

# Food advertising and child obesity assignment

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Although there is speculation on whether or not advertising affects children, unhealthy food advertising causes child obesity because marketers target young children, widely advertise unhealthy food, and the government does not adequately intervene. Some people believe food advertising has nothing to do with child obesity and theorize that including food in children's toys does not affect children and eating. I have heard people say that it is just play so children can pretend to be adults.

Additionally, the idea that food advertising is everywhere, can be viewed as just a way for food companies to market and are not completely directed towards kids. There are defenders of food advertising that have said that the government has intervened in food advertising and it is the parent's fault if their child becomes overweight. Fast food industries do have healthier food options, later in my childhood, I have seen McDonalds working to promote healthy eating by including apples and milk with kid's meals.

The Children's Food and Beverage Initiative makes strides in the food marketing industry by 16 companies that join the program voluntarily working to promote healthy dietary and lifestyle choices. The CFBAI still makes enhancements to the minimum requirements for the participating companies. Food advertising marketers have teamed up with toy manufacturers to target young children. According to Susan Linn, author of "Stop Marketing 'Yummy Food' to Children," toy manufacturers have created toys that advertise certain foods.

The toy manufacturer of Barbie, Mattel, produced a McDonalds Barbie play set, which have seen with my own eyes. This set includes mini French fries, '

Big Macs', and a Sprite soda machine. Toy isles in toy stores contain toys other than Barbie, such as Play Dough, Bratz dolls, and baby doll sets that include foods or advertise food. Also, manufacturers created a pretend food set ups for kids to have their own fast food window. The Play Dough sets that are purchased can have numerous ypes of molds for the dough.

Kids can mold Dairy Queen ice cream and the cones to go with it, ' Big Mac' boxes with the McDonalds logo on it, and there are even mechanisms that are covered with a food company's logo that shape the food. The life size play sets can be McDonalds themed, including the bright colors that adorn the company and include their signature food items. Food companies spend tons of money just to make this happen. According to Jennifer Harris et al in ' Redefining " Child-Directed Advertising' to Reduce Unhealthy Television Food Advertising," U. S. food companies spent \$1. 6 billion in marketing targeted to young children.

I have also noticed that in grocery stores there are foods that incorporate children's cartoon characters and toys. Mac-and-cheese has Sponge Bob Square Pants shaped pasta. I admit that when I was younger, I wanted specific Mac and Cheese because it was shaped with Blues Clues characters and had blue, paw shaped noodles. There are chewy fruit snacks that feature Dora the Explorer or the Smurfs. Soda and other sugary snacks have movie promotions with special characters on them. There are certain cereals that have toys inside the boxes, or if you buy the cereal and mail in something, they send you back a toy.

This proves that food advertising is strategically placed for kids. Food advertising is everywhere including in schools. Susan Linn states that, "The New York Times reported that \$750 million is spent annually selling snacks and processed foods in schools (Linn). In my personal experience in elementary school, my peers and I were rewarded with sugar such as soda and candy. Students are given pizza and ice cream parties as rewards for fundraisers or meeting book reading goals. This form of advertising promotes products high in sugar and sodium or saturated fats (Harris et al 358).

Furthermore, food advertising is found in movies. There are TV shows that hone in on characters eating specific brands of food, like Eggo waffles, or Captain Crunch cereal. This brings kids to want to be like their favorite TV character. I remember as a child watching Cartoon Network, they would advertise Reese Puffs cereal. They would have kids like me dancing and looking popular all because they ate this brand of cereal. "Such tie-ins are designed to lure children into selecting food based on favorite movie or TV characters rather than on healthy eating" (Linn).

I remember most commercials being for high sugar cereals. This is usually what have seen advertised in movies also. The characters are young, have to go to school, sit down for breakfast having conversations as they would have a special brand of cereal to eat. Maybe as they were having a get together with friends they would have a big name pizza company, like Cicis Pizza or Dominos, deliver. These characters are the characters I wanted to be. I know my little brother, who is seven years old, is infatuated with Batman.

He will take anything that represents this character, including food. The government must see this, but they do not create enough guidelines to limit advertising to young children. Ad agencies have too much freedom, because U. S. government is limited mainly because of the first amendment, which guarantees the marketers right to communicate truthful, non-misleading commercial information, including ads to consumers (Harris et al 363). If the government did get involved and initiate restrictions, they would face many legal battles (Harris et al 363). The United States regulates marketing to children less than most other industrialized democracies" (Linn). believe that if the government regulated food advertising to children more, there would be less child obesity. I have traveled to other countries that are about on the same level as the U. S. Looking at those countries children, then looking at U. S. children, there is an obvious difference in the weight. I could not notice this difference and not wonder about the American governments role in food advertising. The government has tried to create a solution.

The Council of Better Business Bureaus created the Children's Food and Beverage Initiative (CFBAI) to help with TV' advertising in 2006. The only thing is that this program is self regulatory. Therefore, food companies do not all participate. In 2012, there was a total of only 16 food companies (Harris et al 358). The companies that participate are not the biggest names in the industry and 40% of food ads on TV are from non participating companies, therefore the amount of change that we need is not being met. There is plentiful research on the CFBAI.

The CFBAI and the public health expert's definition of " healthier dietary choices" do not match up (Harris et al 359). Even if companies complied with <https://assignbuster.com/food-advertising-and-child-obesity-assignment/>

public health experts, it would have little impact because the initiative would be so narrow, it would only apply to a small amount of ads towards kids. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) could regulate food advertising under its jurisdiction over unfair and deceptive acts (Harris et al 363). Despite these efforts, public health experts still believe that the government is not involved enough.

Although there are many issues with food advertising directed at children. There is research that shows that this is not a myth. There are studies that have been done on children that prove that the obesity rate has increased and is correlated with food advertising. If the government was intervening enough, there would be less of a child obesity problem, which is proved in looking at countries with tighter government control. The children of America will face many battles if nothing is changed.