

INFLUENCES ON NUTRITIONAL PRACTICES AND WELLNESS ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

Psychological, Cultural and Social Influences on Food Choices

Grade Levels: 7-12

Concept: Advertising

Comprehensive Standard: 6.1 Analyze the factors that influence nutritional practices and wellness across the lifespan

Technical Standard: 6.1.1 Examine the psychological, cultural and social influences related to food choices

LESSON COMPETENCIES:

- ? Identify advertising strategies used to influence food choices (MS)
- ? Analyze marketing strategies that influence food choices (HS)

ANTICIPATED BEHAVIORAL OUTCOMES:

- ? Students identify the strategies used by advertisers to influence consumers.
- ? Students make buying decisions based on sound nutritional advice.

Resources Needed:

- Magazines and scissors
- Food ads from magazines or taped ads from television

References for teachers and students:

Team Nutrition, a program developed by the USDA to promote healthy eating and physical activity has several resources appropriate for middle school students. These include a Student Activity Guide and Teacher's Guide with several activities called yoursSELF. One activity is called "Advertise for Your Health" which asks students to create ads with the overall goal of encouraging kids their age to make smart eating decisions, stay physically active or both. Several can be downloaded for free at their website or ordered at the site. The address is www.fns.usda.gov/tn Click on educators.

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (1996). Family, Food and Society: A Teacher's Guide. WI Department of Public Instruction, Milwaukee, WI.

The *Media Awareness Network of Canada* has several lesson plans and handouts on advertising for young children and teens, also has information for parents. The site is found at:

<http://www.media-awareness.ca/eng/med/class/teamedia/food2.htm>

A lesson plan, *Magazine Ads and You, the Teenager*, is available at the AskERIC http://askeric.org/cgi-bin/printlessons.cgi/Virtual/Lessons/Health/Consumer_Health/COH0003.html

Background Information:

Advertisers spend billions of dollars each year to influence consumer spending. A wide variety of advertising and strategies are used to influence both children and teens in purchasing food.

A technique is a method ads use to persuade customers to buy a product. Most techniques appeal to the consumer's need for a sense of belonging and acceptance. Some of the more common advertising techniques used include the following:

- ? **Bandwagon** – ads give the impression that everyone is using this product and you don't want to be left out
- ? **Comparison** – compares one product to another of the same type. A brand might also compare its "old" self to its "new, improved formula"
- ? **Generalities or Glittering Generalities** – uses broad, general terms that sound appealing to the audience but really say nothing informative about the product or could apply to any brand of the same product. Example: "The American Way"
- ? **Heart Strings** – ads that draw you into a story and make you feel good.
Example:
- ? **Name Calling or Mudslinging** – "slamming" the competition; claiming their product is better than another product
- ? **Plain Folks** – appeal to the common, ordinary people
- ? **Rewards or Special Offers** – consumer will get something if they purchase the product, i.e. a coupon for use on next purchase, a toy, etc.
- ? **Snob Appeal** – appeal to people who want to become part of an "elite" or "exclusive" group
- ? **Special Ingredient** – adding something to a product to set it apart from the competition
- ? **Testimonial** – used an athlete or celebrity to endorse a product

Advertisers also use "weasel words" – words that are misleading or deceptive. This might include words or phrases such as: "all natural", "new, better tasting" (better tasting than what?), "nutritious", "good for you", "fresh", etc.

Media influences include

- ? media models promoting popular trends including fashion, style, activities,
- ? models appear flawless and reflect images that are unattainable
- ? enticing consumers with "fat free" foods leading them to believe that they are able to eat them in unlimited amounts instead of in moderation, also distorts the need for fat in the diet
- ? advertising fads in exercising and diet pills & machines promising "quick fixes" to life problems instead of lifestyle changes of exercising and changing eating habits
- ? advertising diet centers and techniques contributing further to image or idea of imperfection and being uncomfortable with self
- ? advertising for fast foods or other foods during times to appeal to specific audiences such as children and teens to influence family food purchases

Learning Activities:

Middle School Level

- ? Ask students to brainstorm the reasons why advertisers for food products would want to target children or teens. Answers might include:
- Children are often with parents when they are shopping for groceries
 - Children watch a lot of television and pressure parents to buy what they see advertised
 - Teens often do grocery shopping for themselves and for their families
 - Teens have a lot of disposable income (from allowances and/or part time jobs)
 - The advertisers want to build brand loyalty at an early age
- ? Ask students to:
- Brainstorm where they see or hear ads for food
- in bathrooms
 - on the Internet
 - billboards
 - television
 - radio
 - magazines
 - on shopping carts
 - on people's clothes
 - on race cars
 - on buses in larger cities
 - at movies
 - other
- Brainstorm where they see food ads in school
- on pop machines
 - scoreboards
 - programs for school events
 - clothes
 - book covers
 - other
- Brainstorm places where there are no ads
- church
 - other
- ? Discuss the advertising strategies used to persuade consumers to buy food products and other products. Show example(s) of each type of advertising strategy as you describe it for students. Ask students for examples they have seen. (See background information)
- ? Ask students to identify the advertising strategies by finding magazine ads for foods that are examples of each of the strategies discussed. Have students compile their results by completing the handout "*Advertising Techniques: Does It All "Ad" Up?*" OR Ask the students to find magazine ads for food that are examples of each of the strategies and place them on a bulletin board or white board under the appropriate category. (Note to teacher: you will need to prepare placards with the name for each advertising technique and post before students begin)

- ? Ask students to complete the *Advertise for Your Health!* Available in the yourSELF resources at the Team Nutrition website (see reference list).

High School Level

- ? Review the techniques advertisers use to sell their products using the information provided in the background information section of this lesson. Use the transparency master *Advertising Techniques*
- ? Ask students to find examples of food ads using each of the strategies discussed in magazines targeted at a variety of age groups: children, teens, parents, adults, elderly, etc.
- ? Assign a food that is one that would be difficult to “sell” to teens such as broccoli, liver, cauliflower, etc. Working in teams, ask students to develop an ad campaign designed to encourage teens to eat the assigned food or include as a part of their food choices. Students can use one or more of the techniques discussed in class or develop a technique of their own. Students present their ads to the class OR Ask students to complete the *Advertise for Your Health!* Available in the yourSELF resources at the Team Nutrition website (see reference list).

Extended Learning Activities:

- ? **Ad Campaign** – Using the ads developed to “sell” foods in activity above, place the ads in the cafeteria.