

Fast food restaurants marketing strategies effects on childhood and adolescent ob...

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Obesity has become an increasing problem since the 1970s – 1980s. Every person in the United States ??? men and women, young and old, white or black ??? has become exposed to the influences of obesity. The big concern is that children and young adults are beginning to follow in the footsteps of “big” role models of their time. According to the American Obesity Association, 127 million Americans are overweight, 60 million are obese and 9 million are considered “severely obese”??? this is only for adults. Currently, an estimated 17.6 million children under age 5 are said to be overweight (Spurlock, 2005, p. 66).

The New Hampshire Third Grade Healthy Smiles ??? Healthy Growth Survey was conducted in 2008-2009; collected the heights and weights to gather a baseline data and plan related interventions. In all, 81 randomly selected New Hampshire public schools participated in the survey ??? 3,151 third grade students. The survey found that 34 percent were overweight or obese (Childhood Obesity in New Hampshire 2008-2009, 2010, para. 1). Obesity can have a lot of possible causes: a combination of excessive food energy intake and a lack of physical exercise is a common explanation for most cases along with an individual’s genetics, medical reasons or illness.

Children are slowly creeping up the obesity ladder due to the lack of exercising and playing of video games on bright Saturday mornings. As of July 2011, 20 percent of children and adolescents ages 2-19 are obese. In 2010, no state had a prevalence of obesity less than 10 percent (Overweight and Obesity, 2011). Increasing rates of obesity are felt to be due to an easily accessible and palatable, or pleasant to taste, diet being able to rely on cars and other motorized means of transportation.

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This epidemic affects both young boys and girls of all ages, races, and ethnic groups. As Morgan Spurlock and Susan Okie ??? author of Fed Up! ??? say in their own words ??? no group is spared. The obesity problem in America has become difficult to control with all of the food advertisements that constantly show during programs. Around 1950, only 2 percent of American homes spent their days watching television and being exposed to food advertising; by the early 1990's, 98 percent homes owned a television and 60 percent of them had cable (Chou, Rashad, & Grossman, 2008).

Today, 250 million hours have been watched annually by Americans ??? so much energy that could have been put to use. For children, 1, 680 minutes per week is the average for an average child that watched television. A total of 20, 000 commercials ??? a typical commercial is measured out to be 30 seconds ??? are seen in a year by an average child making it difficult for children to resist their meals (TV Consumption in Americans Statistic, 2011, para 6).

Obesity in children and adolescents is associated with a number of health risks including high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol levels, type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome, sleep disturbances, orthopedic problems, and social and psychological problems, such as discrimination and poor self-esteem (School Health Guidelines to Promote Healthy Eating and Physical Activity, 2011).

Physical and mental problems like these are long term consequences that could and most likely will be affecting them into adulthood ??? eating fast food excessively will start children and adolescents out on a road of struggle

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that is not an easy road to change half way in. Because of these health problems, childhood obesity is responsible for over 300, 000 deaths each year. The annual cost of childhood obesity is around \$100 billion. Healthier habits must be established early on.

Children who are obese are more likely to become obese as adults. And the health risks continue. Numerous studies have shown that a child who is obese between the ages of 10 and 13 has an 80 percent chance of becoming an obese adult. But with proper nutrition, exercise and support, children can lose the weight and develop healthy habits for life (Cala, A. , 2011, para 2). It is difficult to solve a problem that the key player is also the stakeholder; a stakeholder are those who are or should be held accountable for the problem occurring.

Americans, young and old, have the accessibility of fast food restaurants and the convenience to purchase their menu items on the go or to curve a craving. High in fat, sugar, animal products and salt along with being low in fiber, vitamins and minerals ??? are the common nutritional facts for every single menu item at any fast food restaurant. Most people recognize that processed burgers and bagged potato chips are junk-food. McDonald's and other joints prefer the name " fast-food" (Fast = Junk, 2009, para 10).

Looking at their nutritional facts online, the Angus Chipotle BBQ Bacon is 800 calories with 40 grams of fat and 20 grams of sugar, their Angus Mushroom and Swiss is 770 calories, 40 grams of fat and 1170 grams of sodium, then the famous Big Mac with 540 calories, 29 grams of fat and 1040 grams of sodium (Full Menu Explorer, 2010). There are only four items that are on the <https://assignbuster.com/fast-food-restaurants-marketing-strategies-effects-on-childhood-and-adolescent-obesity-assignment/>

McDonald's menu that do not contain any sugar: sausage, coffee, diet coke, and ice tea; even the salads, french fries and hash browns contain sugar.

Over the years, studies, documentaries and surveys have been indicating that parents, schools and fast food restaurants are the main contributors to the child obesity problem in the United States. These three contributors would be known as the key players of this situation ??? those who have the power to effect, or change, the results of the problem. Mrs. Kramer's English 121 class took an informal survey that asked: Is childhood obesity a national epidemic because of the parents or the marketing strategies of fast food restaurants?

Many of the students believe the parents were at fault because they are the link to children between the fast food restaurants. It is easy for people to infer that the parents are at fault when it comes to their child's weight. Considering the parents purchase the meal for the child and the parents allow their child to throw a fit until the child gets what he wants. The parent could possibly give the child money to purchase their meal ??? the parent is the link again. As well as parents being blamed, people also point the finger at schools for the obesity epidemic.

Schools teach students about being active and eating nutritious foods to help with strong bones, teeth and most importantly a strong and smart brain.

Some schools have made the big effort to help their students to a better life by providing the proper and healthy choices. For example, Aptos Middle School in San Francisco parents' worked with the staff and the administration to turn the lunchroom around. Throwing away the pizzas and chips, the Slim

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Jims and BBQ wings, then replaced with “ fresh deli sandwiches, sushi, pasta, salads and homemade soups, and fajitas” (p. 265).

Teachers report that students are more focused in class and behavior has improved with a 74 percent reduction in violence and 24 percent reduction in suspensions (Spurlock, 2005). Some schools switched out vending machines in their schools and restocked them with 100 percent juices and water along with adding a nutritious salad bar. Schools are not the only ones who are physically showing to make a difference. Fast food restaurants, such as McDonald’s try to appease both sides of the playing field with bright, fresh and nutritious fruit slices and energetic smoothies.

In Don’t Eat This Book, “ the fast food industry often now simply offers items that “ create the illusion of being healthy even though they aren’t and all that while it’s continuing to peddle burgers, fries and soda” (Spulock, 2005, p. 312). Then again, lawsuits are targeted towards fast food restaurants for customer consumption ??? in 2005, two New York teenagers tried to sue McDonald’s accusing the company of hiding the health risks of foods high in fat and cholesterol, making them obese. The teenagers said they ate at the fast food restaurant 3-5 times a week over a 15 year period.

Eventually, the case was dismissed because it failed to allege enough facts connecting McDonald’s food to their obesity. The documentary, Super-Size Me, directed by Morgan Spurlock turned the heads and opinions of a lot of people (Becker, T. , 2005, para 3). There are programs all over the United States at the local town YMCA, after school programs and even television

programs promote going outside to play to help keep children and young adolescents active, burning the excess energy in a healthy way.

Schools even send parents information about extra-curricular activities to get their child more involved and away from the video games and television.

Fast food restaurants are coming around to serving “nutritious” menu items at their establishments. For example, McDonald’s sells fruit and yogurt parfaits, oatmeal and smoothies. Their smoothies range from 50 ??? 880 calories with sodium as high as 370 mg (Full Menu Explorer, 2010). Other restaurants are going about this approach as well ??? their ideas are in the right place but not the process.

There are a few steps that should easily turn this nation onto the road of becoming healthy. The first obvious solution would be simple ??? reduce the marketing promotion of commercials to children and adolescents to help reduce the obesity rate in America. But the first major step to reduce obesity in children and adolescents is to start with the fast food restaurants ??? reduce the number of convenient fast food restaurants promoting their unhealthy food or better yet, keep the same number of restaurants, keep the same menu items but recreate them with healthier ingredients.

The main reason why McDonald’s and Wendy’s are unhealthy is because of the empty vitamins and minerals essential for the body to function properly. Not using high fat or sugar ingredients will help maintain the freshness and nutritional value of basic vitamins and minerals of salads, fruits and vegetables in salads, wraps or condiments for the burgers. Something that simple or even changing the feed for the industry’s cows and livestock will

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give additional, natural flavor as well as making the meat higher in quality without adding artificial flavorings and preservatives.

For the tiny tots addicted to the golden arches, in addition to their young children's meals ??? make it required that they come with a whole apple, bag of baby carrots or dried cranberries even if the child wants french fries or a sundae. At least the restaurant is showing a better effort into changing the obesity and promoting healthy eating. Schools are struggling with promoting healthy foods by being less funded by parents. Fast food restaurants are located in 119 different countries ??? they should not have a problem with having the money to prepare their food in a healthier process.

In conclusion, obesity is a big problem that concerns parents, schools and even the children themselves. Being obese either be in someone's genes or in their eating exercise habits ??? or lack of; either way, parents and schools should help their children and motivate them how to eat properly and exercise ??? being away from the television is the best medicine. Obesity in children and young adolescents promotes a lot of health risks and complications that can cause struggle to their life long term.

Those held accountable for the obesity in America are the parents and the fast food restaurants. Parents give into their screaming child to give them what they want, or basically, shut them up. Parents are in control of their child and should take a stand when it comes to the future and health of their child. Children look up to their parents for support and guidance throughout life ??? parents have to take responsibility for their actions. Allowing their

child to have fast food more than 3 times a week would not be the fast food restaurants fault or the child.

Parents have become a link between their child and fast food restaurants that has grown to be unhealthy and life threatening. Fast food restaurants have also grown in their number of restaurants to broadened their targeted market. Fast food restaurants promote unhealthy foods 20, 000 times a year through 30 second commercials to young children and adolescents with addicting food filled with fattening calories and grams of salt and sugar. The key players, or those who are affected by this problem, are endless ??? no group is spared.

It is not too common where the key players are also those being held accountable for the problem at hand. These are called stakeholders ??? the parents, schools and fast food restaurant. It is difficult to fight these problems and help preventing or turning away from the norm when commercials make it difficult for parents and schools to work hard in helping children becoming more active. Even if the parents and schools are trying to help children on the path to a healthy and great adulthood, the results would not be the same if the children were not helping themselves along the way.

Eating healthy, exercising or just getting out of the house on a warm day makes a big difference. Although these choices are a personal matter, people need support, whether children or elderly. With support and confidence in knowing those will successfully succeed, anything is possible. No expensive ban should be in place; the main things that need to change are the parents' mindset with putting their child's health first, fast food

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restaurant ingredients and the child's motivation to better themselves for a brighter and active future.

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