

General Mills FACTS

Child Brands: 7 ■ Family Brands: 3

Of the cereal companies in this report, General Mills engages in the most child marketing, but its child cereals rank among the worst in nutrition quality. It claims the most internet and television advertising to children, with an especially notable web presence in its gaming site Millsberry.com and a high volume of ads on third-party child-targeted websites. Boasting “whole grain guaranteed” on almost all of its boxes along with other health and child engagement features, the company also markets extensively on its packaging, targeting both parents and children.

Nutrition Facts:

Overall Nutrition Score: 43.4 Ranking: 8 of 9

Marketing Facts:

Total advertising spending (\$000): \$261,892.1 . . . Ranking: 1

TELEVISION ADVERTISING

Television advertising exposure: Ranking: 1

AVERAGE ADS VIEWED BY AGE AND DEMOGRAPHICS*				
Children		Adolescents		
2-5 years	6-11 years	Child/Adult viewing ratio	12-17 years	Teens/adults viewing ratio
477	525	3.2	267	1.7

*From 1/1/08 to 3/31/09

INTERNET MARKETING*

Child-targeted website exposure: Ranking: 1

► Millsberry.com

Child-targeted banner ad exposure: Ranking: 1

WEBSITE EXPOSURE*			
Avg unique visitors Age 2-11 (000)	Avg unique visitors Age 12-17 (000)	Avg times visited per month	Avg minutes per visit
386.8	380.2	2.8	23.7

*From 1/1/08 to 3/31/09

BANNER AD EXPOSURE*		
Avg unique viewers per month (000)	Avg ads viewed per month (000)	% of advs on youth website
11,720	10.4	91%

*From 10/1/08 to 3/31/09

IN-STORE MARKETING

Total share of shelf: 18.7% Ranking: 1

In-store displays and promotions: Ranking: 2

SHELF SPACE		DISPLAYS		PROMOTIONS	
% of stores stocking	Avg # facings per store	% stores with displays	Avg # displays per store	% stores with promotions	Avg # promotions per store
100%	69.1	68%	9.0	92%	35.1

*From 05/09 to 06/09

PRODUCT PACKAGING*

Health features on the box Ranking: 2

INGREDIENT CLAIMS		HEALTH CLAIMS		HEALTH URLS
% of boxes	Claims per box	% of boxes	Claims per box	% of boxes
98%	2.1	17%	1.1	89%

Child engagement features on the box Ranking: 4

CHILD FEATURES		PROMOTIONS	GAMES URL
% of boxes	Features per box	% of boxes	% of boxes
47%	1.6	22%	41%

*From 10/08 to 3/09

Key Developments:

- ▶ **September 2008** – General Mills launches “Psst...,” an online word of mouth marketing program where people can sign up to receive free product samples and in turn are expected to blog about them.
- ▶ **October 2008** – General Mills launches a promotion on many of its child-targeted cereal brands, partnering with “Madagascar 2: Out of Africa” to offer toys in boxes and a sweepstakes for a trip to Los Angeles for the movie premiere.
- ▶ **November 2008** – A study funded by General Mills announces that “children and adolescents who eat cereal for breakfast may have an advantage” in getting daily nutrients and physical activity.
- ▶ **February 2009** – General Mills launches a limited promotion with “retro” boxes of cereals sold as a specialty item only at Target: Cocoa Puffs (1967), Trix (1961) and Cheerios (1961) along with later versions of Honey Nut Cheerios (1990) and Lucky Charms (1983). It also launches a line of t-shirts with these same retro logos.
- ▶ **March 2009** – General Mills launches a “Win Cash” promotion on many of its child-targeted cereal brands, in which participants may find gift cards in specially marked boxes.
- ▶ **May 2009** – A study funded by General Mills finds that cereal and milk support physical recovery from sports as well as sports drinks do.
- ▶ **August 2009** – General Mills adds the Smart Choices program nutrition label to many of its products, including virtually all of its children’s cereals.