Sidney Eigeman

Dr. Gingrich

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<div align="center">The Consequences of Food Marketing</div>

As kids, most of us were used to seeing the same infomercials and ads every time we sat down to watch TV. Slogans like "Silly rabbit, Trix are for kids!" and "Lucky Charms: they're magically delicious!" are ingrained in our brains to this day; we still remember seeing Dylan and Cole Sprouse and the iconic animated monkey spokesperson for Danimals Crush Cups laughing and promoting sweepstakes in their bright red branded sweatshirts. Before we could even recognize it, food marketing was a consistent part of our daily lives, changing our decisions, habits, and thoughts surrounding food. Food marketing was so influential even decades ago that it's a significant part of our childhood. And although these memories are nostalgic, they had-- and likely still have-- a firm and often detrimental grip on our health and lifestyle. This food marketing was dangerous, as it told us very early on what products would bring us the most happiness and thus, what we should eat, when most of the ads were from big junk food brands and fast food corporations. Even now, we see food marketing everywhere, from billboards on our way to work to our Twitter feed on our phones (and these ads have become almost unnervingly tailored to your habits and lifestyle), which is no coincidence. Food marketing in the modern-day, particularly from fast-food corporations and/or for traditionally unhealthy products, has significant consequences-- to both physical and mental health-- for the general public.

Marketers often focus on certain racial and income groups/classes that they believe their ads might appeal to most. Fast food businesses are the most frequent culprits, often capitalizing on poorer communities by advertising their convenient, cheap meals specifically and more often to them. The companies gather (often stereotypical) information on these groups of people, like the language they use, their appearances, their media preferences, which are then used to tailor the ads in what is deemed a more culturally appealing way. In particular, "Companies like KFC and Burger King place lots of ads during Spanish-language kids' programs… some companies also run more ads during TV programs popular with black youth; in 2012, African-American kids and teens saw an estimated 60 percent more fast-food ads than white kids," (Source A 146). Beyond advertising more to certain groups, corporations have even *cut* spending on marketing to English channels to focus on others. These companies are only promoting and solidifying the racial/social divisions that already exist through this selective advertising: different kids will see different ads and grow up around a different food culture based just on their race. This is impactful because especially adolescents look to others around them for validation and to relate to, and when the other racial groups at school have even just the slightest difference in culture and lifestyle (brought upon them by food marketing), the kids feel separated from their classmates or neighbors. It widens the divide threatening racial and social equality. On a broader scale, efforts like these are limiting and discouraging social mobility, or the ability of lower classes of people to improve their economic and social situation through their own work. Children in particular are impacted heavily by racially-specific ads, and this, in turn, leads to distinct differences between the habits and mindsets of different communities of adolescents. For example, the aforementioned groups, African-Americans and Hispanics, "are considered to be at

high risk for diet-related health problems," (Source A 146). This pattern is likely attributed, at least in part, to unequal food marketing practices, and it's a dangerous pattern: children and adults alike are at greater health risks and may have a different quality of life because of how corporations choose to maximize their profits.

Food marketers have their focus on children much of the time: young elementary schoolers and preschoolers, as well as teenagers. However, they target this audience, especially younger kids, knowing how naive they are and that the things the kids see on TV will translate to the parents buying them the item, resulting in a profit. Young children will believe almost anything they see, and marketers use clever tactics like timing (placement during popular children's shows), colors, characters, music, and even other children acting in the ads to exploit this. For example, "McDonald's, Wendy's, and Subway all advertise during kids' TV shows and try to reach young children with branded online 'advergames' and mobile apps," (Source A 145). These companies spend huge amounts of money on advertising to their most gullible audience, and a successful tactic many of them use is memorable, colorful logos. The Pizza Hut, McDonald's, Bojangles, Hardee's, Burger King, and Sonic logos, just to name a few, all feature blaring red and yellow colors that snag people's attention-- especially kids, that rely almost solely on what they see to make deductions (Source D).

More importantly, this heavy, constant advertising is highly detrimental to the health of adolescents across the US. The top food product categories advertised to young people are high-sugar breakfast cereals, fast-food restaurants, candy, and sugary drinks (Source A 141). These products are not only highly appealing to young sweet-tooths, but they are dangerous in that they will pull kids off the path to a good diet for their teenage years and adulthood. "On

television, 98% of food advertisements watched by children promote products high in fat, sugar, or sodium," (Source B). Getting kids into these types of junk foods at a young age causes many problems later in life, such as unhealthy lifestyles and eventually health issues. "Research has found that children who watch more than three hours of television a day are 50 percent more likely to be obese than children who watch fewer than two hours," (Source C). This indicates a very strong, undeniable correlation between kids' health and TV food ads. Children are most likely the most affected group of food marketing because they are too young to understand what's good for them and what isn't, and are vulnerable to corporate marketing strategies. The fun characters and colors on the packaging and online ads convince kids that the product tastes better than others, which will lead them to associate those brands and their images with happiness. Similar to corporations' targeting of certain racial groups, food marketing makes money off of kids who will likely develop unhealthy habits because of their products.

Food marketing also generates and fuels unhealthy, inaccurate public ideas about what you should look like, and thus what you should eat to look like it. This concept is not unique to the food industry necessarily, but is far more influential on the public than beauty or diet supplement advertisements. Everyone has to eat, and food marketers can affect what foods we see, *how* we see them, how we *identify* with them, and thus what we end up putting into our bodies for nourishment. They try "to appeal to the way we see ourselves-- or want to see ourselves-- so we identify with the product… an ad for cereal promoted as healthy might feature a slim woman doing yoga or wrapping measuring tape around her waist," (Source A 134). This type of marketing is aimed at advertising a *lifestyle* associated with their food. This not only can be misleading to customers but even lead to self-consciousness and anxiety about health and

physical appearance. While this may be profitable to the corporation, it's damaging to the individuals who pick up on these unrealistic expectations and attempt to change an aspect of their lifestyle by simply buying that one product. It also promotes foods that very likely aren't good for you, no matter what the advertisement or branding implies, which contributes to a decline in public health. A prime example of a food that is misleadingly marketed to nearly every group of people is, perhaps surprisingly, yogurt: "There's a brand of yogurt marketed to women… and there's yogurt in macho-looking black packages marketed specifically to men-- who presumably wouldn't be caught dead buying the [women's] yogurt," (Source A 135). Food marketing once again shows efforts to appeal to specific groups of people, even with a single product. Although this particular advertising of yogurt doesn't set unrealistic body expectations for its audience, it can be damaging; on a broader scale, the differing marketing strategies reinforce stereotypes and gender roles and make the simple task of shopping for your food that much more trivial.

On the other hand, in the modern age of digital advertising and social media, a new category of food marketing has arisen: health influencers. Over platforms like Instagram and personal blogs, healthy-lifestyle influencers promote clean recipes and practices: "By connecting people across the world, social media has created support and advice networks around eating well, making it easier for people to follow a healthier or more natural diet," (Source F). Some may argue that this positive food marketing counteracts the bad influence and intentions of fast food corporations and food production companies, but there is a huge discrepancy in the audiences of these sources. People must want to *seek out* a cleaner lifestyle in order to reach the positive influence of these bloggers and social media users. On the contrary, large-scale food

marketing uses money to ensure that their advertising reaches a wide audience, and it does: anybody can see an ad for unhealthy food at any time, anywhere, whether they were looking for a related topic or not. Although positive food marketing through social media has the potential to grow, in the present and near future food marketing continues to haunt many aspects of our lives and influence our daily decisions.

Food marketing makes an appearance nearly everywhere we look: our phones, TV, sports games, even other foods. In order to maximize their profit, food corporations often target certain groups and try to cater to their culture and trends. However, their strategies widen divisions between racial and economic classes, negatively influence kids, cause health problems, and reinforce unrealistic social expectations. Although there are some efforts to promote healthy foods like fruits and veggies to kids and encourage clean eating through social media influencing, all of these are overshadowed by food marketing's constant presence. Food marketing's misleading and discriminatory nature makes it an overwhelmingly negative influence on the general public.