

Food advertising to children

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



Paper #: 152. 203 Assignment #: Assignment 1 — Reflective Writing

Exercise Name: O'BYRNE, Debbie SID: 08608431 Q1 This NZPA article is a summary of a new code of conduct for food advertisers which outlines steps they will take to be socially responsible in the way they advertise food to children. It is a collaborative approach between various stakeholders to find common ground on a solution satisfactory to all. Q2 The government are intervening for a couple of different reasons. Business contributes to the economic wealth of a nation with jobs and taxes (Crane and Matten, 2010) but the costs of healthcare to deal with the impacts of poor nutrition are borne by the government on behalf of the taxpayer. Business also has a moral obligation to repay society for the public resources it utilizes for its' success and with the goals of opposing parties sometimes coming into conflict, it is the role of the government to intervene and act as an arbitrator to mediate between these competing parties. (Ryan, Parker & Brown, 2003) Key cause for concern is the rising epidemic of obesity among children across the globe with marketing to children recognized as a contributing factor (Kelly et al, 2010). In a comparison of 13 countries, NZ consistently rated in the top 3 in 3 categories of advertising unhealthy food to children (Hammond, Wyllie, Casswell, 1999) and while the frequencies of advertising may vary among countries the goal remained consistent — the marketing of unhealthy food products to children (Kelly et al, 2010). As they reiterated, the times and methods chosen to target children with these unhealthy foods, which clearly contradicted nutritional recommendations, made the job of parents to encourage healthy choices very difficult Q3 While I agree with the principle of intervention in this instance, I'm not convinced that self-

regulation is going far enough. As Ryan and Brown (2003) point out, the disadvantage to codes of conduct devised by industries in an effort to self-regulate is that they are not legally binding or mandatory. While it is in their best interests to comply to stave off compulsory legislation as has happened in Ireland and France (Jardine and Wentz, 2004, as cited in Bakir & Vitell, 2010) often the letter of the law is adhered to rather than the spirit e. g. with stricter controls in relation to advertising on TV becoming more common, increased efforts by food marketers have subsequently been put into alternative forms of advertising like online advergames, viral marketing and product placement (Moore and Rideout 2007). This demonstrates a defensive strategy rather than a pro-active strategy of social responsiveness (Carroll, 1979, as cited in Crane and Matten, 2010) with a superficial pandering to the public rather than a real acknowledgement of the very real harm being done to children's health. Q4 There are various other ways for governments to address this issue. One way would be a laissez-faire, "hands-off" approach that assumes consumers will decide, as happened when the market forced MacDonald's to change their marketing and business strategies relating to food portions and nutritional information (Crane and Matten, 2010). However, this approach was not rolled out in new markets like Asia, China, Africa which indicates a relativistic rather than idealistic strategy that leaves children in these markets at the mercy of marketing ploys that are no longer acceptable in most other parts of the world. (Jardine and Wentz, 2005 , as cited in Bakir & Vitell, 2010). Another way of dealing with it would be through regulation, as has been done by the UK government who, in January 2008 after enquiries into childhood obesity, have imposed

strict regulation on the advertisement of food to children under 16 (Kelly et al, 2003). Direct intervention through taxation is also an option e. g. France has dealt with a similar situation by putting a tax on all food/drink not bearing a health message. Goldberg et al (1978) suggested that to level the playing field, governments would need to spend as much money getting their healthy eating message across as companies advertising unhealthy options but it would seem more cost effective from a government perspective to limit and control the advertisements of business than to make any attempt to compete. The code of conduct mentioned in the article is an attempt at self regulation in order to stave off the more invasive-type approaches outlined above, as was done by soft drink companies in Europe (Bakir & Vitell, 2010). However, I concur with the comments of Delvina Gorton in the background paper for the Heart Foundation on this issue; that we need to monitor the success of this code going forward and if it is not found to be effective then stricter government regulation needs to be considered. References Bakir, A., Vitell. S. (2010) The Ethics of Food Advertising Targeted Toward Children: Parental Viewpoint. *Journal of Business Ethics* 91, 299—311 Crane, A., & Matten, D. (2010). *Business ethics* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press Goldberg, M., Gorn, G., Gibson, W. (1978) TV Messages for Snack and Breakfast Foods: Do they Influence Children's Preferences? *Journal of Consumer Research* 5(2) 73-81. Gorton, D., April 2011, Advertising Food to Children Background Paper, Heart Foundation Hammond K., Wyllie A., Casswell S. (1999) The extent and nature of televised food advertising to New Zealand children and adolescents. *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*; 23(1): 49-55. Kelly, B.,

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