

Fat Food Fast

Luisa Ibarra

English Discipline, El Paso Community College

English 1301: Composition I

Professor Kelli L. Wood

July 19, 2010

Fat Food Fast

Advertising is one of the most significant marketing tools that companies use to sell their products to the average consumer. Most of us know that many advertisements have hidden messages that stimulate our brains and target a certain senses and groups of individuals, and we all know that commercials and advertising are a big part of our everyday lives. We are bombarded with advertising daily, whether it is newspapers, magazines, on a drive to work, or when we sit down and relax in front of the television. We may not realize it, but this daily dose of product bombardment through advertising affects the way we live, the clothes we wear, the car we drive, and most of all the food we eat. The average family in the United States experiences a much busier and hectic lifestyle than that of their parents due to the economy, an increased desire to have more in our life for our family and children, and a push to attend to fitness and wellness. A close examination of three advertisements by the Burger King Corporation illustrates how Burger King appeals to those circumstances in order to appeal to consumers, but these appeals hide a contribution to a growing health problem in our country.

The combination of the three advertisements promoting fast food is needed to accurately display the image of the fast food experience. In the first advertisement, we see the typical fast food restaurant displayed with customers visibly waiting for service to satisfy their hunger. Although this could be any fast food storefront, the subject here is Burger King. The 2009 ad is attractive and pleasing to the eye with its bright colors in the restaurant. The bright colors of red and yellow are used to signify the brand. In addition, in the background above the Burger King sign, we see the words “on platform 13” with an arrow clearly showing we are in an area of transportation where people are on the move and in a hurry to get somewhere (Burger King, 2009). This relates to the idea that our lives have become busier and more involved when it

comes to family, food, convenience, and speed. By setting this ad here, Burger King implicitly sends the message that its products are accessible despite our busy lifestyles.

The second advertisement of the three is set in a typical Burger King (1974) restaurant where we see an average family enjoying a meal. The advertisement gets our attention and targets our sense of family by showing us how happy this family is sharing a meal together in a fast food restaurant. Family is often used in fast food advertisements to entice the consumers to come and share the experience of a family meal of good food, fast. For the mother in this family this ad represents an escape from the kitchen at home. Fowles (1998) states in this excerpt from *Common Culture* that,

Freedom is the pitch here, the freedom that every individual yearns for whenever life becomes too oppressive. Many advertisers like appealing to the need for escape because the sensation of pleasure often accompanies escape, and what nicer emotional nimbus could there be for a product? (“11 Escape,” para. 1).

When we see an advertisement for a fast food product like Burger King’s hamburger, we find that it appeals to our senses. This is done not only through taste and sight but also through the pleasurable idea of leaving a hot kitchen and dishes behind and being able to spend time with our families without having to worry about work or housekeeping. This is a perfectly simple, everyday example what Fowles means when he says that advertisers like to appeal to our desire for escape.

The third advertisement in this combination of ads is the picture of a mouthwatering large hamburger at Burger King. This ad simply shows a Burger King Whopper being put together while the song “You’re Still the One,” plays in the background (Burger King 1997). Fowles (1998) notes that advertising is geared to satisfy us and that “the art of Photographing food and

drink is so advanced sometimes these temptations are wondrously caught in the camera's lens" ("15 Physiological Needs," para. 1). Although this advertisement is successful in reaching the consumer through that lens, it also promotes an unhealthy look at food consumption due to the enormous portion size.

In looking at the advertisement again of the $\frac{1}{4}$ pound hamburger, consumers see it as food that consists of both meat and vegetables, and that gives it the appearance of a healthy food. However, what we actually see can be very deceiving when it comes to this particular hamburger. The fact that we have an obvious display of vegetables in the hamburger such as lettuce, tomato, and onion, tends to make us feel that we are eating healthier. The problem with the fast food hamburger shown in this advertisement is not the hamburger itself, but is that we have meat (two patties equal to $\frac{1}{4}$ pound of meat) which is well over the recommended amount of meat eaten in one meal according to the famous food pyramid suggest by most health organizations. We also have on the very same hamburger the addition of bacon (usually three slices), cheese, and a condiment of mayonnaise all of which contain large amounts of fats. In addition to the food preparation, all the above mentions items consists of additional fats that add even more to the over-all calories contained in just one hamburger.

This combination of fast food advertising definitely displays our relationship with food, family and convenience, but also promotes a diet of large portions that are not part of a healthy diet. The larger portions advertised by most fast food restaurants and the option to increase the size of the meal for a small increase in price definitely promotes a beyond the average caloric intake for one individual on a daily basis. With a continued diet of these types of foods on a regular basis that consists of far too many calories and way too much fat content in the average Americans daily diet, it is no wonder why obesity is on the rise in the United States. Our

continued relationship with fast food that is often considered unhealthful is contributing to the rise of obesity in the United States. The *Healia Health Guide* (2009) article entitled “What is Obesity?” noted that “obesity and being overweight are extremely common in the United States,” and that “one third of American adults are obese and another third are overweight; that means that two out of every three adults is either obese or overweight!” (para. 1).

Fast food advertising where the food is photographed to entice consumers to view the food as convenient, family friendly and healthy continues to contribute to the problem. The appeal of convenience and escape, which the advertisements clearly represent, create appealing views for all members of the family. As customers, we are encouraged to think that the food is healthy by its appearance when we can see the daily food groups of grain, meat, dairy, and vegetables. It may be fast food but that does not mean that it is healthy food or that the portions are in line with what doctors recommend for the daily nutritional requirements for a meal. Its contributions to the health problems of the country surely don’t make it convenient, and its message of escape does not guarantee quality time with the family. Instead of being “simply false or superstitious ideas,” Davis (1992), points out that these kinds of myths and images “are the ideas and stories that motivate daily behavior,” and Burger King plays into those, creating myths about family, health, and escape in the setting of our fast-paced lives (“The New Myths,” para. 2).

References

Burger King. (1974) *Burger King Commercial* [Video file]. <https://youtu.be/KJXzkUH72cY>

Burger King. (1997). *Burger King still the one 1997* [Video file]. https://youtu.be/1lJ3LcRS_-M

Burger King. (2009). *Platform 13* [Image]. London Se1: Community Website.

<http://www.london-se1.co.uk/restaurants/info/257/burger-king>

Davis, J. F. (1992). "The power of images: Creating the myths of our time." *Media and Values*.

57. Retrieved from Center for Media Literacy website: <http://www.medialit.org/media-values/media-values-articles-52-63#mv57>

Fowels, J. (1998). Advertising's fifteen basic appeals. In M. Petracca and M. Sorapure (Eds),

Common Culture: Reading and Writing About American Popular Culture.

<http://www.cyberpat.com/shirlsite/education/essay2/jfowles.html>

Healia Health (2009). Obesity/Overweight Guide--What is Obesity? *Healia Health Guides*.

<https://healthguides.healthgrades.com/how-obesity-affects-your-health/obesity-facts>

How the final paragraphs are edited to stay focused and avoid being more of a nutrition paper than an advertisement analysis.

The third advertisement in this combination of ads is the picture of a mouthwatering large hamburger at Burger King. This ad simply shows a Burger King Whopper being put together while the song "You're Still the One," plays in the background (Burger King 1997). Fowels (1998) notes that advertising is geared to satisfy us and that "the art of Photographing food and drink is so advanced sometimes these temptations are wondrously caught in the camera's lens" ("15 Physiological Needs," para. 1) In looking at the advertisement, consumers see it as food that consists of both meat and vegetables, and that gives it the appearance of a healthy food. However, what we actually see can be very deceiving. The fact that we have an obvious display of vegetables in the hamburger such as lettuce, tomato, and onion, tends to make us feel that we are eating healthier. The problem with the fast food hamburger shown in this advertisement is not the hamburger itself, but is that we have meat (two patties equal to ¼ pound of meat) which is well over the recommended amount of meat eaten in one meal as suggested by most health organizations. We also have the addition of bacon, cheese, and mayonnaise, all of which contain large amounts of fats. Although this advertisement is successful in reaching the consumer through that tempting lens that Fowels refers to, it also promotes an illusion of healthy eating despite it being the opposite.

This combination of fast food advertisements definitely displays our relationship with food, family and convenience. Fast food advertising where the food is photographed to entice consumers to view the food as convenient, family friendly and healthy continues to contribute to the problem. The appeal of convenience and escape, which the advertisements clearly represent, create appealing views for all members of the family. As consumers, we are encouraged to think that the food is healthy by its appearance when we can see the daily food groups of grain, meat, dairy, and vegetables. It may be fast food but that does not mean that it is healthy food or that the portions are in line with what doctors recommend for the daily nutritional requirements for a meal. Its contributions to the health problems of the country surely don't make it convenient, and its message of escape does not guarantee quality time with the family. Instead of being "simply false or superstitious ideas," Davis (1992), points out that these kinds of myths and images "are the ideas and stories that motivate daily behavior," and Burger King is only one example of a company that plays into those, creating myths about family, health, and escape in the setting of our fast-paced lives ("The New Myths," para. 2).

Again, my deepest thanks to Luisa for sharing her essay with the extra parts in it so that it helps us see these issues. Wherever you are, Luisa, you rock! 😊👍