

Lesson 5: Advertising and Marketing Strategy Influences on Food Purchases

Introduction

In this lesson students investigate the diverse and complex advertising and marketing strategies that the food industry uses to entice consumers to purchase products. While some strategies are very obvious, others are subtle, and often exploitive.

This lesson provides students with an opportunity to identify advertising and marketing ploys through hands-on experiences. They also determine the impact of food marketing strategies on their own consumer practices.



Specific Learning Outcome

12.NU.9 Demonstrate understanding of food advertising and marketing strategies and their impact on food purchases.



Key Understandings

- Food producers and advertisers use a range of strategies to influence consumers' food purchases.
 - Understanding marketing strategies helps individuals to be informed consumers.
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Essential Questions

1. What are some common food advertising and marketing strategies?
 2. What can individuals do to be more informed consumers?
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Background Information

Television is the primary medium used for food advertising, followed by magazine advertising. Canadian radio and television advertising must comply with the Food and Beverage Clearance Section of Advertising Standards Canada (ASC). Currently, no federal legislation is applied to print advertising for food and beverages (print advertisements may be voluntarily submitted for review to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's Food Labelling Information Service).

REFERENCES



For more detailed information regarding food and beverage advertising, refer to the following websites:

Advertising Standards Canada (ASC). "ASC Bulletin: Strengthening the Framework for Regulating Children's Advertising." *ASC Clearance Service*.

<www.adstandards.com/en/clearance/strengtheningTheFramework.asp>.

Canada Business: Services for Entrepreneurs. *Food Labelling*.

<www.canadabusiness.ca/servlet/ContentServer?cid=1081944198739&lang=en&page_name=CBSC_FE%2Fdisplay&c=Regs>.

For website updates, please visit Websites to Support the Grades 11 and 12 Curriculum at

<www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/physhlth/>.



Suggestion for Instruction / Assessment

What Does the Package Say?

Make available to students, or have students bring to class, a variety of food packages (e.g., common or uncommon food, healthy or “less healthy” food). Ensure that the cost of each item is available or marked on the product.

As an activating strategy, facilitate a class discussion about the food packages. Have students address questions such as the following:

1. What key messages are found on the various food packages?
2. Do the products make any nutrition claims? Explain.
3. Which demographics do you think are the primary targets for the products?
4. What features would draw consumers’ attention to the products (e.g., wording, colour, images)?
5. Which product has the most appealing package to attract consumers? Explain.
6. Which product is the most nutritious? least nutritious?
7. Which product is the most expensive? least expensive?



Background Information

Nutrient Content Claims

Many food labels are now making *nutrient content claims* in response to consumer health concerns. Food packages often make nutrient content claims by including words or phrases such as *0 trans fats, light, low calorie, good source of fibre, reduced fat*, and so on. What do these phrases really mean, and are they regulated?

In Canada, manufacturers must include *nutrition facts* on most pre-packaged food. *Nutrient content claims* do not have to appear on food packages; however, when they are included, they generally appear on the front of the food packages to draw attention to a specific aspect of the food. When food packages include nutrient content claims, consumers can be reassured that the claims made meet specific government criteria.

Consumers concerned about healthy eating can examine the Nutrition Facts label and list of ingredients on food packages, as well as explore what the nutrient content claims mean.



To review some common Canadian nutrient content claims, refer to RM 12-NU: Food Label Dictionary.

REFERENCES



For additional information on food and nutrition labelling, visit the following websites:

Canadian Food Inspection Agency. "Chapter 7: Nutrient Content Claims." *2003 Guide to Food Labelling and Advertising*. <www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/labeti/guide/ch7e.shtml#7.1>.

Health Canada. "Factsheet Listing." *Nutrition Labelling—Get the Facts!* 16 Jan. 2008. <www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/label-etiquet/nutrition/educat/te_background-le_point-eng.php>.

---. *Nutrition Labelling—Get the Facts!* 16 Jan. 2008. <www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/label-etiquet/nutrition/educat/te_background-le_point-08-eng.php>.

International Food Information Council. "Lesson 3: Label Talk!" *The New Food Label: A Food Label Education Program for High School Students*. 1 July 1994. <www.ific.org/publications/other/tnfles3.cfm>.

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Common Advertising Strategies

Advertising is all around us. Every day we are bombarded with advertising, in every form of media, related to many different products. Food is, of course, an extremely popular and frequently advertised commodity. All producers are in competition trying to entice consumers to buy their products with a variety of advertising strategies.



Suggestion for Instruction / Assessment

Food Advertising Strategies

As a class, examine some misleading or deceptive advertising strategies, sometimes called *hidden persuaders*, which are intended to convince consumers to buy products. Discuss how these strategies affect our food choices.

The Media Awareness Network website, for example, offers a variety of media education resources, including information about food advertising strategies.

REFERENCES



For additional information on advertising strategies, visit the following websites:

Berger, Arthur Asu. "How to Analyze an Advertisement: Finding Ads' Hidden Messages." *Media & Values* 37 (Fall 1986): n.p. Available on the Center for Media Literacy website at <www.medialit.org/reading_room/article227.html>.

Center for Media Literacy. *Common Advertising Strategies: Student Handout*. Media Awareness Network. <www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/educational/handouts/advertising_marketing/common_ad_strats.cfm>.

Media Awareness Network. *Food Advertising Strategies: Student Handout*. <www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/educational/handouts/advertising_marketing/food_ad_strategies.cfm>.

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Journal Entry

Have students record a journal entry in which they respond to questions such as the following:

1. What is your favourite food commercial? Describe it.
2. What makes that commercial memorable?
3. Where do you see and/or hear food advertising that captures your attention (e.g., on the Internet, on billboards, on television, on radio, in magazines, on shopping carts, on clothing, on race cars, on buses in larger cities, at movies)?
4. What strategies were used to make the advertising effective/attractive?
5. Do you see food advertisements in school? If so, indicate where and for what types of food.

Brainstorming

Ask students to brainstorm the reasons why advertisers for food products would want to target teens.

Answers might include the following:

- Teens often give parents a wish list of groceries they want.
- Teens watch a lot of television and pressure parents to buy what they see advertised.
- Teens sometimes do grocery shopping for themselves and for their families.
- Teens have disposable income (e.g., from allowances and/or part time jobs).
- The advertisers want to build brand loyalty in consumers at an early age.

Based on the student responses provided, discuss what conclusions can be made.



Background Information

Marketing Tricks of Grocery Stores

Ongoing market researchers ensure that purchasing opportunities are maximized when individuals are in grocery stores/supermarkets. Grocery retailers rely on shoppers spending more than they intended, buying more than is on their shopping list, and being convinced to purchase items that appear to be on sale (Stone).

If shoppers are aware of advertising and marketing techniques commonly used by grocery stores/supermarkets, and are well organized and prepared in advance for their grocery shopping, they can better avoid being influenced by marketing tricks.



Suggestion for Instruction / Assessment

Marketing Tricks and Strategies

In a group brainstorming session, have students respond to the following questions:

1. What marketing tricks do grocery stores/supermarkets use to appeal to the senses?
2. What other strategies do grocery stores/supermarkets use to get shoppers to part with their money (e.g., product placement, wait times)?

REFERENCES



- For additional information on marketing strategies, refer to the following websites:
- CityFood Magazine. "Sneaky Supermarket Tricks." *Shop*. 23 Oct. 2006.
www.cityfood.com/EN/shop/sneaky_supermarket_tricks/.
- Stone, Sidney. "The Marketing Tricks of Grocery Stores." The Budget Chef.
www.thebudgetchef.com/marketing-tricks-of-grocery-stores.html.
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Suggestion for Instruction / Assessment

Buyer Beware

Provide students with an opportunity to identify advertising and marketing strategies used to influence food purchases by organizing a field trip to a local grocery store/supermarket. Divide the class into groups of no more than four or five students. To avoid congestion for the regular shoppers, ask each group of students to start in a different department/area of the store (e.g., bakery, produce), if applicable.

Directions/Description

Ask each group to do the following during their visit to the grocery store:

- Identify how many of the previously discussed advertising strategies and/or marketing tricks are visible, implemented, or identifiable at the store.
- Identify nutrient content and health claims for selected products found in the department/area in which they started. Identify the product's name, the claim, and the Nutrition Facts that support the claim. Health claims will be harder to find and fewer in number.

NOTE TO TEACHER

Remind students that fresh fruit and vegetables, meat, poultry, and seafood may have nutrition information nearby, but not directly on the packaging.

Once students are back at school, have each group report their findings to the class.



Suggestion for Instruction / Assessment

Food Buying Tips

This learning activity is designed to help students be more informed and better prepared consumers in a grocery store/supermarket environment, using the information from this lesson.

Using the Carousel Brainstorming strategy (see Appendix E), assign students to one of the following three stations:

- Before Shopping
- While Shopping
- After Shopping

Ask each group to prepare a list of grocery shopping tips suitable for the assigned station (using the information they learned from their examination of advertising and marketing strategies). The tips should include suggestions for helping consumers avoid being influenced by advertising and marketing strategies.

REFERENCE



For additional information on grocery shopping tips, refer to the following website:

The Frugal Shopper. "Grocery Shopping Tips." *Frugal Household Tips and Hints*.
[<www.thefrugalshopper.com/tips/grshopping.shtml>](http://www.thefrugalshopper.com/tips/grshopping.shtml).

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