

Manipulation in fast food advertisements

[Business](#), [Marketing](#)



Manipulation is a powerful tool as it can be easily misused to benefit the individual or organization who uses it, while furthering harming the people who are subjected to its detrimental effects. Human beings tend to have a nature of selfishness as most people are impelled to prioritize one's own wants and needs before all else. People tend to find ways to persuade others to fulfil their desires, whether it's for moral or immoral reasons. Manipulation not only occurs in social interactions among people but also when it comes to fast food manufacturing. Advertisements for fast food companies use a plethora of manipulative techniques and exaggeration to sell their products to unaware consumers, specifically the younger generation. Majority of fast food manufacturers manipulate their commercials/advertisements to make their food appear more appealing to seduce the adolescence. Every fast food advertisement is ready to entice the minds of children with food that makes their mouth water. These children fail to understand that advertisements aren't always true because they are still young and naive.

According to the article, " Why Restaurant Meals Don't Look Like the Ads", written by Katie Little, a chief writer for CNBC news, states that " during shoots, stylists use tweezers, toothpicks, scissors, small blow torches, paper, tape, glue, pins, paint, oil, and glycerin to manipulate and enhance food" (Little). These marketers are able to easily lure children as it drives them to overeat the malnourished food which further leads them to become overweight. As the deceitful tactic continues by these fast food manufacturers, these children start developing eating disorders and body image issues due to their obesity. The manipulated party that is highly impacted would be young girls, as they tend to be the most affected by body

image problems. According to the American Psychological Association, other industries objectify beautiful girls and women, which further leads to these overweight children to develop issues like body dissatisfaction, eating disorders, low self-esteem, and depression (APA). The public don't know the difference between what is real and what has been manipulated.

However, the fast food companies such as Carl's Jr. benefit from this because people purchase the food, leading to profits, making these companies more greedy as they become more manipulative because they want even more money. Some fast food companies manipulate the public by implementing unnecessary spokespeople or extremely liked celebrities to further entice their audience. High profile athletes can easily influence children's eating behaviors as they look up to these individuals. A researcher at Berkeley Media Studies Group, Andrew Cheyne told reporter, Alexandra Sifferlin from TIME magazine, that these fast food companies campaign their products with popular celebrities because the kids are attracted to them, no matter what they are doing (Sifferlin). Advertisements featuring professional athletes and their endorsed product tend to get more attention and buys than just a plain advertisement showing off their newest addition to their menu. For example, McDonalds endorsed LeBron James, a basketball superstar and a role model to millions of children.

In the commercial, James was showing off McDonald's monopoly game that one gets to participate if they purchase something from the menu. Another example would be when Carls Jr. Burger used Paris Hilton in one of their commercials. The company intentionally used the woman's image to entice

young girls as Hilton is mostly admired by teenage girls. They also used sex appeal to appeal to get the attention of boys, as seeing a beautiful woman eating a delicious burger would instantly spark the interest of a young boy. In the article, “ The Obsolescence of Advertising in the Information Age”, by Ramsi Woodcock, an expert in economics with a focus in advertising, claims that “ advertising was never primarily about disseminating product information, but about manipulation, changing preferences rather than just informing them” (Woodcock). The notion of manipulative advertisements blinds the consumer to genuine information and differences in product quality, yet the consumer still is willing to pay. Both commercials portray fast-food in a positive manner and were able to gain more exposure to their products because the commercial was able to stimulate interest in the consumer’s mind just because they saw someone famous they liked or knew about. They were able to get recognized which further lead to an increase in customers.

According a survey conducted by a Professor of Economics, specializing in marketing, at the University of Delhi, Jyoti Kasana, resulted in that 20% of parents felt that their children were more influenced by the celebrity endorsement (Kasana). Although 20% is not a lot, it still shows that companies that implement well-known individuals into their commercials are likely to gain consumer interest than fast food companies that choose not to do so. Another way fast food companies manipulate the younger generation is by adding incentives such as toys. Fast food companies know that kids love toys so they use this in their advantage to further gain sales. According to a study published by Dr. Meghan Longacre, stated that the “ fast food

industry spent \$583 million on child-directed marketing, of which \$341 million was spent on toy premiums for kids' meals" (Longacre). Fast food companies such as McDonald's and Burger King have realized that kids who watch fast food commercials are more likely to request fast food because they know they will get a free toy with it, as opposed to children that watch non-targeted advertising. According to a study published by the Journal of Pediatrics, researchers found that fifty four percent of children requested visits to at least one of the restaurants that had child-directed TV ads (JOP).

Since many parents are willing to spoil their children because they want to keep them happy, fast food chains such as McDonald's has become one of the most successful fast food chains in the United States because they have shifted their target towards the younger generation. As these children continue to eat at this fast food places just for toys, they start to develop obesity but at a young age they don't realize that detrimental effects of all the food they are consuming. Children enjoy playing with toys with their friends so by providing toys and a playground, children are evoked to keep asking their parents to go to that fast food chain. The other day I went to McDonald's and saw their happy meal toys. The toys they were offering were related to cartoons and the newest children movies. I also noticed that the happy meal got a lot of attention from families. The toy was able to make the child want the happy meal as opposed to any other meal. The happy meal toys were also placed by the entrance as it gained the attention of every child that walked in.

The manipulation by these companies are strategically implemented as they know what gains attention and what does not. Fast food manufacturers manipulate everyone through the illusion of natural ingredients when it is really all artificially made. The FDA does not force fast food companies to reveal the chemical additives they are using because if the chemicals they are using are considered safe, the food is accepted. All the chemicals crammed into these products, such as cellulose, which is not digestible by humans, are government approved for human consumption. The meals that children enjoy the most from these fast food chains are high in calories, fats, cholesterol, sugars, sodium, and the chemical additives. Robert Rosenheck, a professor at Harvard School of Public Health, states that “ consumption of fast food, which have high energy densities and glycemic loads, and expose customers to excessive portion sizes, may be greatly contributing to and escalating the rates of overweight and obesity” (Rosenheck).

At younger ages, people tend to ignore what they are eating and putting into their bodies, so they keep eating processed foods that lead to obesity because they taste delicious. As they children continue gaining weight, they begin facing body image problems. This further leads to them eating even more to feel better as the problem continues to get worse. All of the ingredients that make up the typical burger or french fry is heavily processed in factories, frozen, and then shipped to the fast food store which is then fried in saturated oils, which increases the fat content and the taste. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) conducted an investigation where they did a DNA test of the chicken sold at Subway Restaurants in Canada. The investigation revealed that two of the chain’s popular sandwiches

contain poultry that's only part meat. According to the investigation, " the oven roasted chicken scored 53. 6 percent chicken DNA, and the chicken strips were found to have just 42. 8 percent chicken DNA... majority of the remaining DNA was soy" (CBC). Fast food corporations such as McDonald's, Subway, Burger King, and Arby's are known for their meat products and say that their sandwiches contain " 100% real meat", but their scandalous unearthing has yet to be done.

These children think they are eating healthy meals when they hear that their chicken sandwich contains 100% chicken but are blinded by the true reality. These companies are able to gain sales and save money by using artificial ingredients that are cheaper and mass produced. In conclusion, fast food is becoming more popular and acceptable due to its manipulative and deceitful techniques that grab the attention of young children. These fast food companies are mainly able to take advantage of the younger generation through advertising. These advertisements sometimes include celebrities that children look up to or the meal includes incentives such as toys that involve popular cartoons/movies.

The advertisements also exaggerate how appealing their food truly is and claim that their food contains all natural ingredients. The manipulated party is left with body image issues due to obesity, financial loss, and unhappiness while these fast food corporations are making profit and gaining popularity. This manipulation continues because these children are not able to tell that they are being exploited and the parents can't do anything to stop it

because it will make their children unhappy. The fast food industry is filled with deception.