



OVERVIEW

BIG IDEA

Frequent use of persuasive techniques in the marketing of unhealthy foods is a major contributor to the obesity epidemic.

OBJECTIVE

2.5 Identify persuasive techniques used in the marketing of food.

AGENDA

1. Your Experience
2. Cereal Marketing Article
3. Persuasive Techniques in Marketing
4. Identify the Techniques!
5. Create a commercial challenge!

HOMEWORK

Read the facts about the fast food industry and answer the reflection questions that follow.

LESSON 2.5

Food Marketing

SUMMARY:


This lesson will focus on one aspect of the obesity epidemic: persuasive food marketing techniques. Students will begin by thinking about their own experiences with food advertising. Then they will read an article about unhealthy cereal marketing aimed at children and watch a short video on the problem. They will move into small teams to brainstorm solutions to the problem. Then students will learn about 10 persuasive techniques used in marketing and analyze 5 TV commercial clips, attempting to identify which technique(s) are used in each. Finally, students will team up to make a healthy commercial for one of the food groups in the MyPlate recommendation, using one of the persuasive techniques for a positive outcome.



UNIT 2: NUTRITION & FITNESS LESSON 2.5


Food Marketing

PH2.5: Identify persuasive techniques used in the marketing of food

 1. Think about a TV commercial you saw lately that caught your attention. Describe it below:

2. What caught your attention or made the commercial memorable?

3. Besides TV commercials, what are all of the ways you can think of that foods and drinks are marketed and advertised.

 **Kids Spoon-Fed Marketing and Advertising for Least Healthy Breakfast Cereals**

New Haven, Conn. — The least healthy breakfast cereals are those most frequently and aggressively marketed directly to children as young as age two, finds a new study from Yale University's Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity. The researchers' evaluation of cereal marketing, the first such study of its kind, shows pervasive targeting of children across all media platforms and in stores. Researchers studied the nutrient composition and comprehensive marketing efforts of 115 cereal brands and 277 individual cereal varieties. Nineteen brands (comprised of 47 varieties) were identified as "child brands" because their cereals are marketed directly to children on television, the Internet, or through licensed characters, such as Dora the Explorer. Cereal companies spend nearly \$156 million annually marketing to children just on television. They also market extensively using the Internet, social media, packaging, and in-store promotions.

Key marketing exposure findings include:

- The average *preschooler* sees 642 cereal ads per year on television alone, almost all for cereals with the worst nutrition rankings.
- Companies make heavy use of online marketing in the form of company-sponsored cereal websites and "advergames." General Mills' website Millsberry.com, averages 767,000 unique young visitors a month who stay an average of nearly 24 minutes per visit while Postopia.com averages nearly 265,000 young visitors monthly.
- Kellogg—the most frequent in-store advertiser—averaged 33.3 promotions per store and 9.5 special displays for its child and family brands over the four-week period examined.

DO NOW: Encourage students to think broadly about how foods/drinks are marketed: print ads, billboards, radio spots, eye-catching packaging, in-store ads/displays, internet, etc.

READ: Cerealfacts.org has a variety of information/resources. They also discuss some of the research studies, which are great models for students about how science is done in the real world. (example: http://cerealfacts.org/media/Sugar_Cereal_Study.pdf)



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LESSON 2.5

- General Mills markets to children more than any other cereal company. Six of the ten least healthy cereals advertised to children are made by General Mills, including the advertised cereal with the worst nutrition score—Reese's Puffs, which is 41% sugar.

Key nutrition findings include:

- Cereals marketed directly to children have 85% more sugar, 65% less fiber, and 60% more sodium than cereals marketed to adults for adult consumption.
- Forty-two percent of child-targeted cereals contain artificial food dyes, compared with 26% of family cereals and 5% of adult cereals.
- Of the cereals targeted directly to children, only 8% meet sugar limits to qualify for inclusion in the USDA's Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program, and not one meets the nutrition standards required to advertise to children in the United Kingdom.
- All cereals marketed directly to children — including Cocoa Puffs (44% sugar), Cap'n Crunch (44% sugar), Froot Loops (41% sugar), Lucky Charms (41% sugar) and Cinnamon Toast Crunch (32% sugar) — meet industry's own nutrition standards for “better-for-you” foods.

Through the Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative (CFBAI) sponsored by the Council of Better Business Bureaus, most of the largest food marketers have pledged to reduce marketing of unhealthy products to children. This research shows that the CFBAI has not significantly reduced the amount of cereal advertising to children on television. According to Jim Marks, MD, MPH: “While cereal can be a healthy and convenient breakfast for children, this study shows that cereal companies are targeting children with their least healthy products. Clearly there's a lot of room for improvement.”

Source: news.yale.edu/.../kids-spoon-fed-marketing-and-advertising-least-healthy

DISCUSS

As a small group, you are a “task force” assigned to focus on how cereal advertising impact the childhood obesity epidemic. What kind of solution would you devise to respond to this problem?

Brainstorm solutions in the space below:

DISCUSS: As students brainstorm solutions they will begin to think about all the factors and players influencing the problem and will likely run into some disagreement. For example, one student might suggest: “government should ban ads for sweet/unhealthy cereals.” Another student will likely disagree, but the debate is valuable. However, for the sake of time (and creativity!) encourage students to consider and write down all ideas. They do not have to solve the problem, they are just engaging in a brainstorming exercise.



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Basic persuasion techniques: Read over the advertising strategies below to increase your awareness of food marketing methods.

- 1. Association.** This persuasion technique tries to link a product, service, or idea with something already liked or desired by the target audience, such as fun, pleasure, beauty, security, intimacy, success, wealth, etc. The media message doesn't make explicit claims that you'll get these things; the association is implied. *Association* can be a very powerful technique. A good ad can create a strong emotional response and then associate that feeling with a brand (family = Coke, victory = Nike).
- 2. Bandwagon.** Many ads show lots of people using the product, implying that "everyone is doing it" (or at least, "all the cool people are doing it"). No one likes to be left out or left behind, and these ads urge us to "jump on the bandwagon." Politicians use the same technique when they say, "The American people want..." How do they know?
- 3. Bribery.** This technique tries to persuade us to buy a product by promising to give us something else, like a discount, a rebate, a coupon, or a "free gift." Sales, special offers, contests, and sweepstakes are all forms of bribery. Unfortunately, we don't really get something for free -- part of the sales price covers the cost of the bribe.
- 4. Experts.** (A type of Testimonial.) We rely on experts to advise us about things that we don't know ourselves. Scientists, doctors, professors and other professionals often appear in ads and advocacy messages, lending their credibility to the product, service, or idea being sold. Sometimes, Plain folks can also be experts, as when a mother endorses a brand of baby powder or a construction worker endorses a treatment for sore muscles.
- 5. Explicit claims.** Something is "explicit" if it is directly, fully, and/or clearly expressed or demonstrated. For example, some ads state the price of a product, the main ingredients, where it was made, or the number of items in the package -- these are explicit claims. So are specific, measurable promises about quality, effectiveness, or reliability, like "Works in only five minutes!" Explicit claims can be proven true or false through close examination or testing, and if they're false, the advertiser can get in trouble. It can be surprising to learn how few ads make explicit claims. Most of them try to persuade us in ways that cannot be proved or disproved.
- 6. Humor.** Many ads use humor because it grabs our attention and it's a powerful persuasion technique. When we laugh, we feel good. Advertisers make us laugh and then show us their product or logo because they're trying to connect that good feeling to their product. They hope that when we see their product in a store, we'll subtly re-experience that good feeling and select their product. Advocacy messages (and news) rarely use humor because it can undermine their credibility; an exception is political satire.
- 7. Intensity.** The language of ads is full of intensifiers, including superlatives (greatest, best, most, fastest, lowest prices), comparatives (more, better than, improved, increased, fewer calories), hyperbole (amazing, incredible, forever), exaggeration, and many other ways to hype the product.
- 8. Maybe.** Unproven, exaggerated or outrageous claims are commonly preceded by "weasel words" such as may, might, can, could, some, many, often, virtually, as many as, or up to. Watch for these words if an offer seems too good to be true. Commonly, the Intensity and Maybe techniques are used together, making the whole thing meaningless.
- 9. Repetition.** Advertisers use repetition in two ways: Within an ad or advocacy message, words, sounds or images may be repeated to reinforce the main point. And the message itself (a TV commercial, a billboard, a website banner ad) may be displayed many times. Even unpleasant ads and political slogans work if they are repeated enough to pound their message into our minds.
- 10. Testimonials.** Media messages often show people testifying about the value or quality of a product, or endorsing an idea. They can be experts, celebrities, or plain folks. We tend to believe them because they appear to be a neutral third party (a pop star, for example, not the lipstick maker, or a community member instead of the politician running for office.)

Source: Media Literacy Project at <http://medialiteracyproject.org/language-persuasion>

NEW INFO: This is not an exhaustive list of persuasive techniques, but a handful of the more "basic" ones. More can be found at www.medialiteracyproject.org and many other Internet sources. For students who need to be challenged, the list could be expanded.



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For each of the cereal commercials, list the persuasive technique(s) you observe:

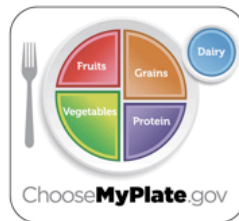
Cereal:	Persuasion Techniques Used:
Clip #1:	
Clip #2:	
Clip #3:	
Clip #4:	
Clip #5:	



Challenge! Your group is an Advertising Agency. The USDA has entered a contract with you to market the new MyPlate message. You need to create and perform a persuasive commercial for a one food group within the MyPlate recommendation. You must use one of the persuasive marketing techniques and your commercial must be 30-60 seconds.

Review: MyPlate Recommendations

- Fruits:** Focus on Fruits
- Vegetables:** Vary your Vegetables.
- Grains:** Make at least half your grains whole.
- Protein:** Go lean with protein.
- Dairy:** Get your calcium-rich foods



Team: _____

Marketing Technique: _____

Food Group: _____

CLIPS (Answer – Product: Youtube link)
 (NOTE: many of these are old (“vintage”) and will be quite humorous & interesting for students to view. Encourage them to have fun with this activity!)

Humor - Wackies: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U4UHHT0EuDg>

Intensity and Repetition - Krinkles: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3094hyz-K9Y>

Association (fun) - Weetabix: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RsLNNrjGrqk>

Testimonial - Wheaties: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L5wbnqmwVPs>

Bandwagon - Toddy: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n7vDuCa2zTc>

Several 30-second cereal commercials can be found at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pA0di184Ntg>

Students should just choose ONE strategy in order to facilitate quick planning and practicing. Students can perform their commercial skits for the class and classmates can guess which marketing strategy was used. If time is a limiting factor, groups can “exchange” skits with one other group rather than having all groups perform in front of the entire class.



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For each of the following advertisements, name the marketing technique used:

1. "You have never tried CrazyPuffs cereal!? That is truly crazy! Everyone eats CrazyPuffs, so you should too!"

Persuasive technique: _____

2. "I have eaten Oaty O's since I was in Little League. It makes me strong and energized. If I didn't eat Oaty O's I would not hit all those grand slams out of the park!"

Persuasive technique: _____

3. "Star Bites are the greatest cereal in this galaxy. If you want to have the very best blast-off breakfast to start your day, choose Star Bites. Eat them for out-of-this-world energy!"

Persuasive technique: _____



Consider these facts about the fast food industry:

1. In the United States, the food industry spends more than \$33 billion a year to advertise products that are mostly loaded with fat, salt and sugar. The National Cancer Institute spends \$1 million per year to encourage people to eat fruits and vegetables.
2. McDonald's is the largest owner of private playgrounds in North America.
3. In 1970, Americans spent about \$6 billion on fast food. In 2006, the spending rose to nearly \$142 billion
4. There are more than 300,000 fast food restaurants in the U.S. alone.
5. McDonald's is Brazil's largest employer.
6. The popularization of the drive-thru led car manufacturers in the 1990s to install cup holders in the dashboards. As fast food drinks became larger, so did the cup holders.
7. Coca-Cola originally included coca derivatives such as cocaine in their sodas, which at the time was not illegal. It was originally served as a "brain tonic and intellectual soda fountain beverage.
8. French fries are the single most popular fast food in America. In 1970, french fries surpassed regular potato sales in the United States. In 2004, Americans ate 7.5 billion pounds of frozen french fries.
9. McDonald's is the largest purchaser of beef, pork, and potatoes and the second largest purchaser of chicken in the world.
10. High-fructose corn syrup (which tricks your body into wanting to eat more and to store more fat) first appeared in 1967, and the average American now consumes 63 pounds of it a year.

Source: Fast Food Nation

Answer the following questions based on the list of facts above:

1. Which of the above facts was most surprising to you? Least surprising to you?
2. What are some of the marketing strategies fast food companies have used to sell their product?
3. What would you do to reduce the consumption of fast food?

ASSESS Answers:

Bandwagon

2. Testimonial (celebrity)

3. Intensity

The purpose of this homework is to give students another example (beyond breakfast cereals) of how an unhealthy food is marketed by a massive industry. All facts are from Fast Food Nation.