

Mass media and obesity



The media in today's society has shown its advantages and disadvantages in order to attract a certain group of consumers. People are exposed to advertisements every day and everywhere. Ads and campaigns are seen by simply walking down the street; posted on walls, boards, and store windows. Even while driving, advertisements are on billboards in areas where there is heavy traffic. The most popular way companies are selling their products is by doing TV commercials. Most households have a TV nowadays; people use it for entertainment and know about the latest news happening around the world.

Unfortunately, there are times where the media can be a detriment to our society. People can become vulnerable to things that seem to be a necessity at first, but can be realized to be only a want. Food is an important factor that our body needs in order to function. Some are healthy while others not so much. The obesity rate in the US has become an epidemic. Those who are counted as obese tend to develop unhealthy lifestyles, such as bad eating habits and not being physically active. Fast food chains and restaurants tend to serve foods that are high in calories, fat, and sodium.

Unfortunately, people do not see enough commercials that are about nutritious foods and being active. Instead they see commercials that have foods that are visually appetizing, while hiding the truth about its facts. The media cannot be a scapegoat to explain as to why the obesity rate is increasing, but it can potentially contribute to people developing unhealthy lifestyles. Each individual has the power and choice to not purchase a certain item. Companies have to advertise their products in order to make revenue. It is all business.

Obesity is an increasing epidemic in the United States. It is not only adults that are overweight, but also children. McDonalds is an example of targeting children, and obese children still eat it. It is well known that the food at McDonald's is very unhealthy, but some parents still take the children to the food chains. Children and obesity is a big problem. " The rate of obesity among children between the ages of 6 and 11 in the United States has increased about five times compared with the rate in the 1970s" (Hyunjae, 87).

In the future, children would have serious health problems. " Overweight and obese children are at an increases risk of suffering comorbidities including type 2 diabetes, fatty liver disease and endocrine and orthopedic disorders" (Henderson). This shows how children are looking at very troubling futures. In order to prevent that, some things have to change. Parents should put more emphasis on how the children are being raised and control what they are eating. Most of the foods that the kids choose to eat come from the influence of the media.

On average, a child in the United States watches about four hours of television daily (Hyunjae, 88). To a child that can be outside or doing other activities, that is a lot of television. The more time children spend watching television, the more overweight or obese they get. This finding led researchers to propose that television viewing supplants time spent in physical activity, thereby leading to reduced energy expenditure relative to energy intake, and the development of obesity (Jenvey). Children do not get to exercise because they spend their time watching television.

There is no way of stopping them if parents do not step in and change the ways their children live. “ Parental influence cannot be ignored, because children generally spend more time with their parents than with anybody else” (Hyunjae, 87). Parents should influence children to be more active and not watch television or play video games so much. Kids believe that everything on TV really happens. They are easily fooled and are gullible when it comes to advertisements. Children take everything seriously, they don't know any better.

Parents should be the ones that explain to the children that the advertisements on television are not real and to not believe them. Parental communications styles have a significant influence on children's obesity level and their attitudes toward TV ads about unhealthy food (Hyunjae, 87). This should be done because parents are more capable in comprehending nutritional facts. The parents should limit the TV time for children because advertisements are a bad influence. There are many types of advertisements.

Advertisements appear everywhere and cannot be easily ignored. Since children watch so much television, they see so many advertisements a day. The most foods that are advertised during children's programs are candy and snacks, sugared cereal, fast food, and sodas and soft drinks. The highest percentage is candy and snacks, which is about 34% of advertisements. That tells us that while children watch TV, they see so much food that makes them want it more. Advertisements are everywhere and that is how companies try to sell their products. In 2009, the fast food industry alone spends \$4. 2 billion on advertising in all media” (Policy Statement, 202). All

that money can be put to a better use, like education. Most companies care about the amount of money they could earn. “ US companies spend \$3. 5 billion on fast food advertisements and \$5. 8 billion on the separate food, beverage, and confectionary category, including \$785. 5 million for the top five soda brands” (Henderson, 191). With that, advertisements help them accomplish that goal.

They earn all that money because so many children watch TV daily, seeing the advertisements make them want the product. “ Youth people see an average of 12 to 21 food ads per day, for a total of 4400 to 7600 ads per year, yet they see fewer than 165 ads that promote fitness or good nutrition” (Policy Statement, 203). So many ads get to children’s heads and that changes the family’s nutrition as a whole. This is a big deal because it has been said that children not only make food choices for themselves, but also they influence the food choices for the whole family (Hyunjae, 89).

In a way, children are the decision making people in the family. It should be the parents, but children know how to persuade them to get what they want. “ According to the U. S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than one in six children and teenagers are obese” (Ban Fast Food Ads on TV). This statistic sparks immediate attention from doctors, who are suggesting that one of the main sources of the obesity epidemic is due to advertising. They believe that fast food TV ads are causing children to become fatter.

Children’s eating habits and their food consumption has direct relations with obesity, diabetes, cancers, hypertension and coronary heart disease (Arnas). Children are more likely to have serious health problems when they get

older. Children are the future of this world, and there should be steps taken to prevent those health problems. “ Just by banning ads for fast food, one study says it could decrease obesity and overweight by 17 percent” (Ban Fast Food Ads on TV). That is a significant change in the obesity rate, and if this case is true, the government should consider the banning of fast food ads.

Fast food industries are only promoting their business so that consumers are aware of their product. Since banning those ads is probably not going to happen, it is up to each individual whether or not they purchase these items. People should not forget that there are other ways to improve the obesity rate of children other than blaming the media. “ The cognitive immaturity of young children increases their susceptibility to persuasive intent of advertisements for foods of poor nutritional quality” (Jenvey).

Children should be educated about what foods are healthy and what they should eat. They should also learn different ways to have an active lifestyle, such as doing sports or exercising. Decreasing the amount of TV ads regarding fast food can potentially lead to the obesity rate of children lower, but there are no guarantees. According to Dayna M. Maniccia from the University at Albany in New York, “ Parents should serve as positive role models for their children and limit their own as well as their children’s television viewing,”(US Doctors).

Educating about developing healthy habits can be more meaningful to children, since they will have to make their own decisions eventually. There are two basic answers to the most simple questions, one is yes and the other

is no. Human beings in this world are driven by their own instincts. It is challenged by external factors, but each person's choice solely relies from within. However, these factors could affect someone more than they should let it. The advertising world in this society is very prominent. Fast food companies spend billions of dollars in marketing every year.

They would be smart enough to know if their marketing strategies are not working, because they would not spend as much money on them. These companies have been blamed for molding children's minds and creating an addiction for their unhealthy foods, however, a lack of providing knowledge about making healthy choices is another potential contributor to the obesity epidemic. The massive amounts of advertisements and commercials are paying off for these fast food companies, especially among targeting children.

Children are vulnerable to these ads that promote unhealthy foods. All they see are cute cartoons and cool toys, but among adults, they see high calorie, sugary, gut-busting foods. The obesity epidemic is becoming an issue with children, due to a lack of knowledge of nutritional alternatives. Parents are the first role models for their children. They are the ones that set the boundaries for their kids. Some parents do not realize how an excessive amount of watching TV by their children can really be a disadvantage.

Children are exposed to dozens of commercials promoting fast food and unhealthy snacks. They are easily attracted to these and end up forcing their parents to purchase foods that have no nutritional value whatsoever. At the same time, parents have to step in and be responsible for their kids' health;

they cannot be pushovers. Why put your children in danger of being obese? Forcing them to eat healthy might not work. By slowly showing them what all the bad food being advertised will do to them in the future, they might change their mind about a lot of the things they see on TV.