

Advertising can help us decide what foods to buy, but should not dictate our food choices. To use advertising to greatest advantage, it is important to analyze it carefully.

Advertising is all around us. We're exposed to ads when we watch television, when we listen to the radio, when we read magazines and newspapers, and even when we open our mail.

- Q. What is the purpose of advertising?
- A. Advertising helps manufacturers sell their products. It also helps consumers by telling what products are available, where to find them and what they cost. As an added benefit, advertising reduces the cost of magazines and newspapers for subscribers and makes free television programs possible.
- Q. How do advertisers reach us with their message?
- A. Before starting an advertising campaign for a product, advertisers determine what "target" audience they want to reach with their message. They then select an appropriate media to use (newspaper, magazine, radio, television). Many food advertisers use television to communicate their messages because the combination of sight and sound is an entertaining, appealing way to sell food.
- Q. What is our exposure to food advertising on television?
- A. The number of food commercials varies with the time of day and the viewing audience. Children are usually exposed to more food advertising than adults. A recent study found the following percentages of food commercials on 3 major networks during 27 hours of broadcasting:

| Time Slot | % Food Product Commercials | Target Audience |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| Saturday 8:00-11:00 am | 69 | children |
| Friday 11:00 am-2:00 pm | 40 | women |
| Tuesday 9:00 pm-midnight | 28 | women & men |

(Brown, J. 1977. Graduate students examine TV ads for food. Journal of Nutrition Education 9 (3): 120).



- Q. What types of food are advertised on television?
- A. Different foods are advertised to different viewing audiences. The study by Brown revealed that breakfast cereals, cookies, candy, gum, popcorn and snacks were advertised more frequently to children than to adults.
- Q. What advertising techniques are used?
- A. Advertising messages are carefully planned. Most ads persuade you to buy the products by appealing to your "hidden wants and desires." What are some of these desires? We may want to be popular, to be healthy, to be recognized for our accomplishments, to be creative, to be independent, to be adventurous. If good looks are important to us, an ad promoting a low calorie food may catch our eye. Snack food ads may promise that we'll have more fun if we buy the advertised product. These emotional appeals are very persuasive, but should not be the only factors influencing whether or not we buy a product.

SOME ACTIVITIES FOR TEENS

- 1. Look for examples of food ads in magazines that appeal to "hidden wants and desires."
- 2. Analyze the sales pitch of 3 or 4 food ads in magazines or on television.

Who is the ad directed toward? (children? mothers? teenagers? senior citizens? etc.)

How does the advertizer get your attention? (catchy tune? bright colors? clever headline? etc.)

What information does the ad give about the product? (cost? nutritional value? flavor? serving suggestions? etc.)

Does the ad appeal to your "hidden wants and desires?"

Would the ad persuade you to buy the food?

- 3. Make a list of slogans and jingles used in food ads. For a fun party game or meeting opener ask other teens to identify the product being advertised.
- 4. Watch television for 1 hour Saturday morning. Record the number of commercials and the products advertised. What percentage of the commercials were for food products? Classify the types of food advertised: snacks? desserts? breakfast foods? main dishes? fruits or vegetables? etc. Did you see any public service announcements promoting good nutrition? Watch television for 1 hour at a time when teen shows are aired. Repeat the observations listed above. Were there differences in the number and type of food advertised?
- Make an educational exhibit on food advertising.

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