



14 Ways to Get Food and Beverage Brands Into the College Market

White Paper

*Presented by:
NAM Youth Marketing
PO Box 1170
Conway, NH 03818*

The Importance of the College Demographic

College students keep strange hours and their busy lifestyle impacts their choice of food and beverage purchases. They want food that does not slow them down and adds value to their lives. Snacks that cater to their on-the-go lifestyle are hugely popular among the college crowd, making college students a key consumer segment for the snack industry: “In fact, the serious snacking habits of college students contributed heavily to the \$18.5 billion worth of snack sales in US restaurants, vending machines, and mobile vendors that was expected last year.”¹ This shows the important role college consumers have on the snack industry.

College students have huge spending power when it comes to buying snack food and their food consumption habits are growing increasingly atypical. Shawn LaPean, executive director of Cal Dining at the University of California-Berkeley, explains that “Eating weird is the new normal. If students eat any square meals per day, it might be one. The rest is filled with snacks and food on the go.”² This trend away from traditional meals and towards increased snacking shows the growing value college students place on convenience.

Though college students consume a lot of snacks, competition among snack companies remain fierce. One way to gain an edge over the competition is through collegiate marketing.



Consumers between the ages of 18 and 24 spend the highest percentage of their income on snacks and non-alcoholic beverages.³

At least 35% of the meals eaten by Millennials aren't meals at all, but snacks.⁴

Four in 10 Millennials snack more than once daily, reports research firm Technomic.⁵

Snack companies should utilize collegiate marketing and on-campus advertising to target the snack-crazed, on-the-go college consumer.

14 Ways to Get Food and Beverage Brands in Front of College Students

1) Target Incoming Students at Orientation



Most colleges conduct mandatory orientation sessions involving their entire entering classes—**hundreds to thousands of new students**—and this presents an excellent opportunity for college marketing.

Why orientation is advantageous:

Orientation is mandatory and formulaic. The fact that all entering students have to attend is favorable for obvious reasons—you have a captive audience. The fact that orientations differ little in structure or content means similar college marketing strategies can succeed at different institutions. Also, you have access to a preset schedule ahead of time, which facilitates planning.

Large groups move through chokepoints. At large orientations, students are broken up into groups of a hundred or so. These groups then move to various points around campus, touring facilities, performing administrative tasks, and listening to speakers. This movement presents an opportunity for members of a college street team to pass out samples. Also, the group waits in line at various points (such as when getting a student ID), and this is a great time to approach students.

An added benefit of focusing on students at orientation is the long-term nature of the college marketing plan—it maximizes the exposure to the demographic, because these students still have their entire college career ahead of them. If they get hooked as consumers now, they may remain loyal to the product for years to come.

“There is a perception that the Millennial generation does not have significant purchasing power given their unemployment rate is around 16%. Yet, they have \$200B direct purchasing power and \$500B in indirect purchasing power. They are influencing the generations before them and the generation that follows. We need to start to think about their influencing power as currency.”⁶

*

Sandra Lopez - Intel Marketing Strategy Director for New Business

2) Market an Experience

Innovative snack companies and brands are turning towards college experiential marketing and college event marketing in lieu of more traditional marketing approaches when advertising to students.

Associate your brand with an event they'll remember

The whole strategy behind college event marketing is the ability to create a brand experience for students that they'll remember, so they'll form memories of the event and link it with your product. By choosing a day that's significant to them, they'll be more inclined to remember those events. A company that utilized this approach in a creative way was DORITOS® in their DORITOS® Collisions college marketing campaign.

They chose to execute a college experiential marketing campaign at colleges nationwide on the day of and the day prior to the 2008 presidential election. The campuses were already filled with buzz about the upcoming election and DORITOS® capitalized on this excitement by having college street teams pass out bags of DORITOS® and encourage voter participation. They chose a current event that was relevant to college students and used a significant date for marketing the campaign—the day many students were allowed to vote for the first time.



Contribute to the Moment



Be a Part of the Experience

Revitalize your college marketing approach by using college experiential marketing and gain an edge over the competition by marketing an experience. Students will appreciate the creative approach and spread the word to their friends.

3) Have a Tailgate Party Featuring Your Products



It's no secret that college athletics equals big money—the Texas Longhorns took in over \$150 million in the 2010-11 season—and youth marketing should glom onto this.

College sporting events draw big crowds and represent huge college marketing potential. With the biggest college football stadiums capable of holding close to 100,000 spectators—not to mention the thousands of fans gathering in the vicinity tailgating—the college marketing opportunities at these events are astronomical!

College students attend sporting events as a way to socialize, show support for their school, and as a form of entertainment. College sporting events allow students to share in a universal experience and feel a part of the community. By attending these events, they're representing their university and showing their team pride.

Students love to cheer on their team and participate in athletic competitions; from fans to players, they want to be a part of the action. Appealing to this drive and bringing the advertising to them—during high profile games—will attract their attention. College students make the best fans; gaining their loyalty will lead to huge rewards.



College sporting events are a huge part of college students' lives and therefore should be taken advantage of when advertising to college students.

Marketing to college students before, during, and after major sporting events will lead to increased brand awareness among the college demographic. College street teams are an excellent way of reaching college students during athletic events. They'll promote your brand by interacting and conversing with fellow students, while distributing promotional samples and free swag. College street teams help solidify your on-campus presence in a fun, engaging way.

Sporting events are a truly unique world unto themselves. People go to a home game and instantly have thousands of fans cheering with them. It enables an instant point of connection and brings people together, leading to feelings of camaraderie.

4) Market Your Product as a Study Snack or Energy Booster



College students live extremely busy lives and this oftentimes affects their sleep negatively: “On average, most college students get 6 - 6.9 hours of sleep per night, and the college years are notoriously sleep-deprived due to an overload of activities.”⁸ Sleep is not the only things students neglect when stressed or busy; they also skip meals. Snack companies can attract the attention of college students by promoting their snack or beverage as a convenient, energy enhancer.

Students often consume food and drinks to help them stay awake during late night cram sessions. College students intake snacks and beverage to combat boredom, increase their energy levels, and as a way to stay motivated and on track. College sampling in front of the library during the early morning or late night is one way brands can meaningfully connect with students. Students will appreciate the free samples and begin to associate your product as an on-the-go study food.



45% [of students] report having received product samples during the school year, with two-thirds of those going to purchase the brand.⁹

5) Emphasize Variety



"Our customers are consistently telling us, particularly millennials, they expect variety, more choices, customization and their ability to be able to personalize their food experience."¹⁰

McDonald's memo

Students love options! When it comes to millennials, variety matters and showcasing your brand's expanse of options is of paramount importance. Whether you have a relatively new business or a well-established business, college sampling maximizes the exposure of your product to the college demographic. New businesses oftentimes lack the brand recognition of more established companies, making it hard for them to attract clientele and build their reputation. They might have great products, but if no one knows about them, it does not matter. College sampling can introduce their products to thousands of college students, increasing awareness and driving sales.

Well-established businesses can use college sampling to promote new products to the youth demographic and demonstrate their many options. They already have a strong reputation and brand image, but may want to introduce new products into the college market or conduct a trial run of a new snack flavor. Brands that engage in college sampling techniques are taking initiative, letting the product speak for itself. By providing a free sample to college students, brands are vouching for their product, implying that this new snack delivers the same high standards—if not higher—as past products.

By offering college students free product samples, you are allowing them to experience your product. They will form positive associations with your brand, as you are giving them something they like for free. As large crowds of students gather to receive your product, their excitement builds; this generates buzz and further heightens their experience.

"It's about control, especially for millennials. They want the ability to customize and control what's happening to the food that's being prepared. They want it the way they want it."¹¹

Darren Tristano - Executive Vice President of Technomic, a food-service consultancy and research company located in Chicago

6) Emphasize Convenience



When marketing to college students it is important to show them how your product will contribute to their lives. Whether it's an energy boost to help with late night cramming or an easily transportable grab-and-go snack for the early morning rush, make sure to highlight the ease and convenience of use. If it saves them time and effort; they will appreciate it.



A recent survey showed that 60% of all participants snack in the car, and college-aged consumers are even more likely (by 27%) to snack on the fly.¹²

When catering to students, don't go in with any preconceived notions of normal eating behaviors. Students have been known to eat cereal for dessert, pizza for breakfast, and omelets for dinner. With them anything is game. Don't constrict your college marketing campaign. Emphasize variety, convenience, and versatility.

“Our new paradigm for looking at the future is the lack of three structured meals. When people approach food today, it's about anytime, anywhere and anyhow.”¹³

Barry Calpino - Vice President of Breakthrough Innovation at Kraft Foods

7) Have Healthy Options



“People have talked about health and food for a long time, but I think millennials are acting on that information in different ways. They want healthy food, but it also has to be interesting food that tastes good.”¹⁴

Mr. Pace of Subway

College students spend a great deal of discretionary funds on food and beverages. Foodservice companies should capitalize on college students’ interest in healthier meal options and engage in college marketing techniques as a way of reaching college students.

College students may seem unlikely candidates for health products or services given their tendencies for late night partying, heavy drinking, and overeating of junk food. However, most students care immensely about their health and staying in shape. College students are walking dichotomies. They like to maintain healthy lifestyles during the week, but when the weekend rolls around they like to let loose and have fun.

Though college students like to occasionally indulge in unhealthy behavior, they recognize the importance of maintaining their health. College students want healthy eating options and are willing to spend money to get it:

There are nearly 16 million hungry U.S. college and university students wielding more than \$300 billion in spending power; however, only 28% are satisfied with the healthy foodservice offerings at their schools, according to new market data from Technomic. The findings suggest significant opportunities for foodservice suppliers and operators to grow revenues by appealing to the campus crowd.¹⁵

Since the majority of college students are unhappy with their school’s dining options, they will look elsewhere to find healthier choices. This represents huge potential for expansion and growth within the food industry. Through college marketing, you can advertise your healthy eating options and attract new customers to your business.

On-campus marketing provides focused marketing efforts geared specifically towards college students. College posters, campus ads, and college newspaper advertising will draw attention to your establishment and increase brand exposure. College street teams can provide students with promotional flyers containing a call to action discount.

8) Encourage Engagement on Social Media Platforms



While having a large following on Facebook theoretically increases a brand's reach, big numbers alone won't build a brand.¹⁶

College students need a reason to stay connected on your social media sites; simple sweepstakes—though great for accruing followers—will not suffice in reaching college students. Millennials require constant engagement that they find valuable. A company needs to build value when amassing fans through social media marketing and focus on creating meaningful content that students can contribute to and engage with. Simple sweepstakes provide incentives for students to become fans or followers, but that alone will not suffice in reaching college students. College students need to know why they should stay linked with your company.



Millennials expect brands to not only have a social media presence, but to provide valuable content and foster interactions in real time through social networking.



Interactive contests and events can help with your college advertising campaign. Having photo contests allows students to express their creativity and sense of humor while connecting with your brand. They will share their photo submissions with their friends, increasing traffic to your site. College students love to express their opinions and show their personality; having a contest in which they can describe their experience with your brand—through words, music, videos, or photos—allows them to meaningfully reflect on your product and what it means to them. It lets them experience your brand in a totally new way.

College advertising needs to focus around the students. When advertising to students you need to ask yourself: what is in it for them? If you cannot answer this question, you need to go back to the drawing board. Contests, sweepstakes, discounts, promotions, entertaining videos, and informative articles are all ways to keep students linked to your social networking sites.

9) Host a Movie or Video Gaming Event Featuring Your Snack Products



With a majority of college students playing video games regularly, new student marketing possibilities abound. College students comprise a significant portion of the gamer community and hence represent a potentially lucrative college advertising demographic. Consider the following:

- American youths *average* 11 hours of video game use per week.¹⁷
- 70% of American college students play at least once in a while, with half of those playing so much that it interferes with studies “some” to “a lot.”¹⁸
- “Extreme gamers”—approximately 4% of the U.S. gaming population—play for an average of 48.5 hours per week.¹⁹

By sponsoring a gaming event on campus, you will increase product visibility and gain credibility as a snack company that supports their gaming lifestyle.



Movies have always been a popular pastime among the youth. Hosting a movie on campus and providing free snacks and beverages is one way to capture attention and gain fans.

10) Sponsor a Concert On Campus



Concerts make excellent venues for reaching millennials, as they draw large crowds of people who want an experience. The youth have always had a fascination with music. In fact, a large portion of the music created today is made with the youth in mind. They eagerly consume it and use it as an outlet to vent their anger and frustrations. Oftentimes the youth feel misunderstood by their parents, by older generations, and even by themselves. They listen to music to feel understood and connected with their peers and the world at large. Through music they can experience their hopes and desires, and feel reassured.

Late teen and twenty-something Millennials have reached the age of self-discovery at a difficult time. Many college grads have moved back home and are finding it difficult to secure full-time employment in today's saturated job market, leaving them in limbo between independence and the inability to support themselves financially. Music and fashion have always provided the ultimate escape from the stresses of daily life, and now more than ever Millennials need this escape. ²⁰

Sponsoring a concert on campus and distributing product samples to students produces results:

Offline brand interaction, especially events and promotions bear strong results on campus. Nearly half (47%) of co-eds have received a free product sample, and 65% of them went on to purchase the brand. More than a third (34%) have attended a brand-sponsored event on campus; 64% went on to purchase the brand. ²¹

11) Get Your Product Into The Dorms



Do you know that 40 percent of full-time students live on campus?²² Making dorm room door hangers an easy and effective way of marketing to college students—**reaching 40% of the student population!** Dorms have the highest concentration of students on campus, making it the ideal **college advertising** arena. Placing door hangers directly on dorm room doors draws students’ attention to the highly visible, evocative ads.



In addition to distributing the door hangers throughout the dorms, student brand ambassadors can engage students by utilizing the door hangers as a form of college sampling and hand to hand marketing. They can access highly trafficked locations on campus, where they interact with students, and start conversations about your brand. This maximizes exposure and ensures that your campus ads reach their intended target, fostering real connections that encourage word of mouth viral marketing.

NAM Youth Marketing can access dorms across the nation, bringing your message into the homes of thousands of students!

12) Connect With Fraternities and Sororities



There are over nine million fraternity and sorority members nationwide.²³ Each of these fraternity and sorority members are highly networked members of the student body. They connect with other students through classes, athletics, clubs, student government, social gatherings, etc. Influential fraternity and sorority members have access to a large network of students and peers.

If you can connect with fraternity and sorority members and get them involved in your college advertising campaign, your brand will be able to access their networks. Campus representatives in the Greek system can harness their connections and use it to promote your products. P2P marketing is an extremely effective college marketing vehicle that resonates with students. College students respond favorably to word of mouth viral marketing, especially when the endorsement comes from a friend or peer.



College students are notoriously elusive and highly wary of advertising. P2P Marketing breaks down those barriers by engaging students face to face. This point of contact not only enables meaningful connections, it also establishes trust—which is of paramount importance in college advertising.

13) Introduce New Flavors



Introducing new flavors into the college market can lead to social media marketing and provide you with invaluable market research as you can listen to students' opinions.

Flavor factors hugely in students' purchasing decisions. College students love experiences and introducing new flavors, flavor combinations, and limited-time offers contributes to their sense of adventure. It makes your brand fresh and exciting, and keeps consumers interested.

The typical Gen Y eater swoons over unusual food forms, flavor profiles tweaked with unexpected or dramatic twists and of course, vivid global cuisines, especially when they blend fresh and spicy.²⁴

Marketing new experiences is critical when advertising on college campuses. Millennials value brands that entertain their taste buds and provide them with a new consumer experience. They delight in trying new flavors and flavor combinations. Food and beverage companies that want to attract students' attention will develop innovative flavor combinations.

“What's happening is that American consumers, especially millennials, are developing more adventurous taste palates. You can see it in the emergence of Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese, in addition to Thai, restaurants. Those organizations that already produce those products internationally are opening production facilities in the U.S.”²⁵

Darren Tristano - Executive Vice President of Technomic, a food-service consultancy and research

14) Tell a Story



“Forget thinking about how to make a Vine or send out the most clever tweet. Instead, focus on how to connect to consumers using ideas so big they’ll work on any platform.”²⁶

Marc Pritchard - Procter & Gamble’s Global Marketing Officer

Marketing to college students using a compelling story or innovative idea, will lead to a successful college advertising campaign. The focus of any college advertising strategy is to increase awareness of your brand and gain new clientele. A successful college advertising campaign prioritizes the concept above all else. Creating a compelling story or delivering an innovative new experience, will capture students’ attention.

With so many social media marketing platforms out there, and new ones constantly on the horizon, it takes herculean effort not to be swept into cyberspace. But you must resist this temptation and focus on developing an intriguing idea before ever worrying about the technological aspect.

Constructing a story that demonstrates the connectivity of your product or brand will have huge impact on the college demographic, as they value interconnectedness tremendously. They want to know how your product brings people together and how it will add to their experience. Stories provide insight, relatability, and meaning to their audience, engaging and captivating them. Plus, stories can start conversations, leading to increased brand awareness and social media marketing.

First, focus on the message and last, decide on the medium. A powerful story can capture hearts and minds; the medium allows the story to be communicated with the audience. Both are of incredible importance, but the order must be followed.

“I like to know the story about the places I eat. I think it’s key to feed one’s heart in addition to one’s stomach when going out.”²⁷

Vera Chang, 26



Sources

1. "[Ah, the Good Life.](#)" *Food Service Director*.
2. Horovitz, Bruce. "[Marketers Adapt Menus to Eat-What-I-Want-When-I-Want Trend.](#)" *USA Today*.
3. "[Snacking Strengthens Restaurant Spending.](#)" *MonkeyDish*.
4. "[Millennials Drive 24/7 Snacking.](#)" *Food Processing*.
5. Horovitz, Bruce. "[Marketers Adapt Menus to Eat-What-I-Want-When-I-Want Trend.](#)" *USA Today*.
6. Lopez, Sandra. "[Ypulse Mashup Speaker Q&A: Sandra Lopez.](#)" *Ypulse*.
7. Wieberg, Steve, et al. "[Texas Athletics Overwhelm Rivals in Revenue and Spending.](#)" *USA Today*.
8. "[Sleep Rocks! ...get more of it!.](#)" *The University Health Center*.
9. "[Multi-Screening Popular Among College Students.](#)" *Marketing Charts*.
10. Moorison, Maureen. "[McDonald's Has a Millennial Problem.](#)" *Advertising Age*.
11. Grimes, William. "[Chopped Salad Has Become the Lunch of Choice in the Northeast.](#)" *The New York Times*.
12. "[Ah, the Good Life.](#)" *Food Service Director*.
13. Horovitz, Bruce. "[Marketers Adapt Menus to Eat-What-I-Want-When-I-Want Trend.](#)" *USA Today*.
14. Strom, Stephanie. "[Restaurant Chains Try to Woo a Younger Generation.](#)" *The New York Times*.
15. "[College Students Want Healthy Dining Options](#)". *Food Product Design*.
16. McMains, Andrew. "[Social Media Reach Helps, But Quality Counts More](#)". *Adweek*.
17. "[Video Game Addiction.](#)" *Wikipedia*.
18. Weaver, Jane. "[College Students Are Avid Gamers.](#)" *NBC News*.
19. Takahashi, Dean. "[Extreme Video Gamers Play 48 Hours Per Week.](#)" *VentureBeat*.
20. "[The Whys Behind Festival Fashion.](#)" *Ypulse*.
21. Re:fuel. "[Campus Life Back in Session -- College Students Arrive Confident, Smart-er and With Climbing Consumer Spending Power.](#)" *Globe Newswire*.
22. Tellefsen, Robyn. "[30 Things You Need to Know About Dorm Life.](#)" *Collegebound Network*.



23. [“Stories tagged "Fraternities and Sororities."](#) *Spartan Daily*.
24. Lukovitz, Karlene. [“Figuring Out Gen Y's Eclectic Eating Preferences.”](#) *Media Post*.
25. Clough, Richard. [“Asian Food Companies Buy O.C. Factory Space.”](#) *Orange County Register*.
26. Keller, Ed. [“Ideas Trump Technology: A Message Worth Sharing”](#). *Shelly Palmer*.
27. Strom, Stephanie. [“Restaurant Chains Try to Woo a Younger Generation.”](#) *The New York Times*.



Agency Overview

Since 1997, NAM Youth Marketing has been implementing innovative and effective marketing and advertising solutions for clients seeking to improve their presence in the college and youth marketing arena. College advertising can be so much more than media distribution—with NAM, you’ll meaningfully connect with students, build brand recognition, and establish a digital and on- campus presence. We offer targeted marketing to millions of students at over 4,000 college campuses in the United States, Puerto Rico, and Canada.

NAM specializes in developing customized marketing solutions. We take the time to truly understand our clients’ college marketing goals and then we work with them in determining a plan of action to achieve those goals, utilizing and adapting our extensive P2P networks to suit their needs. We engage the college consumer using a combination of print, online, face-to-face, social media, and experiential marketing techniques. We help companies rise above the noise!

www.namoo.com

Why Partner with NAM Youth Marketing?

NAM provides high-quality, cost-effective packaging and distribution services designed to get your product samples from Point A to Point B as fast and efficiently as possible. Our exclusive college advertising network consists of over 100,000 Student Brand Ambassadors, and covers over 4,000 college campuses. Our ambassadors—highly networked members of the student body—belong to a variety of student clubs and organizations. By utilizing this vast network, we are able to distribute your products into the hands of students in fun, innovative ways.



ADVERTISING AGENCIES :

Accent • Arnold • BBDO • Campbell-Ewald • Carat • Cramer-Krasselt • Dentsu America • Dieste • DMGUS • Erwin-Penland • Fallon Worldwide • Generation Outdoors
 Ground Zero • Horizon • Idea City • Ivie & Associates • JWT • Kinetic • Lopez Negrete • Marketing Associates • MEC Global • MediaVest • Mindshare • MPG • GlobalHue • Olson
 OMD • OMG • OOH Pitch • Posterscope • RedPeg Marketing • Saatchi & Saatchi • Starcom MediaVest • TargetCast • Uni World • Universal McCann • Zubi

Contributors



Marc Sorel
NAM Youth Marketing
President



Rosanna Bell
Senior Liaison & Content
Marketing Specialist for NAM

Contact

Marc Sorel
marcsorel@collegiatepromotions.com
Phone: 888-631-9222

Schedule a free 30-minute college marketing consultation [here](#).

Company Blog Sites

NAMOOH Blog: <http://www.namoooh.com/news/>

College Marketing INSider: <http://www.collegemarketing.net/>

Your resource to unlocking the elusive college market where students
study, live & play!