grains or other healthy foods.

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