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FOOD MARKETING STRATEGIES AND CORPORATE SOCIAL
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HAPPY MEALS, HAPPY PARENTS:
FOOD MARKETING STRATEGIES AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

By

Elizabeth Taylor Quilliam

A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

HAPPY MEALS, HAPPY PARENTS: FOOD MARKETING STRATEGIES AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

By

Elizabeth Taylor Quilliam

Food marketing to children has come under intense scrutiny for its role in fueling the childhood obesity epidemic. Fifteen percent of children aged six through nineteen are considered obese; more than thirty percent of American adults are similarly classified (American Obesity Association 2006; United States Department of Health & Human Services 2007). In response to heightened public concern about childhood obesity, accompanied by renewed calls for advertising regulation, some food companies are adopting new strategies for marketing to children. This research examines how these changing strategies influence consumers, specifically parents of children aged twelve and younger.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been defined as “a company’s commitment to minimizing or eliminating any harmful effects and maximizing its long-run beneficial impact on society” (Mohr et al. 2001). Activities typically considered in studies of CSR include sponsorships, cause-related marketing campaigns, and environmental or “green” advertising. Similarly, how companies respond to concerns about children’s diet and health can be considered evidence of social responsibility. Following this general conceptualization of corporate social responsibility, the research presented here expands on a model developed to understand consumer response to cause-brand alliances (Rifon et al. 2004), exploring if, and how, marketers can enhance their reputations by changing advertising strategies.

Using the framework of attribution theory, the motives that consumers ascribe to marketers were examined in a series of empirical studies. In the main study, an online experiment, several variables hypothesized to influence perceptions of company credibility and attitude toward the company were tested. Involvement with nutrition, skepticism toward advertising, motive attributions, and attributions of blame were among the factors studied for their effect on perceived company credibility and parental attitudes toward the company.

The results of this research have implications for practitioners, policy makers, and scholars. Parents are important stakeholders in the regulation of advertising to children. Understanding their views offers valuable insights for marketers and policy makers.

In addition to these practical applications, this research contributes to the growing body of scholarly knowledge regarding socially responsible marketing. Expanding on the Rifon et al. (2004) model, the findings support the role of attributions for corporate reputational effects when making a strategic decision that may be viewed for its socially responsible implications. Further, in addition to the altruistic and profit motives identified in that model, a third “avoidance” motive was found. A company’s inferred desire to avoid public pressure and potential regulation can be used in other domains of public policy research involving issues of advertising limits or prohibitions. Finally, this research introduced individual characteristic variables into the model and extended it to a new domain, advertising to children.

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DEDICATION

To my husband, Michael Quilliam, the love of my life,
who encouraged me to set a good example for our children by following my muse

To our children, Tasha Nicole and Brett David,
who keep me young and challenged, and who make me so very proud

And in memory of my mother, Sylvia Friedland Taylor,
who showed me, by example, that you can indeed teach an old dog new tricks

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Food marketing to children has come under intense scrutiny for its role in fueling the childhood obesity epidemic. Fifteen percent of children aged six through nineteen are considered obese; more than thirty percent of American adults are similarly classified (American Obesity Association 2006; United States Department of Health & Human Services 2007). The long-term health effects are serious. Implicated in more than thirty medical conditions including diabetes and coronary heart disease, obesity is the number two cause, after tobacco, of preventable death in the U.S. (American Obesity Association 2006). For children the risks may be even greater given “the epidemic of overweight among today’s youth” (NARC 2004). The likelihood of lifelong health problems increases for obese children, who have a 70% probability of becoming overweight or obese adults, with the concomitant increased risk for heart disease, type 2 diabetes, some forms of cancer, and high blood pressure (United States Department of Health & Human Services 2007).

With childhood obesity in the United States increasing dramatically, and nearly tripling for adolescents in the last twenty years (United States Department of Health & Human Services 2007), parents and policy makers seek solutions. The current debate, echoing the concerns surrounding food advertising for the last three decades, focuses on the questionable practice of marketers targeting children; food marketers are now prime targets for regulators, consumer advocates, and parents, for arguably fueling the childhood obesity epidemic.

Historically food marketers have been blamed for a number of ills, ranging from dental health problems to eating disorders (Livingstone and Helsper 2006). Today they are targeted as prime offenders in the childhood obesity epidemic (Strasburger 2001). Attacks on food marketers have broadened with calls for regulations limiting or prohibiting advertisements targeting children (Ellison 2005; Markey 2007b). In response to heightened public concern about childhood obesity, accompanied by renewed calls for advertising regulation, some food companies are adopting new strategies for marketing to children. This research examines how one important stakeholder group, parents of children aged twelve and younger, respond to these changing strategies.

No single strategy has emerged. Some advertisers have adopted new tactics designed to avert government intervention, while continuing to defend the industry's record of self-regulation even as criticism mounts (Better Business Bureau 2006). In November 2006, the Council of Better Business Bureaus, along with ten member companies, announced plans to modify food marketing aimed at children. This action followed public hearings convened by the Federal Trade Commission and Department of Health and Human Services (Federal Trade Commission and Department of Health & Human Services 2006), the publication of a comprehensive analysis of food marketing's influence on children (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies 2006) and other research examining the tactics used by food marketers to reach children (Moore 2006; Wilcox et al. 2004). Concurrently, some food marketers have announced the adoption of a variety of strategy changes, including menu modifications, limitations on advertising to children, or changes in advertising messages.

How companies respond to these concerns can be viewed as a demonstration of social responsibility. The ethics of advertising to children has garnered considerable attention in both academia and popular media, yet the topic is not typically included in academic research on corporate social responsibility (CSR), defined as a “company’s commitment to minimizing or eliminating any harmful effects and maximizing its long-run beneficial impact on society” (Mohr et al. 2001). This study will explore whether socially responsible actions concerning children influence consumers, who have become increasingly distrustful of marketers. In this domain, can marketers enhance their reputations by changing their advertising?

This study focuses on parents, the chief socialization agents for children and the ultimate decision-makers and purchasers of most food consumed by children, (Bridges and Briesch 2006), and their response to changing food marketing strategies targeting children. Marketers often rely on the nag factor, directing advertisements to children with the goal of persuading them to request that their parents purchase specific brands (Bridges and Briesch 2006). Parents then are faced with an unpleasant choice: purchase products that are not nutritious, or deal with unhappy children. Conceivably, parents would reward a company that made the choice easier by promoting healthy options or by ceasing to promote certain foods directly to children. Given the public attention to the childhood obesity epidemic, companies that take the initiative in helping to protect children might be rewarded as responsible corporate citizens. If parents believe the companies are acting responsibly, company and brand attitude and purchase intentions could be enhanced. Further, the FTC, commenting on the challenges encountered during efforts to regulate food advertising in the 1970s, notes that it would be more practical and

effective, as well as more consistent with First Amendment free speech protections, to encourage businesses to be proactive in addressing the obesity issue, rather than to attempt to regulate food marketing to children (Federal Trade Commission and Department of Health & Human Services 2006).

This dissertation addresses the use of new food marketing tactics within the framework of attribution theory, to understand the effectiveness of alternate approaches. Parental response to food marketing strategies is posited to be influenced by the motives that parents attribute to the sponsor. Consumers judge corporate strategies and actions, and the companies that act, by assessing the motives of the company. As evidenced in recent sponsorship and cause related marketing research, consumers attribute those motives in part based on characteristics of the tactics, and in part based on their preexisting perceptions of the corporation (Ellen et al. 2006; Mohr and Webb 2005; Rifon et al. 2004; Trimble and Rifon 2006). This study will expand on that research, using the conceptual framework of attribution theory (Fiske and Taylor 1991; Kelley 1973; Ross and Fletcher 1985), to examine how changing child-oriented advertising tactics affects parents' attributions.

As the food wars continue to rage, policy makers and advertisers alike seek solutions. The current tenor of the debate is illustrative of Pollay's broader contention that advertising's supporters and critics "talk past one another, raising wholly different issues and reaching judgments on wholly different criteria" (Pollay 1986). Food marketers and their advocates continue to emphasize their fiduciary responsibilities and First Amendment rights, while critics emphasize the negative effects of advertising to vulnerable children. Given the unlikelihood of resolution, a new approach is needed.

This study, by increasing our understanding of how consumers respond to new food marketing strategies, can help bridge the gap. It meets the call for academic marketing researchers to “point the way toward enlightened marketing practices... that should...safeguard the rapidly depleting pool of goodwill that consumers possess toward most companies” (Sheth and Sisodia 2005).

Given the length of the debate, the emphasis on free market forces and freedom of speech, and the paucity of clear evidence of a link between advertising and food consumption, policy makers have been reluctant to adopt regulations limiting marketing targeted to children. Yet the questionable record of industry collective self-regulation leaves critics and concerned parents with limited options. If individual companies are motivated to take corrective action, the environment could be improved. In fact, the Federal Trade Commission has called on companies to modify their food marketing practices, revisiting the nutritional balance of products they promote to children and how they are promoted. (Federal Trade Commission and Department of Health & Human Services 2006). If parents respond positively to withdrawal of advertisements targeting children, then food marketers can find support for adopting such a strategy despite its apparent inconsistency with accepted marketing dictums, and calls for further regulation may be quieted. Companies with reputations that are congruent with healthy lifestyle messages will be encouraged to expand such initiatives, providing a social marketing benefit. As Calfee noted nearly twenty years ago, advertising that incorporates health claims has often been more successful than government efforts to educate the public (Calfee 1988). This study will help companies determine whether such an effort might be effective in enhancing their reputations.

Further, the findings will build on the existing scholarly foundation for understanding the effects of corporate socially responsible marketing activities on consumers, testing and extending prior research. Studies of corporate social responsibility and consumers have typically focused on cause related marketing, corporate philanthropy, and environmental responsibility (Ellen et al. 2006). This research introduces a new domain, advertising to children, to the CSR literature. This study will explore the role of individual characteristic variables, such as involvement with and knowledge of nutrition and skepticism to advertising, to understand their influence on parents' reactions to advertising strategies. It will expand the Rifon et al. (2004) model, exploring the role of parents' attributions of company motive in concert with these individual characteristics, to gain a broader understanding of what influences how parents react to different advertising strategies.

Based on a model developed to understand consumer response to corporate socially responsible behavior in sponsorships and cause related marketing, this study examines parental response to food marketing tactics with the goal of understanding how and why parents respond to marketing strategies that modify or limit advertising. If parents reward the advertisers that they judge to be socially responsible with their business, others may emulate those strategies. Further, such voluntary demonstrations of corporate responsibility could mitigate the need for government intervention. Food marketers may find that, in fact, they can do well by doing good.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Children, Food Marketing, and Obesity

Food marketing practices that target children have been criticized for decades, although the reasons have changed. Early concerns about nutrition, dental health, and eating disorders have been replaced by a focus on the dramatically increased incidence of childhood obesity in the U.S. and other Western nations (Livingstone and Helsper 2006). Concerns about the doubled rate of childhood obesity (Livingstone and Helsper 2006) and its related health problems have been accompanied by a renewed effort from researchers and policy makers to identify causes and solutions. With food marketers spending in excess of \$10 billion per year promoting their products to children and youth, a 20-fold increase in ten years (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies 2006; Strasburger 2001), food marketing practices are falling under increased scrutiny.

Public attention and concern with food advertising's effects on children are not unique to the United States. In Great Britain, for example, calls for legislation to ban fast food advertising to children on the premise that it contributes to health problems (Higham 2003; Silverman 2004) were recently answered with the decision by the U.K. regulator Office of Communications (Ofcom) to ban advertising of foods high in salt, sugar, or fat to children and adolescents (Hall 2006; Office of Communications 2006). Similar bans have been enacted in Sweden and debated in other European Union member countries (Higham 2003), and the EU itself has considered such legislation (Grant 2005).

A systematic review of more than 200 research studies conducted in the United Kingdom in 2003 concluded that food is the most heavily advertised product to children,

with the advertised diet diverging dramatically from the diet generally recommended by nutritionists and physicians (BBC.co.uk 2003; Hastings et al. 2003; Higham 2003). This level of advertising has been blamed for the growing obesity problem, with one physician stating unequivocally that “ . . . the leading cause of damage...is the relationship between food advertisements, unhealthy eating practices, and obesity” (Strasburger 2001).

Not only has food been the most heavily advertised product, but also the items that are represented tended to be nutrient poor. Between 1972 and 1997, the top advertised category was cereal, followed closely by candy/cookies/gum/snacks, then beverages (Reece et al. 1999). More recently, sorting foods into slightly different categories, nutritionists found that candy, sweets and soft drinks (combining the second and third categories from earlier studies) dominate child-audience food advertising, followed by convenience foods, then breads and cereals (Harrison and Marske 2005). The troubling findings about types of foods advertised to children were confirmed in a 2007 report issued by the Kaiser Family Foundation. That content analysis of a sample of more than 1,600 hours of programming found that candy and snacks, cereal, and fast food are the top three categories of food products advertised on television programs viewed by children (Gantz et al. 2007). The Kaiser report concluded that “most of the food ads that children and teens see on TV are for foods that nutritionists, watchdog groups, and government agencies argue should be consumed either in moderation, occasionally, or in small portions” (Gantz et al. 2007).

A detailed analysis of the nutritional content of advertised foods supported the claim that these products offer little to meet the health needs of growing children. Compiling the advertised foods into a single composite food, Harrison and Marske

(2005) created a nutrition label that showed 34% of calories per serving coming from sugar, far exceeding the American Heart Association's recommendation. In fact, were a child to consume a daily diet comprised of nothing but the advertised foods, that diet would include more sodium and sugar, but less fiber, vitamin A, calcium and iron than recommended by nutritionists and government agencies (Harrison and Marske 2005). Reinforcing these findings, a later study found that the majority of television food advertisements viewed by children featured products high in fat, sugar, and sodium, with nearly half the calories in advertised products coming from sugar (Powell et al. 2007).

In 2006, the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies in the United States published an extensive study of food marketing to children, including an updated systematic review of the evidence, a call for further research, and a variety of public policy recommendations (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies 2006). Among the conclusions drawn from their analysis of 123 studies was that television advertising influences children's food and beverage requests and dietary intake, and that there is strong statistical evidence of a link between exposure to food advertising and child adiposity.

Demonstrating the existence and nature of a link between frequent exposure to television ads for nutritionally poor food products and childhood obesity is complicated by a number of factors, including level of the child's physical activity, parental supervision, media consumption, child's cognitive developmental stage, and the development of a child's capacity to self-regulate food intake and media consumption (Hastings et al. 2003; Rideout 2005). The Hastings review concluded that while there is substantial evidence that food promotion and television viewing significantly influence

children's food behavior and diet independent of other factors, the size of the effect is difficult to gauge (Hastings et al. 2003). Others have reached similar conclusions, attributing exposure to food commercials with affecting children's food preferences and requests (Rollins 2004). Despite a large body of research conducted over decades, establishing the existence of a clear link between advertising and childhood obesity has been elusive. Many of the studies used content analysis to gauge frequency and content of food advertising, but that alone does not identify causality or effects (see, e.g., Reece et al. 1999, Harrison and Marske 2005, Gantz et al. 2007, Powell et al. 2007). In empirical studies, it has been difficult to isolate advertising from other contributing factors (e.g. Anderson et al. 1998, Lowry et al. 2002, Robinson 1999). Nonetheless, and consistent with the conclusions reached by the Hastings (2003) and IOM (2006) reviews, even the presence of a small effect of food marketing would be consequential to the nation's children and their future health (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies 2006).

Children and Advertising

In addition to this lack of clarity regarding the relationship between food advertising and obesity is the incomplete picture of how children understand and use advertising. Research has demonstrated differences in the ways children view advertising at various ages (John 1999a; John 1999b; Oates et al. 2002), and has examined how children acquire the requisite information processing skills to understand advertising, i.e., distinguishing between program content and advertising, and recognizing the persuasive nature of advertising (Moore 2004). Yet there is not a clear picture of how children use

this knowledge to interpret and judge advertising (John 1999b; Moore 2004). As a result, the debate about advertising's role in this public health issue continues.

John (1999a) summarized the findings from consumer socialization research with a model describing how children mature in both social and cognitive terms based largely on information processing theory. The stages John presented are represented roughly by ages three through seven (perceptual stage), seven through eleven (analytical stage) and eleven through sixteen (reflective stage), with children varying along dimensions of knowledge structure (orientation, focus and complexity) and decision-making and influence strategies (orientation, focus, complexity, and adaptivity perspective). These variations in development then translate into different capabilities with respect to advertising knowledge and decision strategies (John 1999a).

Children in the perceptual stage, approximately ages three through seven, have been found to be able to distinguish television commercials from programming, yet without demonstrating understanding of the true differences between the two (John 1999a). They were more likely to rely on a single perceptual cue, such as the length of a commercial versus the length of a program, than to realize that a commercial contained a selling message. In addition, children under the age of 8 generally have difficulty distinguishing whether advertising claims are true (Derevensky and Klein 1992).

Children in the analytical stage are better able to distinguish advertising from programming and understand its persuasive intent, a new capability that emerges abruptly around age seven or eight (John 1999a). Recognition of the persuasive intent of advertising does not, however, translate into action; the analytical child may realize that a marketer is trying to sell something but without considering that intention in evaluating

the advertised product. It is at this stage, also, that children recognize that advertising messages may be biased or deceptive (John 1999a; John 1999b). Again, however, that recognition is not necessarily accompanied by behavior. Children demonstrate that they recognize falsehoods, yet still act as if the information were true. Children at this stage have the ability to use more information processing strategies than younger children, but typically must be prompted or guided (John 1999a).

Youth at the reflective stage, roughly coinciding with the preteen years beginning around age eleven or twelve, are strategic processors, focusing on relevant features, weighing multiple attributes, adopting dual perspectives, and applying those skills in the marketplace (John 1999a). Adolescents, like adults, are able to think abstractly, developing theories to explain reality and reasoning out their conclusions (Flavell et al. 2002). This advanced cognitive processing translates into understanding the persuasive intent of advertising messages, and is accompanied by evidence of skepticism towards advertisers' claims (John 1999a).

Most of the research regarding food marketing to children, as well as the majority of the policy debate, has addressed television. This is not surprising, given the ubiquitous nature of the medium; 99% of U.S. children live in homes with televisions (Roberts et al. 2005). Not only are televisions present in nearly all U.S. households, but one-third of children aged six and younger, and two-thirds of children aged eight and older, have televisions in their own bedrooms (Rideout et al. 2003). Frequent television viewing (more than two hours per day) has been associated with being overweight, being sedentary, and consuming fewer healthy foods (Anderson et al. 1998; Lowry et al. 2002), although the exact nature and size of the causal relationship between television viewing

and obesity remains elusive. Weak associations between amount of television viewing and levels of physical activity have been reported, but there is stronger support for the relationship between amount of television viewing and high-fat food consumption (Robinson 1999), lending credence to the premise that advertising contributes to the problem of childhood obesity.

Recent research found that children may, in fact, now be exposed to less television advertising, with total paid advertisements reaching children in 2004 down by 7% from 1994, and an estimated 9% decrease in food advertising to children (Desrochers and Holt 2007). This has led some to question the often repeated claim that childhood obesity has increased as television advertising of unhealthy foods has grown, indicating a likely causal link (Seiders and Petty 2007). Desrochers and Holt note, though, that the decline in exposure to television advertising may be accompanied by the growth in use of other marketing tactics, such as product placement, licensing, and other integrated marketing communications tools. Further, simply counting the number or length of television exposures ignores other variables that might influence the persuasive effects of the messages, including the quality of the commercials or the difference between exposure and attention (Desrochers and Holt 2007).

Recently, researchers have turned their attention to new media effects, as marketers have adopted integrated marketing communications programs to reach children as well as adults (Moore 2004). Tactics such as product placement, in-school promotion, and, increasingly, online marketing, accompany the traditional television commercials that have long been studied. A review of websites targeting or appealing to children revealed a variety of practices incorporating marketing messages, such as viral marketing

and advergames (customized interactive games with brand identifiers), promoting food to children (Moore 2006). In a content analysis of advergames, more than 600 advergames were found on the websites for 108 food brands that target children (Lee et al. 2007). A random sample of 251 of those games identified similar types of food being promoted with this new technique as historically advertised on television: candy and gum, cereals, and soft drinks were the most frequent categories.

As new marketing tactics evolve, new policy issues are raised. Moore and Rideout (2007) identify a top concern being the nutritional profile of foods marketed to children online, a concern that echoes those directed towards television.

Public Policy: Regulation vs. Industry Self-Regulation

The absence of a clear picture of the relationship between advertising and childhood obesity has fostered a variety of recommendations, but little agreement on the appropriate public policy response. Many advertisers point to the research inconsistencies to defend their claims that advertising is not responsible for the obesity epidemic, while advocacy groups and some lawmakers focus on the studies that identify a correlation and call for further regulation (Teinowitz 2005b). Some supporters of advertising as information recommend even fewer regulations with an emphasis on free market forces and education (Calfee and Ringold 1994).

Industry self-regulation is often cited as a preferred solution, particularly given the history of difficulty attempting to regulate food advertising (Federal Trade Commission and Department of Health & Human Services 2006). The National Advertising Review Council (NARC) is an independent, self-regulatory body that was created by the Council of Better Business Bureaus in partnership with several advertising

agency associations; its Children's Advertising Review Unit (CARU) promotes and investigates claims related to truth in advertising to children under the age of 12. NARC and CARU issued a White Paper in 2004 explaining their activities regarding oversight of food advertising to children and confirming the advertising industry's commitment to, and CARU's contribution to, self-regulation (NARC 2004). Proposals to expand CARU's supervision of advertising to incorporate more specific standards regarding food advertisements coupled with voluntary restraint by advertisers (Teinowitz 2005a) were answered with the November 2006 revision of CARU guidelines (Better Business Bureau 2006; Martin 2006) and the creation of the Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative (NARC 2006). Under the most recent revision, CARU can take action against unfair advertising, where it was previously limited to addressing only misleading advertisements. Further, they will be responsible for oversight of voluntary programs to be introduced by food marketers in response to childhood obesity concerns.

Supporters of industry self-regulation point to the unintended effects of the UK ban on certain advertising of foods high in fat, salt, and sugar. Notably, more than \$60 million in lost advertising spending has resulted in a reduction in development of new children's television programming (Fitzgerald 2007). Critics of self-regulation still contend, however, that the new CARU guidelines are insufficient and evidence of the failure of self-regulation (Martin 2006). Further, with the rapid evolution of marketing tactics, particularly in the online environment, CARU guidelines may not effectively address critical policy issues such as unlimited exposure to advertising in the form of advergames, or viral marketing effects (Moore and Rideout 2007). Citing the UK experience, some critics note the prevalence of loopholes even in a regulated

environment, allowing marketers to continue to exploit opportunities that could be considered questionable such as the use of proprietary, as opposed to licensed, cartoon characters, and certain online tactics such as viral marketing (Hall 2007)

Although there is no clear-cut agreement on the optimal public policy response, there is agreement that obesity is a problem that must be addressed. Studies such as those discussed above galvanize public opinion and draw the attention of legislators and regulators, resulting in calls for further research, voluntary limits on advertising, or outright advertising bans (Mishra 2004; Teinowitz 2005b).

Food Advertising and Marketing Tactics

Food marketers have responded to their critics with a variety of advertising tactics, ranging from avoidance to modification of promotional practices to withdrawing advertising to developing labeling programs. Those that have held steadfast in their opposition to any external regulation or voluntary limitations emphasize advertisers' First Amendment rights to free speech as well as the belief that parents, not advertisers, bear the primary responsibility for children's food preferences and consumption (Ellison 2005). A group of major advertisers formed a coalition to lobby against regulation and launch a publicity campaign rebutting the contention that advertising is the cause of the childhood obesity epidemic (Melillo and Baar 2005).

Other advertisers have embraced proactive approaches, emphasizing the healthy aspects of their products or healthy lifestyles in general (Federal Trade Commission and Department of Health & Human Services 2006; Institute of Medicine of the National Academies 2006; Sanders 2005). These companies strive to enhance both their market shares and their reputations (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies 2006).

McDonald's, for example, has frequently come under attack for its unhealthy offerings, as prominently portrayed in the 2004 documentary film *Super Size Me* (Spurlock 2004). To combat public perceptions, in 2005 the company announced its program to promote healthy eating habits and active lifestyles in its advertising to children. The "It's what I eat and what I do. . . I'm lovin' it" campaign promoted physical activity and healthy eating, along with adding more nutritious menu options and offering more accessible nutrition information (McDonalds.com 2005).

A third approach involves elimination of advertising targeting children, as practiced by food and beverage giant Pepsico and announced in 2005 by Kraft, a company that produces a variety of popular food brands including both nutritionally rich and nutritionally poor products (Federal Trade Commission and Department of Health & Human Services 2006; Kraft Foods 2005; Sanders 2005). Typically, elimination tactics such as these would be accompanied by substantial publicity, using the tools of integrated marketing communication to ensure that consumers are aware of the company's initiatives. This was in fact the case with Kraft. Kraft withdrew advertising non-nutritional foods in time slots or programs targeting children between the ages of six and twelve, and reiterated its policy of not advertising in media with target audiences younger than age six (Kraft 2005; McKay 2005; Teinowitz 2005a). Critics were quick to point out that Kraft's motives might be suspect, as its parent company at the time, Altria Group, had learned of the perils of promoting controversial products to children from the legal battles involving its Philip Morris tobacco subsidiary. The critics note the irony of a corporation built on marketing of harmful products now claiming to be a champion of health, as well as the likelihood that Kraft has learned from its parent's tobacco

experience and was eliminating the questionable advertising in order to avoid more adverse consequences (Higgins 2005). Regardless of the underlying reasons, however, the company has modified its advertising to children, responding to the public opinion pressures for action by eliminating advertising of suspect products (Kraft 2005).

More recently, and perhaps partially in reaction to a threatened lawsuit, Kellogg's announced a sweeping plan to change its marketing to children, either reformulating products to meet internally developed nutritional guidelines or eliminating advertising those products to children (Martin 2007). With prodding from the chairman of the House Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet (Markey 2007a), other companies have begun to follow suit (Eggerton 2007). Burger King introduced new products such as apple slices and agreed to limit the types of foods advertised to children (York 2007); NBC Universal banned advertisements for unhealthy food in children's programming for network-owned stations (Teinowitz 2007b); and Chuck E. Cheese and ConAgra announced limits in response to Congressman Markey's appeal (Eggerton 2007).

As public pressure has mounted, ten major food companies in partnership with the Council of Better Business Bureaus launched a voluntary self-regulatory initiative intended to limit their promotion of junk food to children (Better Business Bureau 2006; Martin 2006). Among the provisions is a commitment to promote healthier foods or lifestyles in at least half of their advertising targeted to children under age twelve. Companies are also agreeing to limitations or bans on the use of licensed characters in promoting non-nutritious foods to children. Each company will establish its own guidelines, though, and the announced program stopped short of Kraft's prior commitment to stop advertising unhealthy food to children. The initiative in fact bears

more resemblance to the McDonald's approach of using healthy lifestyle messages while continuing product promotions.

Parental Response to Food Advertising

A Kaiser Family Foundation survey found that the majority of parents believe their children's food choices are influenced by television (Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation 2004) and that the most important health problem facing children and teens is obesity (Rideout 2005). Concern with food advertising is not a new issue, although the specific food-related problems have evolved (Livingstone and Helsper 2006). More than twenty years ago, Crosby and Grossbart (1984) identified parental concerns about both the quantity of food advertising and the tactics used by food marketers to reach children.

In a survey of parents of elementary school-aged children, Crosby and Grossbart (1984) explored parental concerns about food within the framework of parenting style. They found that, regardless of the parent's socialization style, the volume of food advertising directed to children, the tactics used by advertisers, and the sugar content of the advertised products, were all salient. Parents of all types were more likely to identify these issues than they were to note intrafamily conflicts or concerns about eating habits.

Given the increase in quantity and variety of food marketing during the last twenty years (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies 2006; Strasburger 2001), it is not surprising that parents' concerns continue.

Further, although parents may be the primary food shoppers, they are heavily influenced by their children's preferences for snack foods, breakfast foods, desserts, and even dinner groceries (Bridges and Briesch 2006; Institute of Medicine of the National Academies 2006). Advertisers recognize this influence, and frequently design campaigns

targeting each group, parent and child, separately, attempting to persuade children to ask their parents for specific brands (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies 2006). The magnitude of child influence has even been recognized with a nickname: the nag factor (Bridges and Briesch 2006).

Given the critical role that parents play in socialization (Carlson and Grossbart 1988; Crosby and Grossbart 1984; Grier et al. 2007) combined with the typical family pattern of parental responsibility for most food purchases (Bridges and Briesch 2006), the reaction of parents to food marketing targeted at children would seem to play a critical role in those purchasing decisions. Yet research has focused primarily on the effects of food marketing on children, rather than on the effects on parents and how that influences children's diet and activities (Grier et al. 2007). Even less is known about parents' knowledge of online marketing techniques, their attitudes toward such practices, or even how much parental supervision is involved when children use the Internet (Moore and Rideout 2007).

The long history of concerns about food marketing to children can be characterized as a failure to meet consumer, i.e., parent, needs (Grossbart and Crosby 1984), opening the door for proactive marketers to gain support by changing their practices to address the concerns of today's parents. This study, along with the Grier et al. (2007) research, addresses how parents respond. Grier et al. explored the effects of fast food marketing on parental behavior and subsequent influence on children's consumption, based on attitude and behavior models of consumption. This dissertation uses attribution theory to explore the mechanisms by which parents form their attitudes about the marketers. The concepts studied here with respect to television should be

transferable to other media, but the focus is on parental response to advertising strategies, and specifically to television, as with the majority of prior research.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been defined as a “company’s commitment to minimizing or eliminating any harmful effects and maximizing its long-run beneficial impact on society” (Mohr et al. 2001). The idea that companies should act as good citizens is not universally embraced, as famously noted by Milton Friedman’s often quoted statement that “. . . there is one and only one social responsibility of business—to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits . . .” (Friedman 1970). Nonetheless, the belief that corporations should function in a manner that benefits a variety of stakeholders has gained traction (Mohr and Webb 2005). As a response to accounting scandals and prominent corporate frauds, social responsibility has been viewed as a way for companies to redeem their reputations and address calls by consumers for companies to contribute to society (Dawkins 2004; Mohr and Webb 2005).

The academic literature on corporate social responsibility follows a number of paths, but of primary interest for the current research is its focus on consumer response. Typically these studies have explored sponsorships and cause related marketing (Barone et al. 2000; Deshpande and Hitchon 2002; Ellen et al. 2006; Mohr and Webb 2005; Rifon et al. 2004; Simmons and Becker-Olsen 2006; Trimble and Rifon 2006; Varadarajan and Menon 1988; Webb and Mohr 1998), corporate philanthropy, or environmental marketing (D'Souza and Taghian 2005; Davis 1994; Grankvist et al. 2004; Mohr et al. 1998; Putrevu and Lord 1994; Schuhwerk and Lefkoff-Hagius 1995; Schwepker and Cornwell 1991). A common theme is the desire to understand how consumers respond to

various attempts by companies to engage in and promote their socially responsible initiatives.

The issue of advertising to children can be approached from the CSR perspective. Similar to company efforts to meet consumer needs by providing support for desired causes or adopting environmentally friendly practices, company strategies for communicating with children can be understood as evidence of social responsibility, particularly in the domain of food advertising. As the nation has become increasingly concerned with obesity and its related health problems, concurrent with the increase in childhood obesity, food marketers' actions in this arena have come under increased scrutiny and businesses have explored possible responses and rationales for action (Seiders and Berry 2007). How companies respond to these demands, and how consumers react to corporate initiatives, are analogous to other CSR tactics that have received academic attention.

Environmental ("Green") Marketing

Parallels to the issues involved in food advertising can be found in environmental ("green") marketing where advertisers adopt socially responsible stances to further their marketing goals. In the case of environmental advertising, as with food advertisements, the products themselves may be called into question as being detrimental to society, or the motives and practices of the company may be interpreted in a negative manner. "Green" marketers modify their products, develop new products, or adopt tactics to promote their products or organizations as environmentally responsible in an effort to attract customers. The options currently being tested by food marketers are similar; for example, the labeling tactics being introduced in response to obesity concerns are similar

to eco-labeling, used to persuade consumers to select one product or brand over another due to its environmental friendliness (Grankvist et al. 2004).

Empirical studies have investigated consumer response to “green” advertising, examining the relationship between environmental attitudes and purchase intentions (Schwepker and Cornwell 1991), consumer response to type of environmental appeal (Schuhwerk and Lefkoff-Hagius 1995), the effects of corporate environmental activity and green advertising on consumer attitudes (D'Souza and Taghian 2005; Davis 1994), and the effects of labeling products as environmentally friendly on consumer response (Grankvist et al. 2004; Thogerson 2000). Schuhwerk and Lefkoff-Hagius (1995) tested print advertisements for an environmentally friendly laundry detergent and found that involvement with the environment influenced the effectiveness of different types of advertising appeals. For individuals highly involved with environmental issues, purchase intent and attitude toward the ad did not differ based on type of appeal; those with low environmental involvement did find the green appeals more persuasive than price appeals. The authors concluded that those who are highly involved with the environment are predisposed to buy green products, so the type of message appeal makes no difference. However, advertisers can influence those who are less involved with environmental issues by directing attention to the environmental characteristics of their products.

Grankvist et al. (2004) found that individuals who had low levels of interest in environmental issues were not affected by eco-labels. Their study included a computer-based experiment investigating how different types of eco-labels (positive, negative and neutral) affected product preferences. As in the Schuhwerk and Lefkoff-Hagius study,

highly interested or involved individuals reported no difference in response to different types of message appeals, while negative labels influenced those with moderate interest in the environment. In a later study, involvement with environmental issues was found to influence the effectiveness of green ads (D'Souza and Taghian 2005). In a telephone survey of Australian consumers, the authors found that highly involved consumers thought green ads were more believable, and rated them more favorably, than did low involvement consumers.

While most research focused on product appeals, Davis (1994) investigated corporate responses to environmental concerns. The options examined were similar to the options currently being tested by food marketers, with the emphasis on the organization's total commitment as opposed to specific product advertising appeals. Davis identified three corporate behaviors that environmental advertisers promoted in their messages. The first, philanthropic activities, was represented by announcing monetary grants. The second, preservation or conservation activities, included advertisements promoting the outcomes of expenditures or human resource support, while the third area, corporation specific advertising, was intended to communicate both large financial commitments and overall corporate philosophy and activities. Davis found that company image perceptions play a significant role in shaping consumer response to environmental advertising. When consumers believed that a company was environmentally concerned, then the corporate specific appeals were most effective. When individuals had positive perceptions of a company's environmental activities, then advertiser image, product image, and purchase intent were also perceived more favorably. Davis concluded that the results indicated corporate environmental advertising can influence consumer perceptions and behaviors,

but only if consumers have positive perceptions of the company's actions or image regarding the environment (Davis 1994).

Mohr, Eroglu and Ellen (1998) developed and tested a scale to measure the effects of consumer skepticism on environmental marketing effectiveness. They distinguished between skepticism toward advertising in general and skepticism toward the specific target of environmental claims in advertising. The scale could be adapted to measure skepticism toward food advertising claims. Given the similarities between environmental advertising and food advertising, similar effects of skepticism and involvement would be expected.

Cause Related Marketing

Cause-related marketing (CRM), the marriage of for-profit company advertising with non-profit organizations, first caught the attention of marketers more than twenty years ago. In 1983, American Express tied its corporate philanthropy to consumer purchases, donating one cent to the Statue of Liberty restoration for every American Express card transaction (American Express 2003). More recently, the stakes were raised when General Motors promised to contribute \$100 to the VFW Children's Home for each purchase of certain automobile models (Detroit Free Press 2006). In the intervening years, partnerships between for-profit and not-for-profit organizations have become a prominent part of the marketing landscape, with colorful ribbons sprouting throughout the country in advertisements, on product labels, and car bumpers, promoting corporate support of non-profit organizations. Breast cancer research has been a particularly popular cause for a variety of companies and brands. Yoplait yogurt, BMW automobiles, Avon, and 3-M Post-It notes are just a sampling of those that have prominently displayed

the pink ribbon signifying their financial support for the Susan G. Komen Foundation, City of Hope, Breast Cancer Research Foundation, or other similar organizations (Woo 2005). The popularity of cause-brand alliances as a marketing tactic is evidenced by annual U.S. cause-related marketing expenditures exceeding one billion dollars in 2005 (Cause Marketing Forum 2006).

Defined by Varadarajan and Menon (1988) as "...marketing activities that are characterized by an offer from the firm to contribute a specified amount to a designated cause when customers engage in revenue-providing exchanges that satisfy organization and individual objectives," CRM uses elements from advertising, publicity, and corporate philanthropy (Varadarajan and Menon 1988; Webb and Mohr 1998). The corporate scandals that have dominated business news in recent years have fostered the need for companies to find ways to improve their reputations and enhance their brands' images. Marketers have adopted CRM as one way to achieve those objectives. Companies that partner with causes seek to transfer the positive image associated with the non-profit organization to the company, while simultaneously increasing sales. This transference results in numerous benefits to the sponsor, including strengthening of its customer base, enhanced employee loyalty, and increased revenues and profits (Deshpande and Hitchon 2002).

Similar to food advertising to children, CRM intermingles social responsibility with advertising. Some of the recent responses to concerns about childhood obesity have included tactics intended to signal that the company is "doing the right thing" by minimizing or eliminating the offensive advertising, or promoting responsible behavior. The aforementioned plan by Kraft to eliminate advertisements to children was described

by the company as part of their "... broader efforts to address consumers' health and wellness concerns" (Teinowitz 2005a). In an analogous manner, CRM uses signals to consumers that the company is "doing the right thing" by contributing to causes that are typically aligned either with the organization's objectives or the target consumer's concerns. CRM is "a marketing program that strives to achieve two objectives – improve corporate performance and help worthy causes – by linking fund raising for the benefit of a cause to the purchase of the firm's products and/or services" (Varadarajan and Menon 1988).

Much of the early research following Varadarajan and Menon's seminal article was qualitative, focused on defining and describing the issues. Drumright, for example, used elite interviews (interviews with decision makers rather than consumers) to compare advertising campaigns with social dimensions to standard advertising campaigns, from the perspective of management (Drumright 1996). Webb and Mohr (1998) investigated consumer reactions to CRM activities, conducting semistructured interviews to develop a typology of consumers. Their typology of four types of consumer response to CRM (skeptics, balancers, attribution-oriented and socially concerned) indicates the importance of attribution in CRM effectiveness. When categorized for their response to CRM tactics, the sample of consumers was evenly split between consumers who thought the company engaged in this type of campaign to increase sales or profits and those who thought that the company acted, at least in part, for altruistic reasons. A subsequent study confirmed the influence of perceived motivation on the effectiveness of CRM (Barone et al. 2000). The authors conducted two experiments, testing several hypotheses about consumer response to cause-related marketing activities. The experimental design

involved a manipulation of motivation perception (participants were presented with information describing the company's motives). The authors identified sponsor motivation and price or performance trade-offs as interacting to affect brand choice.

Rifon and colleagues focused on the measurement of consumer attributions of sponsor motives (Rifon et al. 2004) and their mediating role for the creation of reputational outcomes. Analogous to the manner in which consumers have been found to attribute motives to celebrity endorsers, consumers attribute motives to sponsoring companies to infer why the company is supporting the partner cause. Whether consumers view companies as altruistic or profit-motivated will be based in part on the perceived congruence between company and cause. The experiment paired a fictitious cause, a health and disease prevention web site, with real companies. The researchers found that, as hypothesized, subjects had a more favorable attitude in the high fit situation, and the congruent sponsor was perceived as more credible and more altruistic. Furthermore, the level of altruistic attributions mediated the development of a corporation's credibility as a result of that tactic, confirming the essential role of consumer attributions of corporate motives in response to sponsorship-linked marketing tactics. Consumers ask, "Why is the company taking this action," and they answer the questions themselves, based only on the tactic itself and their inferences. However, consumer characteristics that might be drivers of these inferences were not measured. Since inferences are based on knowledge and characteristics already possessed by consumers, one missing piece of this puzzle is the role of individual characteristics.

In addition, unlike other areas of advertising with a social dimension, the members of the target audience under discussion for changing food marketing tactics

targeting children are not the purchasers. Food advertisers target children with their messages, in hopes that the children will influence the purchasers - their parents - today, and ultimately become brand-loyal consumers themselves (Bridges and Briesch 2006). Parents believe that such advertising does influence their children's food choices and contributes to the childhood obesity problem (Rideout 2005). Understanding parents' responses to food marketers' activities, within this framework of corporate social responsibility, can both enhance our understanding of consumer behavior and guide food marketers through the changing landscape.

CHAPTER 3

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Attribution Theory

Attribution theory addresses how individuals explain their own behavior and the behavior of others. People make inferences about causal relationships based on events they experience and observe, and those inferences help them perceive and understand the world in which they live. The theory traces its roots to Fritz Heider, whose common-sense or naïve psychology compared how individuals make sense of their worlds to the experimental method (Heider 1958; Sparkman and Locander 1980). Heider was particularly concerned with causality, explaining that to understand why people behave as they do, it is necessary to understand whether the locus of causality is internal or external to the actor (Fiske and Taylor 1991). Harold Kelley described attribution theory as being “about how people make causal explanations, about how they answer questions beginning with ‘why?’”(Kelley 1973); he elaborated on these concepts in developing a description of how individuals learn cause and effect patterns and make causal inferences. These early works supply the foundation for much subsequent research based on attribution theory, providing a platform for examining consumer behavior (Folkes 1988).

Correspondent Inference

Jones and Davis’s correspondent inference theory (Fiske and Taylor 1991), which falls into the general class of attribution theories, explains that people impute intentions to others to explain their behavior. The theory proposes that people make these inferences in two stages, attribution of intention and attribution of disposition (Ross and Fletcher

1985). An act, such as a company undertaking an advertising campaign, is judged as intentional when the individual perceives that the actor (i.e., the company) knows that the act will result in the observed consequences, and the actor has the ability to achieve those results. When acts are judged as intentional, the second stage of assessment is invoked, attribution of disposition. Here, the perceiver compares chosen and nonchosen acts to identify the underlying disposition. The overall goal is to be able to reach conclusions about both the behavior and the actor's intention in producing the behavior. If the behavior and intention can be traced to an underlying stable quality in the actor, or disposition, then the perceiver can better understand and predict future behavior (Fiske and Taylor 1991).

The Discounting Principle

Kelley based his version of attribution theory on the premise that people have expectations or preconceptions that guide their causal determinations (Kelley 1973). In describing how people make attributions with limited information, Kelley explained that they use a covariation principle to help attribute a single cause to an outcome, judging whether the outcome varies across entities (distinctiveness), is consistent over time (consistency), and if other people experience the same outcome (consensus) (Fiske and Taylor 1991; Kelley 1973). But such distinctiveness, consistency, and consensus are not always obvious or available to a consumer faced with a decision. One of the rules used to assess causality in their absence is the discounting principle.

According to the discounting principle, individuals will minimize an explanation for events if an alternate explanation exists and is plausible; intrinsic motivation is likely to be discounted if an extrinsic motive can be used to explain outcomes (Kelley 1973). In

the case of advertising, consumers are unlikely to know the sponsoring company's intrinsic motivation, but may identify an extrinsic (i.e., profit) motive. They will then rely on the extrinsic explanation that is available, and attribute the company's actions to the external motive. They will do so even in the presence of cues that might signal an internal rationale. It thus becomes critical to understand how extrinsic attributions might be changed by controlling information and modifying consumer beliefs (Folkes 1988).

To explain cause and effect individuals attribute motives shaped by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors and by the amount of information available prior to the observed event. People seek explanations, especially when confronted with unexpected behaviors (Hastie 1984). The explanations rely on attributing some motive to the actor; in this case, the actor is the company. For example, consumers accustomed to aggressive food marketing aimed at children by profit-seeking companies would find cessation of such activities to be unexpected. According to attribution theory, they then will look for an explanation for the company's actions. Because most consumers understand the link between selling products and corporate profits, they may be likely to assume a profit motive for the company's actions (Rifon et al. 2004). Similar to companies that sponsor causes to enhance their reputations, companies seeking to promote their concern with consumer health, particularly the health of children, hope to supplant consumers' profit inferences with beliefs that the actions are socially responsible. Consumers may believe that companies choosing to eliminate advertisements of unhealthy food products to children are more altruistic than companies that continue advertising to that market segment, perceiving the former companies as acting in the interest of their customers and society as a whole while willingly forgoing potential profit opportunities.

Similarly, consumers may attribute internal motives to companies that change their advertising message appeals. Messages encouraging moderation in food consumption and the adoption of healthy measures (e.g., increased physical activity, dietary changes) would be perceived in a more favorable light than the messages that simply promote non-nutritious foods, but are less likely to be perceived as altruistic than the elimination tactic.

This leads to the following hypothesis:

H1: Companies that eliminate food advertising targeting children will generate stronger consumer attributions of internal (altruistic) motives and weaker attributions of external motives than will companies that target children with food advertising, including healthy lifestyle messages.

Congruence

Schemas are cognitive structures based on interactions with one's environment, preconceptions or images that organize past experience (Mandler 1982). They are not fixed, but change over time as new information and experiences interact with the information stored in memory. Incongruent information, that is, information that does not match an individual's existing schema because it is unexpected or irrelevant (Heckler and Childers 1992; Mandler 1982), will lead to greater cognitive evaluation and elaboration (Hastie 1984). Elaboration could lead to generation of counterarguments, reducing the effectiveness of persuasive messages (Petty et al. 1981).

Congruence between new information and a consumer's existing schema for a company can affect the accessibility of information about why the company is acting as it is, and hence the assessment of internal vs. external motives. Further, a distinction

between moderate and strong congruence is related to the degree to which elaboration occurs (Myers-Levy and Tybout 1989). Information that is moderately incongruent can be resolved and incorporated into the schema, while highly incongruent information is difficult to resolve (Myers-Levy and Tybout 1989).

Two key dimensions of congruence are expectancy and relevancy (Heckler and Childers 1992). With reference to advertising messages, expectancy is defined as “the degree to which a piece of information falls into some predetermined pattern or structure evoked by an ad,” (Lee and Mason 1999) while relevancy refers to “the degree to which a piece of information contributes to the identification of the primary message” (Lee and Mason 1999). Expectancy relates to the probability of the action occurring, while relevancy relates to whether it contributes to definition or understanding. Stimuli are considered congruent with schema when the information is both expected and relevant, and incongruent when unexpected and relevant (Heckler and Childers 1992).

In research on sponsorships and CRM, the effects of congruence between the sponsored cause and the company on consumer attributions have been identified (Rifon et al. 2004; Trimble and Rifon 2006). In this study, consumer perceptions of congruence between the corporate behavior schema and planned new actions are posited to influence consumers’ motive attributions and subsequent assessment of corporate credibility and attitudes. A strategy that is perceived by consumers as congruent with their schemas for the company is predicted to generate more internal or altruistic attributions and hence more positive attitudes. For example, a “nutritious fast food” schema for a company such as Subway, voted “healthiest of the fast-food pack” in a survey of 5,500 diners conducted by the popular restaurant rating service, Zagat’s (Zagat and Zagat 2007), would include

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expectations of a variety of low fat and fresh ingredients with many fruits and vegetables. Advertisements promoting exercise and nutritious diets would be perceived as congruent with the Subway schema. Consumers would expect a company that offers nutritious food to promote nutrition, and thus the announced behavior would be perceived as congruent with their existing schemas. A strategy perceived as incongruent with the company schema, such as a fast food company known for its high fat and fried foods using a healthy lifestyles message strategy, is expected to be less successful due to incongruence. Consumers expecting the company to sell non-nutritious foods to their children would not expect those companies to use marketing messages that promote values or behaviors that run counter to the unhealthy food image. They would, then, find the lifestyles messages incongruent with their existing schemas.

H2: The elimination of food advertising to children will be viewed as more congruent with companies viewed as having nutritious offerings than with companies viewed as offering non-nutritious products.

H3: Congruence will mediate the relationship between advertising strategy and motive attributions.

Attribution of Blame

Attribution theory has been used to explain how consumers respond in problem situations by evaluating and understanding how they assign responsibility or blame for the problem. Building on Bem's self perception theory, the idea that individuals evaluate their own behaviors in a similar manner to their evaluation of others (Bem 1965), two dimensions of responsibility have been identified, locus of causality and controllability. Because consumers are characterized as rational information processors acting on their

causal inferences, their beliefs about the reasons underlying problems are expected to influence how they respond to those problems (Folkes 1984). The search for reasons includes identification of the causal agent, either internal (self) or external. A consumer might identify the reason for a product failure as something he or she caused, such as misuse of the product. On the other hand, the consumer might infer an explanation that blames the company, e.g., a manufacturing defect. Locus of causality has been found to be related to consumer reaction to product failure (Folkes 1984) and penalty pricing (Kim 2006); who is judged to blame for a problem affects who is deemed responsible for a solution (Folkes 1984; Folkes 1988; Kim 2006). If the customer attributes the problem to her own actions, then responsibility for resolution is internal. Conversely, an external attribution will be accompanied by an expectation that the company should solve the problem.

A second dimension of responsibility is degree of control (Tsiros et al. 2004; Weiner 2000). While locus of causality addresses the question of who caused the problem, controllability addresses the question of whether the causal party could, in fact, influence the circumstances. Continuing with the product failure example, a consumer determines that a product failed due to her misuse of the product, attributing internal causality. However, if there were inadequate instructions on proper use, the consumer might conclude that she did not have control over the circumstances, and the company then bears some of the responsibility. If the inference for the problem with a product is that there was something inherently wrong with the product, and that the company knew and could have changed it, responsibility will be attributed to the company. Since the two dimensions of locus and controllability have been found to be highly correlated (Folkes

1984), a single responsibility construct, encompassing the ideas of who caused a problem and the degree of control that party has, can be identified.

Analogous to product failure and consumer response, responsibility for nutrition is expected to affect consumer response to food company advertising tactics. Parents who blame food companies for nutrition-related problems, and who think that the companies can control the circumstances, will assign responsibility to the companies. They would then look to those companies for assistance in solving the problem. Conversely, parents who believe they alone are responsible for their children's diet and any nutrition-related problems will not. In the former case, internal, altruistic attributions would be expected for either elimination of advertising or healthy lifestyle messages. In the latter, when consumers believe that they are to blame, it is expected that elimination of advertising to children will be deemed altruistic, but healthy lifestyle messages will not.

H4: Consumers who attribute blame externally will be more likely to attribute altruistic motives to the company than will consumers who attribute blame internally.

H5: Consumers who attribute blame internally will be more likely to attribute profit motives to a company that uses healthy lifestyle messages in advertising to children, and altruistic motives to a company that eliminates advertising to children.

Involvement

The concept of involvement, defined as “a person's perceived relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values, and interests,” (Zaichowsky 1985) or as a motivational state to process information (Celsi and Olson 1988) is frequently studied in

consumer research, and its effect on consumer behavior is well-documented (Celsi and Olson 1988; Krugman 1977; Krugman 1965; Laurent and Kapferer 1985; Muehling et al. 1991; Zaichowsky 1985). Involvement is described as an individual characteristic, either enduring and long lasting (intrinsic involvement) or transitory and related to environmental cues (situational involvement) (Celsi and Olson 1988; Zhang and Zinkhan 2006).

According to dual processing models such as Petty and Cacioppo's Elaboration Likelihood Model, messages are processed either centrally or peripherally, depending on the individual's involvement with the issue (Petty et al. 1981; Petty et al. 1983). Central processing is slow, deliberate, elaborate, and systematic. Information is evaluated; elaborations are made by connecting new information with existing information in memory. If strong arguments are presented, attitude change will be generated. In contrast, peripheral processing is intuitive, fast, and heuristic. Individuals rely on cues such as executional elements of the message or characteristics of the source. If the source is credible (i.e. trustworthy and expert), then the message will be more effective in generating attitude change.

The ELM explains that the determination of whether a message is processed centrally or peripherally is issue involvement (Petty et al. 1981). If an issue is relevant to the individual, and if the individual will be affected by the outcome, then messages regarding that issue will be processed centrally. If an individual is not highly involved with the issue, then processing will be peripheral. When a message is processed centrally, it is compared with other information stored in memory. Linkages are made to other memories (i.e. elaboration). The key determinant of whether the message will be

persuasive is the strength of the arguments. Attitudes will be changed when strong arguments are presented. Unlike central processing, when individuals are engaged in peripheral processing they are not attending to the arguments. In peripheral processing, attitudes will be changed based on executional elements or the credibility of the source. A highly credible source, one that is trusted and perceived as having high expertise, will be most persuasive (Petty et al. 1981).

High involvement has been found to be related to favorable brand name recall, attitudes, and purchase intentions (Hitchon and Thorson 1995; Priluck and Till 2004). Given our understanding of the role of involvement in attending to and processing advertising messages, it is reasonable to believe it would be a factor in parents' responses to food marketing. Because involvement is an individual, not product, characteristic, parents are likely to differ in their levels of involvement with nutrition. Parents who are highly involved with nutrition would be more likely to attend to and process messages about nutrition (Celsi and Olson 1988). They would be more likely to be concerned with providing healthy meals for their children, and are expected to take note of food advertising that targets their children. Those who are not involved with nutrition are less likely to process and elaborate on messages about nutrition, and even less likely to notice if advertisers stopped targeting children. Level of involvement, then, is expected to influence the attributions that consumers make about food marketers' motives, leading to the following hypothesis:

H6: Consumers with high levels of involvement with nutrition will be less likely to perceive congruence between company schema and planned behavior than will consumers with low involvement.

Much as individual differences exist in perceptions of personal relevance, so too are there differences in how knowledgeable individuals are about different domains such as nutrition. Three different dimensions of consumer knowledge have been identified (Brucks 1985). Objective knowledge is defined as the actual knowledge an individual possesses, as measured by some type of test. Experience with a product or category is the second type of knowledge. Subjective knowledge, the consumer's perception of what he or she knows, has been found to predict consumer behavior and purchase satisfaction (Flynn and Goldsmith 1999). Subjective knowledge, like involvement, plays a role in search and purchase decisions.

Skepticism

Skepticism generally implies disbelief, a context-specific cognitive response (Mohr et al. 1998). In the sense of marketplace skepticism, it is a component of consumer socialization, a tool consumers are trained to use when managing persuasion attempts (Obermiller et al. 2005). Because it is learned, skepticism differs from the more general concept of cynicism, "an enduring disbelief of others that occurs when people are seen as acting solely based on selfish motives" (Mohr et al. 1998). Both are individual characteristics, but cynicism is a personality trait that is stable over time and across different situations, while skepticism is context-dependent. Skepticism, due to its time or context-specific nature, may be subject to influence, and thus responsive to persuasive messages such as advertisements, while cynicism is more difficult to influence (Mohr et al. 1998).

Skepticism towards advertising has been characterized as inevitable (Pollay 1986), the result of consumer recognition of advertising's inherent distortions. Defined as

a trait that reflects an individual's "tendency to disbelieve the informational claims of advertising," ad skepticism is a personal, as opposed to a situational or environmental, characteristic (Obermiller and Spangenberg 1998). This definition construes the idea more narrowly than may be otherwise suggested, excluding related dimensions such as skepticism about advertiser motives, appropriateness of targeting certain audiences, or criticism of advertisements of stigmatized products (Obermiller and Spangenberg 1998). In developing a scale to measure skepticism toward advertising, Obermiller and Spangenberg (1998) focused on the disbelief aspect of the construct. They acknowledged the multi-dimensionality of skepticism, but did not attempt to incorporate all of those dimensions.

Several variables affect the believability of advertising, including product type and advertising execution. Consistent with prior findings regarding advertising believability (Obermiller et al. 2005), skepticism toward advertising in general, and toward food advertising specifically, will likely influence the motives that consumers attribute to food marketers:

H7: Consumers with high skepticism about advertising will be more likely to attribute external profit motives than will consumers with low skepticism about advertising.

Parental Concern with Advertising

As discussed in chapter 2, parents are concerned with the quantity of food advertising targeting children, and with tactics used by marketers to reach their children (Grossbart and Crosby 1984). Differences in degree of concern are expected to moderate congruence in a manner similar to involvement. Highly concerned parents may not be

receptive to any advertisements that target their children, regardless of how those strategies may fit with their perceptions of the marketer. Those parents will be less likely to perceive congruence between behaviors that involve healthy message strategies and any food company due to their beliefs about advertising to children, and consequently more likely to attribute profit motives to advertisers that use healthy lifestyle messages. With regard to parental concern, then, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H8: Consumers with high levels of parental concern about food advertising to children will be less likely to attribute altruistic motives for companies that change advertising strategies to children than will parents with low levels of concern about food advertising.

Source Credibility and Attitude toward the Company

Source credibility in advertising was originally explored in reference to spokespeople or endorsers, with the idea that a credible source would lead to more positive attitudes about the sponsoring company. This conceptualization, in relation to individuals as endorsers, included three critical dimensions: expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness (Haley 1996; Ohanian 1990).

Subsequently, researchers identified the role of company reputation, image, or credibility, on consumers. Expertise and trust are applicable to both individuals and companies, but attractiveness is problematic when applied to organizations or corporations (Goldsmith et al. 2000). Goldsmith, Lafferty and Newell (2000) define corporate credibility as “the reputation of a company for honesty and expertise,” and studies of corporate credibility typically include just those dimensions (Goldsmith et al. 2000; Lafferty et al. 2002; Newell and Goldsmith 2001).

Credibility is important to advertisers because of its effects on consumer attitudes and behavior. It is presumed to influence how consumers react to advertisements, to contribute to shaping their brand attitudes and purchasing decisions. Corporate credibility, related to the concepts of reputation and image, complements endorser credibility. While endorser or celebrity credibility affects attitude toward the ad, in a survey, corporate credibility was found to have a strong effect on attitude toward the brand and ultimately purchase intentions (Goldsmith et al. 2000; Lafferty et al. 2002).

In explicating how attributions influence consumer attitudes, Rifon and colleagues (2004) found that congruence, or good fit, between a company and the cause it sponsors is more likely to generate consumer perceptions of altruistic motivations by the company. Further, and relevant to the current research, the authors identified the mediating role of attributions of sponsor motive on source credibility. Stronger attributions of altruistic motives led to greater perceptions of company credibility. This same dynamic could be expected in the domain of food marketing. Consistent with Rifon et al. (2004), attributions are expected to influence perceptions of source credibility, which has been found to enhance attitude toward the company (Goldsmith et al. 2000). Motive attributions will influence perceptions of company credibility and attitudes toward the company. The greater the consumer's belief that the company had altruistic reasons for adopting an advertising strategy, the more likely that the consumer will find the company credible:

H9: Attributions of altruistic company motives will generate stronger consumer perceptions of company credibility than will attributions of external motives.

Consumer attributions may be particularly enduring once they become established (Folkes 1988). As noted previously, if parents believe that companies are acting in their interests or the interests of their children, then it is expected that those parents will have more favorable attitudes. Attributions of altruistic motives that generate perceptions of credibility are likely to lead to more positive attitudes toward the company than are attributions of self-serving, profit motives. Consistent with earlier work on credibility, it is expected that perceptions of source credibility will enhance attitude toward the company, so that companies perceived as credible will be more likely to generate positive attitudes, leading to the final set of hypotheses.

H10: Consumer perceptions of company credibility will mediate the relationship between attributions of the sponsor's motive and consumer attitude toward the company.

H11: Attributions of altruistic sponsor motives will lead to greater perceptions of credibility, which will generate positive attitude toward the company, while attributions of profit motives will lead to perceptions of less credibility, which will have a negative effect on attitude toward the company.

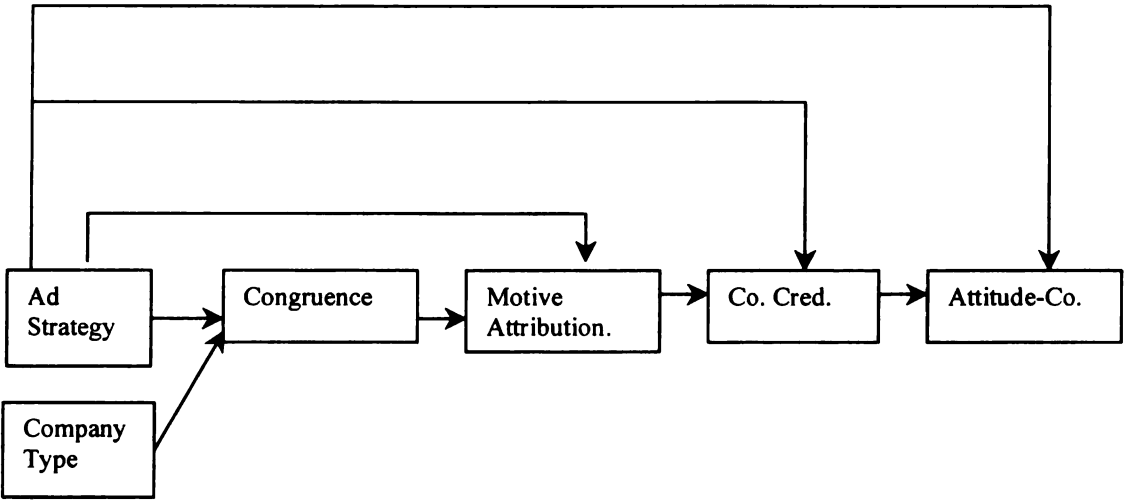
Consequently, food marketers who offer to eliminate their advertising to children are expected to receive greater reputational benefits than those who add healthy lifestyle messages to their child-oriented advertising programs.

H12: Elimination of food advertising targeted to children will yield stronger perceptions of source credibility than a change to a healthy lifestyle strategy.

H13: Elimination of food advertising targeted to children will yield more positive attitudes toward the company than a change to a healthy lifestyle strategy.

The proposed model (see Figure 1 below) incorporates the concepts discussed above.

Figure 1
Conceptual Model



CHAPTER 4

METHODS

Three studies were conducted: two pretests to identify stimulus companies and test stimulus materials, and the main study, an experiment. Real companies and the actual strategies being proposed were used to enhance external validity of the main study. The main objective of Study 1 was to identify those real companies, while Study 2 was intended as a pretest of some of the measures to be used in the main study.

Study 1 - Stimulus Development

Design

A major focus of this research was to understand parental response and inform the public policy debate. To do so called for enhanced external validity, requiring use of real companies in stimulus materials. Study 1 was designed to help identify and select companies familiar to research subjects, and to determine which company images were consistent with the study's design. The goal was to assess consumer familiarity with and attitudes toward national fast food companies in order to select stimulus companies that represented perceptions of companies offering either nutritional or non-nutritional products. A survey of fast food restaurants conducted by the popular rating organization, Zagat's, was used as a starting point (Zagat and Zagat 2007). According to this non-scientific survey of 5,500 individuals, the most popular "mega-chain" fast food restaurants in 2007 were Wendy's, Subway, McDonald's, Taco Bell, and Burger King. The report noted that, of these chains, only Subway performed well in ratings of healthy food options. These five companies were included in the first pretest, along with KFC, another fast food company specializing in a different type of fast food (fried chicken).

Participants

One hundred thirteen undergraduate students were recruited from four advertising classes and offered extra credit for participating. Slightly more than half (60%) of the participants in this convenience sample were female. Most were seniors (45.9%) or juniors (44.1%), with a mean age of 21 and ages ranging from 19 to 28.

Measures and Procedures

Students completed short self-administered questionnaires including questions measuring familiarity with six fast food companies (a seven-point semantic differential question anchored by familiar/unfamiliar), attitudes toward those companies using a three item, seven-point semantic differential scale (MacKenzie and Lutz 1989), and perceptions of the company's offerings as nutritious or non-nutritious using two questions developed for this study (See Appendix C, Instruments). To control for differences in preconceptions about the stimulus companies, companies with similar ratings on the attitude scales were preferred for the main study. To assess attitudes for the six pretest companies, the three attitude items were combined to form a scale for each company (α ranged from .788 to .862). The two health and nutrition items were combined to identify a single rating on that dimension (r ranged from .329 for McDonald's to .538 for Taco Bell, all significant correlations).

Results

The objective of Study 1 was to identify stimulus companies for use in the subsequent studies. Subjects provided attitude and health/nutrition ratings for six fast food companies. The attitude ratings used a three item, seven-point semantic differential scale with one being most positive and seven least positive (MacKenzie and Lutz 1989).

Scale reliability ranged from 0.788 for McDonald's to .862 for KFC. The most favorable attitudes were expressed toward Subway ($M = 2.30$) while KFC ($M = 3.91$) garnered the least favorable attitude ratings, compared to the scale mean of 4.00.

Because all subjects answered sets of questions about six different fast food companies, repeated measures ANOVA was calculated comparing attitudes toward McDonalds, Burger King, Taco Bell, Subway, KFC, and Wendy's. A significant effect was found ($F(1,104) = 10.873, p = .000$). To identify where the difference was, follow-up paired sample t tests were conducted. Because fifteen pairs were involved, a significance level of $p < .003$ was required, due to the necessity to divide the standard .05 significance level by fifteen (Cronk 2002). The tests revealed that mean attitude ratings differed significantly between Subway and McDonald's ($t(111) = 7.929, p = .000$), and Subway and Burger King ($t(108) = 8.693, p = .000$). There was no significant difference in participants' attitudes toward McDonalds and Burger King ($t(107) = 0.821, p > .05$). See Table 1 on the following page for more details.

TABLE 1
Study 1 Attitude Ratings

Pair	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig.
McDonald's- Burger King	0.10	1.25	0.82	107	.413
McDonald's- Taco Bell	0.51	1.78	3.01	110	.003
McDonald's- Subway	1.35	1.80	7.93	111	.000
McDonald's- KFC	0.25	1.64	1.57	109	.120
McDonald's- Wendy's	0.53	1.42	3.93	109	.000
Burger King- Taco Bell	0.62	1.93	3.32	107	.001
Burger King- Subway	1.46	1.75	8.70	108	.000
Burger King- KFC	0.17	1.78	1.00	106	.322
Burger King- Wendy's	0.62	1.58	4.06	106	.000
Taco Bell- Subway	0.83	1.85	4.76	111	.000
Taco Bell-KFC	0.82	2.04	4.22	109	.000
Taco Bell- Wendy's	0.01	1.48	0.04	109	.966
Subway-KFC	1.61	2.04	8.30	110	.000
Subway- Wendy's	0.80	1.56	5.42	110	.000
KFC-Wendy's	0.80	1.78	4.72	110	.000

Health and nutrition ratings were based on two seven-point semantic differential item (healthy/unhealthy, nutritious food/non-nutritious food) with one being healthy and seven unhealthy. These items were significantly correlated for each of the brands, with r ranging from 0.329 for McDonald's to 0.538 for Taco Bell. Mean ratings on a seven-point scale ranged from 2.33 for Subway to 5.96 and 6.10 for Burger King and McDonald's,

respectively. Subway was the only brand with a health and nutrition score below the scale mean of 4.00. Similar to the evaluation of attitude ratings, repeated measures ANOVA was calculated comparing health and nutrition ratings for the six fast food companies. Again, a significant effect was found ($F(1,108) = 129.864, p = .000$). The follow-up paired sample t tests conducted to identify where the differences lay revealed a significant difference in perceptions of the nutritional value of foods sold by McDonald's versus Subway ($t(111) = 26.324, p = .000$) and between Subway and Burger King ($t(112) = 24.866, p = .000$). Because the intent was to identify companies that represented clear examples of perceptions regarding the health and nutrition value of product offerings, significant differences were important in choosing companies. Subway was thus selected as the healthy products company, as it was perceived as significantly healthier than all of the other five options (see Table 2 on the following page).

For the unhealthy options, both McDonald's and Burger King were selected for further evaluation in Study 2. These brands had similar attitude ratings (McDonald's $M = 3.65$, Burger King $M = 3.75$), which as noted above were not significantly different, and health and nutrition ratings that were similarly not significantly different ($t(107) = 0.821, p > .05$). However, they had recently adopted different advertising strategies, with McDonald's promoting healthy lifestyles while Burger King emphasized large portion sizes. For study 2, then, both brands were used to explore whether the current advertising would influence parents, even though the attitude and health ratings found in Study 1 did not differ significantly.

TABLE 2**Study 1 Health and Nutrition Ratings**

Pair	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	Df	Sig.
McDonald's- Burger King	0.13	0.59	2.31	111	.022
McDonald's- Taco Bell	0.45	1.02	4.62	111	.000
McDonald's- Subway	3.76	1.51	26.32	111	.000
McDonald's- KFC	0.61	1.37	4.71	109	.000
McDonald's- Wendy's	0.96	1.20	8.36	108	.000
Burger King- Taco Bell	0.31	1.05	3.19	112	.002
Burger King- Subway	3.62	1.54	24.87	112	.000
Burger King- KFC	0.49	1.32	3.91	110	.000
Burger King- Wendy's	0.84	1.24	7.13	109	.000
Taco Bell- Subway	3.30	1.47	23.97	112	.000
Taco Bell-KFC	0.17	1.48	1.18	110	.240
Taco Bell- Wendy's	0.50	1.33	3.97	109	.000
Subway-KFC	3.12	1.67	18.67	110	.000
Subway- Wendy's	2.77	1.42	20.48	109	.000
KFC-Wendy's	0.36	1.42	2.68	109	.008

Study 2 – Pilot StudyDesign

Prior to launching the main study, a test of the stimulus materials was conducted.

The purpose of this study was to pretest the manipulation checks and some of the planned scales. The study employed a fixed-factor, 3 (company) X 3 (advertising strategy)

between subjects, pretest/posttest, randomized design administered via an online survey. Parents of children aged twelve and younger, rather than the student convenience sample from Study 1, were research subjects.

Participants

Participants in Study 2 were parents with children aged twelve and younger, recruited through a parent listserv with 600 names maintained by Michigan State University. To participate, an individual was required to have one or more children aged 12 or younger living at home, and to be the family's primary food shopper. As an incentive, respondents were entered in a drawing for one of three \$100 gift certificates from amazon.com. One hundred thirteen parents participated, for a response rate of 18.3%, with the majority female (93.5%). The actual response rate for eligible parents may have been higher; the ages of the children of parents on the list are unknown. This was a highly educated group, with fewer than 17% having less than a college degree and the majority (52.8%) possessing graduate degrees. Their average age was 37 and mean family household income was in the \$50,000 - \$74,999 range.

Stimulus Materials

For Study 2, stimulus materials were developed using real brands identified in Study 1 and advertising strategies reflecting those recently proposed or adopted by food companies, i.e. elimination of some advertising to children, introducing healthy lifestyles messages in ads targeting children, or no change representing the status quo. The materials used brief news stories announcing the appointment of a new advertising agency, and subsequent introduction of new advertising tactics, by one of the three companies (See Appendix B, Stimulus Materials).

Measures and Procedures

Parents were invited to participate via an email invitation from the coordinator of the Michigan State Family Resource Center, operator of the parent listserv. Those who replied to the email invitation were assigned, using a random number generator, to one of nine experimental treatments (Table 3 - Study 2 Participants). Each subject then received an email confirmation with a link to a survey URL hosted by Zoomerang, a commercial online market research organization. Each survey or condition represented a combination of one of the three stimulus companies chosen following Study 1 (McDonald's, Burger King, and Subway) and one of the three possible advertising treatments, i.e. elimination of advertising to children, changing to healthy lifestyle messages in children's advertising, and the control group, no change to the company's advertising strategy. First, the informed consent information was presented. Selecting "next" on the online survey indicated consent and agreement to participate. The pretest questionnaire was then presented. Subjects were asked questions about their attitudes toward the stimulus company and other fast food companies. Then, following a distraction task that involved reporting their amount of participation in twelve different online activities, participants were presented with a news story about one of the companies and its new advertising plans. This was followed by a series of questions including a manipulation check and measurements of motive attribution, acceptance of the strategy, and attitude toward the treatment company. Last, demographic data was collected (See Appendix C, Instruments).

Results

All participants, randomly assigned to different conditions (see Table 3– Study 2 Participants), were asked to provide attitude ratings for six fast food companies using a three item, seven-point semantic differential scale (MacKenzie and Lutz 1989). Scale reliability ranged from 0.798 for Taco Bell to 0.859 for Burger King. The most favorable attitudes were expressed toward Subway ($M = 2.42$) while Burger King ($M = 4.23$) and KFC ($M = 4.33$) garnered the least favorable attitude ratings. A repeated measures ANOVA was calculated comparing attitudes toward all six brands. A significant effect was found ($F(1,109) = 106.6, p=.000$). As in Study 1, follow-up paired sample t-tests were calculated. A significant difference was found between Subway and McDonald's ($t(110) = 10.355, p=.000$) and between Subway and Burger King ($t(109) = 11.626, p=.000$).

TABLE 3

Study 2 Participants

Company Strategy	McDonald's	Burger King	Subway
Eliminate	11	15	11
Healthy Lifestyles	14	11	15
Status Quo	14	11	11

To ensure that participants perceived the differences between non-nutritious brands (Burger King and McDonald's) and the nutritious brand (Subway), eight manipulation check items were included in the study. Principal components factor

analysis with varimax rotation confirmed that four of the items loaded on one factor assessing perceived nutritional value of the company's products and two items assess congruence between the company's ad strategy and the respondent's expectation (See Table 4 – Study 2 Manipulation Check Factor Analysis). The four nutrition items ($\alpha = .939$) were measured using a five-point Likert-type scale. An independent samples t-test was conducted comparing perceptions of company nutrition for Subway versus McDonald's. A significant difference was found ($t(71) = 17.899, p = .000$). A significant difference was also found between Subway and Burger King ($t(71) = 23.897, p = .000$). However, as expected, there was no significant difference in the nutrition perceptions of Burger King and McDonald's ($t(72) = .895$). Thus, the manipulation for perceived nutritional content of the companies' products was confirmed.

TABLE 4
Study 2 Manipulation Check Factor Analysis

	Factor Loading	
	Factor 1 – Company Type/Healthy Products	Factor 2 – Congruence
The company offers mostly nutritious products	.919	
Products are not part of a nutritious diet	.911	
The company has a reputation for healthy products	.906	
The company is known for junk food	.858	
I am surprised the company is doing this		.875
The new ad plans are consistent with a company like this		.875
Eigenvalues	4.142	1.484

The second manipulation check, congruence, used the two items identified in the factor analysis as loading on the congruence factor. These items were measured with a

five-point Likert-type scale ($r = 0.648$, $p < .01$). An independent samples t-test compared congruence perceptions for the high congruence conditions (McDonald's/eliminate ads, Burger King/eliminate ads, and Subway/healthy lifestyle) with the incongruent conditions (McDonald's/healthy lifestyle and Burger King/healthy lifestyle). A significant difference was found ($t(63) = 3.607$, $p = .001$). Participants perceived the highly congruent conditions as more congruent ($m = 3.77$) than the low congruence conditions ($m = 2.99$). The manipulation was confirmed.

Study 3 – Main Study

Design

Similar to Study 2, the main study used a fixed factor, 2 (company schema) X 2 (planned behavior) between subjects pretest/posttest, randomized experimental design with an online self-administered instrument. Two schemas for company were provided. One emphasized expectations of nutritious offerings as identified in studies 1 and 2 (Subway), while the other company was regarded as providing non-nutritious products (McDonald's). Planned behavior was operationalized as the announced advertising strategy, healthy messages versus elimination of advertising to children versus status quo advertising to children. The status quo condition, tested in study 2, was subsequently dropped in the analysis of study 3 results because the primary purpose was to investigate parental response to changes in marketing communication. Following the schema congruity model (Myers-Levy and Tybout 1989), congruence was manipulated in an attempt to create high congruence, moderate congruence, and high incongruence between company schema and planned behavior.

Participants

As in study 2, participants were parents who had children aged twelve and younger living at home and were responsible for their families' food shopping. Subjects were recruited from members of an online panel operated by the Media Research Lab at the University of Texas – Austin. This panel, with approximately 20,000 adult members, is an opt-in, informed consent, privacy-protected group with diverse national representation, available to researchers for Internet-based studies. As an incentive to participate, panel members were offered the opportunity to participate in a drawing for one of five \$100 cash prizes, a technique recommended by the Media Research Lab at University of Texas-Austin to maximize response rates.

Four hundred twenty-one participants, parents of children aged twelve and younger, participated in the main study. They were recruited in two phases. In phase one, an email invitation was sent to 4,991 panel members, inviting them to visit a URL operated by the Media Research Lab at the University of Texas-Austin to participate. The invitation specified that participants must have one or more children aged twelve or younger living at home, and must be their family's primary food shopper. Further, they were informed that, upon completion of the online survey, they would be entered in the cash prize drawing. Within ten days, three hundred responses were received from this initial invitation, for a response rate of 6.0%. In phase two, the same email invitation was sent to 2,315 different panel members. After one week, one hundred twenty-one parents had responded, for a response rate of 5.2%. The overall combined response rate calculated on the total number of invitations was 5.8%. Information about the number of panelists who are parents and the ages of any of their children was not available, so a

revised response rate of 18.1% was calculated based on U.S. Census data indicating that 31.9% of U.S. households have children aged 18 or younger (United States Census Bureau 2006). Since an even smaller number of households would have children aged 12 and younger, the actual response rate was likely somewhat higher.

Participants in the main study ranged in age from 19 to 77, with mean age of 41. Three quarters of the sample (75%) were aged 48 or younger. Most participants (77%) had at least some education, and mean household income was in the \$35,000 - \$50,000 bracket. Eighty percent of respondents were female, and nearly two thirds (63%) were married. More than half (57%) had one child aged twelve or younger living at home, with the majority (95%) having three or fewer children in that age group living at home.

After eliminating the status quo condition and parents who believed that one of the stimulus companies does not advertise to children, a total of 231 participants were included in the main study for analysis.

Stimulus Materials

Based on the results of the pilot studies, stimulus materials were created describing actual fast food companies, representing one of the largest categories of food advertised to children as well as one of the frequent targets of criticism (Gantz et al. 2007). The stimuli were news stories about two national fast food companies, one regarded as offering predominantly non-nutritious products (McDonald's) and one offering primarily nutritious products (e.g., Subway). Each story included a brief description of one company, highlighting menu items that tap into the nutritious/non-nutritious aspects of the schema, and announcing the company's advertising plans, one of the three ad strategy types (healthy message emphasizing nutritious diet and exercise,

limits placed on advertising to children including elimination of television ads in children's programs, or status quo advertising to children on children's programs).

In this study, high incongruence was intended to be represented by the non-nutritious food company/healthy lifestyle advertising treatment. This incongruence is exemplified by McDonald's in this analogy to a politician trying to reconcile conflicting positions: "It's a bit like McDonald's trying to stand for childhood nutrition and fitness, or GM trying to advertise that it has the most fuel efficient gas guzzlers on the market" (Kiley 2007). High congruence was represented by the nutritious food company/healthy lifestyle advertising and non-nutritious food company/eliminate advertising treatments. Moderate incongruence was represented by the nutritious food company /eliminate advertising treatment. The status quo advertising conditions were subsequently excluded from the analysis.

Procedures

After responding to the email invitation by clicking on a link to the Media Research Lab, subjects were again reminded of the eligibility criteria (parent of child/children aged twelve or younger, primary food shopper), and then presented with the consent language. Upon agreeing to participate, subjects were randomly assigned, using a random number Java script, to one of six survey conditions, with the Media Research Lab automatically redirecting the participant to the appropriate survey instrument hosted by Zoomerang.com. No identifying information was transmitted to Zoomerang.

The online, self-administered questionnaire began with a pretest including measures of advertising skepticism, food advertising skepticism, involvement with

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nutrition, parental concern about food advertising and subjective nutrition knowledge. Subjects were then asked to provide attitude and familiarity ratings for six fast food companies and to indicate their recent patronage of each. Following the pretest, a distraction task was presented, asking subjects to indicate their level of usage of twelve different online activities. This was followed by presentation of one of the six stimuli, a news story about one fast food company and one advertising strategy. The post-test questions included measures of motive attribution, strategy acceptance, responsibility and blame for childhood obesity, post-test attitude toward the stimulus company, post-test measures of company credibility and measures of familiarity with the stimulus company's recent advertising. Finally, parents were asked to respond to a ten-item social desirability scale and to provide demographic information. Subjects were then thanked for their participation. The University of Texas-Austin Media Research Lab completed the follow-up with survey participants by contacting winners selected randomly and awarding them the cash prize. Descriptions of the items follow, and are shown in Table 5 – Table of Measures, on page 64. The questionnaire is shown in Appendix C – Instruments.

Measures

Two measures of advertising skepticism were used. The first assessed general skepticism towards advertising (Obermiller and Spangenberg 1998). In addition, a scale originally developed to measure skepticism towards green advertising was modified to measure skepticism about food advertisements (Mohr et al. 1998). Reliabilities for the two skepticism scales were $\alpha = .947$ for general advertising and $\alpha = .756$ for food advertising.

To measure parental concern with food advertising, six Likert items anchored by strongly agree/strongly disagree were used ($\alpha = .818$). These items are designed to identify general parental concern with the quantity and type of food advertising used to reach children (Grossbart and Crosby 1984).

Involvement was measured using the reduced Personal Involvement Inventory (Zaichowsky 1994), comprised of ten bipolar adjectives (e.g. important/unimportant) ranked on a seven-point scale ($\alpha = .895$). Subjective knowledge of nutrition was assessed using five seven-point Likert-type questions anchored by strongly agree/strongly disagree (Flynn and Goldsmith 1999). Scale reliability was $\alpha = .857$.

Also in the pretest, in order to be able to determine attitude change after exposure to the stimulus, existing attitude toward six fast food companies was assessed with three seven-point semantic differential items, bad/good, favorable/unfavorable, unpleasant/pleasant (MacKenzie and Lutz 1989), with $\alpha = .918$. Similarly, one seven-point semantic differential item measured familiarity with those same companies, familiar/unfamiliar.

Following exposure to the stimulus story, a post-test was administered. Several manipulation check questions were asked immediately following presentation of the stimulus story. The company description manipulation check used a four-item Likert scale ($\alpha = .906$). The congruence manipulation check was a five-point Likert scale ($\alpha = .817$) that included five items, with three added to the two identified in Study 2, in an effort to tap into perceptions of congruence that were not revealed in Study 2.

The first scales assessed motive attribution, or the consumer's perception of the sponsor's motive. Motives could be either internal (altruistic) or external (profit-driven).

Consumers who infer altruistic motives believe that the company or sponsor's primary reason for undertaking an advertising campaign or other marketing program is to "do the right thing," to do what is in the best interest of customers and society as a whole. In contrast, when consumers attribute profit motives to a sponsor, they believe that the sponsor is engaging in the activities to generate or increase profits. Eleven five-point, Likert items used to tap socially responsible/altruistic and self-serving/profit sponsor motive attributions, both from previous research (Rifon et al. 2004; Trimble 2007) and created for this study, were used to operationalize the motive attribution variable. Because several of the items were originally created to assess motive attribution in cause-brand alliances, they were modified for this study to reflect the motives attributed to food marketers targeting children.

Participants were asked to rate their acceptance of the ad strategy using a six item, five-point Likert-type scale ($\alpha = .918$), anchored by strongly agree/strongly disagree (Trimble 2007). Attribution of blame was measured using a four item Likert-type scale, originally created to measure such attributions arising from negative consequences that result from use of a manufacturer's product (Griffin et al. 1996). First created to measure reaction to an accident caused by a product, the scale was adapted here to measure perceptions of blame for negative outcomes resulting from consumption of the marketer's product. Scale reliability ranged from $\alpha = .840$ for parental (internal) responsibility to $\alpha = .892$ for company (external) responsibility.

To measure the dependent variables of company credibility and attitude toward the company, previously validated scales were used in the post-exposure questions. Attitude toward the company was measured with three seven-point semantic differential

items, bad/good, favorable/unfavorable, unpleasant/pleasant (MacKenzie and Lutz 1989) and three seven-point Likert items (Harris Interactive 2007). The combined reliability for the post-test attitude scale was $\alpha = .940$. A scale developed by Newell and Goldsmith (2001) that measures the two dimensions of source credibility, trust and expertise, was also used ($\alpha = .859$). Familiarity with the stimulus company and its advertising campaigns were each measured on a seven-point semantic differential item anchored by familiar/unfamiliar.

Because this study asks parents about their parenting, they might be expected to answer in what would be considered a socially acceptable manner (“of course I care about my kid’s diet and health....”). To assess the degree to which parental responses are socially desirable, a modified, ten-item Crowne-Marlowe social desirability scale was administered for later correlation with other items (Crowne and Marlowe 1960). The scale consists of ten dichotomous choice items answered True/False ($\alpha = .670$). Finally, a series of demographic questions were asked, including age, marital status, education, income, number and ages of children.

TABLE 5**Measures***

Variable	Item	Reliability	Source
Type of Company	• I believe that the company offers mostly nutritious products. • For the most part, the company's products are not part of a nutritious diet • The company has a reputation for having healthy product offerings. • This company is well known for its junk food.	$\alpha = .906$	Created for this study
Congruence-company and strategy	• The new advertising plans make sense for a company like this. • The new advertising plans are consistent with what I would expect from this company. • I am surprised that the company is doing this. • I would not expect a company like this to take this action • The company's new advertising plans fit my expectations.	$\alpha = .817$	Created for this study
Involvement with nutrition	• Important/unimportant • Boring/interesting • Relevant/irrelevant • Exciting/unexciting • Means nothing/means a lot to me • Appealing/unappealing • Fascinating/mundane • Worthless/valuable • Involving/uninvolving • Not needed/needed	$\alpha = .895$	Zaichowsky 1994

TABLE 5 (cont'd)

Variable	Item	Reliability	Source
Skepticism toward advertising	• We can depend on getting the truth in most advertising • Advertising's aim is to inform the consumer. • I believe advertising is informative. • Advertising is generally truthful. • Advertising is a reliable source of information about the quality and performance of products. • Advertising is truth well told. • In general, advertising presents a true picture of the product being advertised. • I feel I've been accurately informed after viewing most advertisements. • Most advertising provides consumers with essential information.	$\alpha = .947$	Obermiller & Spangenberg 1998
Skepticism toward food advertising	• Most claims made in food advertising are true. • Most nutritional claims are exaggerated. • Consumers would be better off if nutritional claims in advertising were eliminated. • Most claims in food advertising are intended to mislead rather than to inform consumers. • I do not believe most claims made in food advertising.	$\alpha = .756$	Mohr et al. 1998 (adaptation of environmental advertising skepticism scale)

TABLE 5 (cont'd)

Variable	Item	Reliability	Source
Motive Attribution	Factor 1 – Altruistic motives (dispositional)	$\alpha = .875$	Based on Rifon et al. 2004 and Trimble 2007; additional items created for this study
	• The new advertising strategy demonstrates the company's commitment to helping its customers. • The company is doing this because they care about children & childhood obesity. • The company is doing this because it is the ethical thing to do. • The company really cares about getting nutrition information to their customers.		
	Factor 2 – Avoidance motives (situational)	$\alpha = .828$	
	• The company is changing its advertising to avoid government regulation. • The company is afraid that laws will be passed limiting their ability to advertise unless they take actions like their new advertising plans. • The company is changing its advertising only to pacify parents who might not want their children to eat their food. • The company is changing its advertising because other companies are using similar strategies.		
	Factor 3 – Profit motives (dispositional)	$\alpha = .805$	
	• The company is doing this to persuade me to buy their products. • The company is doing this because it will increase their profits. • Ultimately, the company benefits by this action.		

TABLE 5 (cont'd)

Variable	Item	Reliability	Source
Parental concern with food advertising	• There are too many food ads • Food ads employ tricks and gimmicks to get children to buy • Food ads make false nutritional claims • There is too much sugar in advertised foods • Food ads teach children bad eating habits • Food ads lead to family conflict	$A = .818$	Grossbart & Crosby 1984
Attribution of blame	Factor 1 – Company responsibility • How much do you blame the company for children's diet related problems? • How responsible is the company for children's diet-related problems? • I think advertisers like this company are responsible for childhood obesity. Factor 2 – Parental responsibility • How much blame do you place on parents like you for children's diet related problems? • How responsible are parents like you for children's diet related problems? • I think that parents are responsible for childhood obesity.	$\alpha = .892$ $\alpha = .840$	Griffin and Babin 1996 (adapted from attribution of blame scale) and items created for this study

TABLE 5 (cont'd)

Variable	Item	Reliability	Source
Source credibility	• The company has a great amount of experience. • The company is skilled at what they do. • The company has great expertise. • The company does not have much experience. • I trust the company. • The company makes truthful claims. • The company is honest. • I do not believe what the company tells me.	$\alpha = .859$	Newell and Goldsmith 2001
Familiarity with company	How familiar are you with [the company]? How familiar are you with [the company]'s advertising campaigns?		Rifon et al. 2004
Attitude toward company	• My impression of [company name] is: • Good/ bad • Unpleasant/pleasant • Favorable/unfavorable • I have a good feeling about the company. • I admire respect the company. I respect the company	$\alpha = .940$	MacKenzie & Lutz 1989 Harris Online Emotional appeal dimension

TABLE 5 (cont'd)

Variable	Item	Reliability	Source
Acceptance of the strategy	• I agree with the company's advertising strategy. • I don't have any problems with the company's advertising strategy. • More companies should do something like this company's advertising strategy. • The company's advertising strategy is a bad idea • I reject the company's advertising strategy. • I approve of the company's advertising strategy. • This company's strategy will help my child. • The company's new advertising will not make any difference in childhood obesity.	$\alpha = .918$	Trimble 2007 (adaptation of acceptance of alliance scale)

TABLE 5 (cont'd)

Variable	Item	Reliability	Source
Social Desirability	• I am always willing to admit it when I make a mistake. • I always try to practice what I preach. • I never resent being asked to return a favor. • I have never been annoyed when people expressed ideas very different from my own. • I have never deliberately said something that hurt someone's feelings. • I like to gossip at times. (reverse coded) • There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone. (reverse coded) • I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget (reverse coded) • At times I have really insisted on having things my own way. (reverse coded) • There have been occasions when I felt like smashing things. (reverse coded)	$\alpha = .670$	Crowne & Marlowe 1960

*Individual items were averaged to create scales

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

Main Study Results

Participants

As in Study 2, participants were randomly assigned to the different conditions. One item measured the participants' beliefs about the stimulus companies actual advertising targeting children ("The company advertises to children") using a five point Likert scale anchored by strongly disagree/strongly agree. To avoid confounding results by asking about a change in strategy if the parents did not believe the company advertised to children, participants answering strongly disagree or disagree somewhat were excluded from further analysis. This resulted in the following distribution of 231 main study participants.

TABLE 6

Main Study Participants

Company Strategy	McDonald's	Subway
Eliminate	56	51
Healthy Lifestyles	73	51

Manipulation Checks

New items were added to the manipulation check scale used in Study 2. The factor analysis for study 2 resulted in only two items for the congruence scale. With the

addition of items to produce a more robust scale in the Main Study, nine manipulation check items were evaluated. Principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation revealed that four items again loaded on factor 1, company type/healthy products, while five items loaded on factor 2, congruence (see Table 7 – Main Study Manipulation Check Factor Analysis).

TABLE 7

Main Study Manipulation Check Factor Analysis

	Factor Loading	
	Factor 1 – Company Type/Healthy Products	Factor 2 – Congruence
The company has a reputation for healthy products	.885	
The company offers mostly nutritious products	.845	
The company is known for junk food	.845	
The company's products are not part of a nutritious diet	.801	
I wouldn't expect a company like this to do this		.776
I am surprised that the company is doing this		.769
The company's new advertising plans fit my expectations		.709
The new ad plans are consistent with what I would expect from a company like this		.671
The new advertising plans makes sense for a company like this		.653
Eigenvalues	4.925	1.375

The manipulation check for the health or nutrition value of the company's products used a four-item Likert scale ($\alpha = .906$). An independent samples t-test was conducted and confirmed that health and nutrition perceptions were significantly different ($t(227) = 14.86, p = .000$) between McDonald's ($m = 2.20$) and Subway ($m = 3.85$).

Parents perceived Subway as offering more nutritious foods than McDonalds confirming the manipulation.

The manipulation check for congruence used a five-item Likert scale ($\alpha = .817$). An independent samples t-test compared high congruence conditions (McDonald's eliminate advertising, Subway healthy lifestyles) to the incongruent condition (McDonald's healthy lifestyles). A significant difference was found ($t(176) = 3.11$, $p < .05$). McDonald's/eliminate and Subway/healthy lifestyles were viewed as more highly congruent ($m = 3.50$) than McDonald's/healthy lifestyle ($m = 3.12$), confirming the manipulation.

Motive Attribution Dimensions

Motive attributions were assessed using eleven Likert items. Principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation of the motive items identified three dimensions of parental attributions of food marketers' motives. This solution accounted for 69.4% of the total variance (see Table 8 – Motive Attribution Factor Analysis). Factor 1, Altruism, is a dispositional dimension related to the marketer's concerns for its customers and their children. Factor 2, labeled Avoidance, is a situational dimension reflecting the perception that the company is taking action to avoid potential future problems. Factor 3, Profit, is a dispositional characteristic reflecting parents' beliefs that the company is acting to further its own self-interest.

TABLE 8**Motive Attribution Factor Analysis**

	Factor Loading		
	Factor 1 – Altruism	Factor 2 – Avoidance	Factor 3 – Profit
Shows company's commitment to customers	.875		
Cares about children & childhood obesity	.861		
Ethical thing to do	.834		
Cares about getting nutrition info out	.776		
Change to avoid gov't regulation		.845	
Afraid of laws limiting ads		.897	
Change because others are		.807	
Change to pacify parents		.739	
Company ultimately benefits			.830
Change to persuade me to buy products			.753
Increase profits			.722
Eigenvalues	4.739	2.807	1.474

Dimensions of Attributions of Blame/Responsibility

Six items assessed whether parents placed primary responsibility for childhood diet problems with the companies or with themselves. Principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation identified two dimensions of blame, external and internal. The solution accounted for 80.4% of the variance. Factor 1 represents external blame and Factor 2 internal blame (See Table 9 – Responsibility Factor Analysis).

TABLE 9**Responsibility Factor Analysis**

	Factor Loading	
	Factor 1 – Company	Factor 2 – Parents
How much do you blame the company for children's diet related problems?	.923	
How responsible is the company for children's diet-related problems?	.901	
I think advertisers like this company are responsible for childhood obesity	.867	
How much blame do you place on parents like you for children's diet related problems?		.920
How responsible are parents like you for children's diet related problems?		.882
I think that parents are responsible for childhood obesity.		.823
Eigenvalues	3.081	1.742

Variables

Descriptive statistics for the variables and scales under study are shown below, based on the 231 subjects used for the main study analysis. For each of the variables or scales, one is low and five or seven is high.

Table 10**Descriptive Statistics for Main Study Variables**

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Congruence 5 point scale	1.60	5.00	3.47	0.77
Involvement 7 point scale	2.80	7.00	5.63	0.98
Parental concern with food advertising 5 point scale	1.00	5.00	3.51	0.75
Skepticism to advertising 5 point scale	1.00	5.00	3.02	0.89
Skepticism to food advertising 5 point scale	1.00	5.00	3.12	0.70
Altruism motive attribution 5 point scale	1.00	5.00	3.40	0.98
Avoidance motive attribution 5 point scale	1.00	5.00	3.19	0.90
Profit motive attribution 5 point scale	1.00	5.00	3.92	0.81
External blame attribution 5 point scale	1.00	5.00	2.41	1.06

Table 10 (cont'd)

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Internal blame attribution 5 point scale	1.00	5.00	4.31	0.76
Source credibility 5 point scale	1.00	5.00	3.68	0.70
Pretest attitude to McDonald's 7 point scale	1.00	7.00	4.47	1.71
Pretest attitude to Subway 7 point scale	1.00	7.00	5.70	1.27
Posttest attitude to McDonald's 7 point scale	1.00	7.00	4.71	1.65
Posttest attitude to Subway 7 point scale	1.00	7.00	5.89	1.33
Age	19	77	41	11.7
# Children aged 12 and younger	1	10	1.64	1.03

Hypothesis Tests

To test H1, an independent samples t-test comparing the mean scores for altruistic motive attributions of the parents exposed to elimination versus healthy lifestyles advertising strategies was calculated. There was no significant difference between the means of the two strategy treatments ($t(225) = .894, p > .05$). The mean rating for altruistic motivations for the parents exposed to the elimination strategy ($m = 3.49, sd = .92$) was not significantly different from the mean rating for parents exposed to the healthy lifestyles strategy ($m = 3.35, sd = .09$). Similarly, an independent samples t-test comparing the mean scores for profit motive attributions of parents exposed to

elimination versus healthy lifestyles advertising found no significant difference between the two groups ($t(227) = .072, p > .05$). The mean rating for parents in the elimination strategy treatment group ($m = 3.91, sd = .08$) was not significantly different from the mean rating by parents in the healthy lifestyles strategy treatment group ($m = 3.92, sd = .073$). H1 was not supported.

Congruence perceptions were influenced by the company changing its strategy. To test H2, a 2 (company) X 2 (new advertising strategy) between subjects factorial ANOVA was calculated comparing congruence perceptions. A significant main effect for company was found ($F(1,223) = 34.67, p = .000$). Subway ($m = 3.79, sd = .71$) was viewed as significantly more congruent with either strategy than was McDonald's ($m = 3.23, sd = .72$). The main effect for ad strategy was not significant ($F(1,223) = .426, p > .05$). While it was hypothesized that the type of strategy change would influence congruence based on the expectations the consumer had for the company's actions, there was no significant interaction ($F(1,223) = 1.832, p > .05$) and H2 was not supported. However, Subway, the company perceived as having more nutritious food products, was viewed as more congruent with both types of strategy changes than McDonald's, the company viewed as having non-nutritious offerings.

Congruence was expected to mediate the relationship between advertising strategy and motive attribution. Stepdown ANCOVAs were calculated for each of the three motives. Two of the motives were influenced by congruence perceptions. Congruence was significantly related to the altruism motive ($F(1,219) = 57.49, p = .000$), and to the avoidance motive ($F(1,217) = 27.45, p = .000$), but only marginally related to the profit motive ($F(1,220) = 3.36, p = .07$). However, advertising strategy is not

significantly related to any of the motives when congruence is included as a covariate: for motive 1, $F(1,219) = 0.81, p > .05$; for motive 2, $F(1,217) = 0.39, p > .05$; and for motive 3, $F(1,220) = 0.02, p > .05$. Contrary to what was predicted by H3, advertising strategy is not significantly related to the motives when congruence is removed: for motive 1, $F(1,223) = 0.45, p > .05$; for motive 2, $F(1,222) = 0.26, p > .05$; for motive 3, $F(1,225) = 0.00, p > .05$.) Thus, no mediation effect was found, disconfirming H3.

To test H4, a Pearson correlation was calculated examining the relationship between attribution of blame and motive attributions. A significant correlation was found between altruistic motive attributions and external (company) blame attributions ($r(230) = .276, p < .01$). There was no significant correlation between internal (parent) blame attributions and altruistic motive attributions ($r(230) = .021, n.s.$). H4 was supported.

In H5, parent attribution of blame and strategy change were predicted to be related to motive attributions. Internal blame was expected to lead to attributions of profit motives for healthy lifestyle messages and attributions of altruistic motives for elimination strategies. An analysis of variance was conducted comparing profit motive attributions based on strategy and internal blame. A significant effect was found for internal blame attributions on profit motive attributions ($F(10,211) = 4.05, p = .000$), but no effect was found for strategy change ($F(1,211) = 0.19, p > .05$) and no interaction effect was found ($F(6,211) = 0.67, p > .05$). Analysis of variance for altruistic motives was conducted. No significant effect was found for internal blame ($F(10,209) = 0.32, p > .05$), strategy ($F(1,209) = 0.12, p > .05$), or the interaction between blame and strategy ($F(6, 209) = 0.88, p > .05$). H5 was not supported.

In H6, it was proposed that involvement would influence perceptions of congruence. To test H6, an independent samples t-test was conducted comparing the perceptions of congruence for parents who were highly involved with nutrition versus those with low levels of involvement. A significant effect for involvement was found ($t(214) = 2.876, p = .004$). Parents who were highly involved were more likely to perceive congruence between the company and strategy ($m = 3.61$) than were parents with low levels of involvement with nutrition ($m = 3.31$).

To test H7, an analysis of variance was conducted comparing the attributions of profit motives based on parents' skepticism toward advertising. A significant difference was found ($F(33,185) = 2.45, p = .000$). Parents who were more skeptical about advertising were more likely to attribute profit motives to the stimulus company. Similarly, an analysis of variance comparing profit motive attributions based on skepticism toward food advertising found a significant difference ($F(19, 207) = 3.08, p = .000$). Greater skepticism toward food advertising was significantly related to attributions of profit motives. H7 was thus supported.

To further examine some of the hypotheses, analyses of variance tests were conducted for motive attributions. Attributions were different by company but not strategy. For motive 1, altruism, there was no significant difference for company ($F(1,191) = .645, p > .05$) or strategy ($F(1,191) = 2.361, p > .05$). However, altruism was significantly related to the parent's existing attitude toward the company ($F(1, 191) = 33.83, p = .000$), external blame attributions ($F(1,191) = 5.84, p = .017$), skepticism toward food advertising ($F(1,191) = 5.29, p = .023$), and skepticism toward advertising ($F(1,191) = 14.52, p = .000$). The greater the parent's skepticism and the more positive

the pre-existing attitude toward the company, the greater the perceptions of an altruistic motive behind the strategy change. Altruistic motive attributions were not significantly related to involvement ($F(1,191) = .986, p > .05$), or internal blame attributions ($F(1,191) = 0.91, p > .05$). (See Table 11 – Altruistic Motive Attributions)

TABLE 11
Altruism Motive Attributions

Source	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	13.82	.000
Intercept	48.63	.000
Pretest attitude	33.83	.000
Skepticism to food advertising	5.29	.023
Skepticism to advertising	14.52	.000
Involvement	0.99	.322
Attribute Blame external	5.84	.017
Attribute Blame internal	0.09	.763
Parental Concern	0.64	.426
Company	0.64	.426
Strategy Change	2.36	.126
Company X	0.02	.886
Strategy Change		

R Squared = .369 (Adjusted R Squared = .390)

For motive 2 attributions, the company treatment had a significant effect ($F(1,191) = 12.70, p = .000$). McDonald's ($m = 3.45$) was viewed as being motivated by avoidance of negative consequences more than Subway ($m = 2.85$). Attribution of blame was also positively related to views of avoidance methods. Both external blame attributions ($F(1,191) = 19.5, p = .000$) and internal blame attributions ($F(1,191) = 4.31, p = .039$) were significant. Parental concern was statistically marginally significantly

related to avoidance attributions ($F(1,191) = 3.14, p = .078$). (See Table 12 – Avoidance Motive Attributions)

TABLE 12
Avoidance Motive Attributions

Source	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	7.71	.000
Intercept	7.54	.007
Pretest attitude	2.12	.147
Skepticism to food advertising	0.36	.549
Skepticism to advertising	0.13	.723
Involvement	0.89	.347
Attribute Blame external	19.50	.000
Attribute Blame internal	4.31	.039
Parental Concern	3.14	.078
Company	12.70	.000
Strategy Change	0.00	.993
Company X	0.83	.364
Strategy Change		

R Squared = .288 (Adjusted R Squared = .250)

For motive 3, profit, pretest attitude toward the company was marginally statistically significant ($F(1, 193) = 3.32, p = .07$). Internal blame attribution was significantly related to profit motive attributions ($F(1,193) = 14.31, p = .000$) but external blame was not ($F(1,193) = 0.20, p > .05$). Parental concern with food advertising was another significant predictor of attributions of profit motives ($F(1,193) = 5.34, p = .022$). Skepticism to advertising was marginally significant ($F(1,193) = 3.41, p = .066$), but skepticism to food advertising was not ($F(1,193) = 0.56, p > .05$). (See Table 13– Profit Motive Attributions.) Thus, support was found for H4, marginal support was found for H7, and no support was found for H1 and H8.

TABLE 13**Profit Motive Attributions**

Source	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	7.723	.000
Intercept	8.90	.003
Pretest Attitude to company	3.32	.070
Skepticism to food advertising	0.56	.457
Skepticism to advertising	3.41	.066
Involvement	.001	.907
Attribute Blame external	0.20	.656
Attribute Blame internal	14.31	.000
Parental Concern	5.34	.022
Company	0.39	.531
Strategy Change	0.15	.695
Company X Strategy Change	0.03	.871

R Squared = .237 (Adjusted R Squared = .236)

Parental attitude toward the company before knowing of the change was also directly related to perceptions of congruence ($F(1,191) = 16.20, p = .000$), as was involvement with nutrition ($F(1,191) = 7.16, p = .008$), supporting H6. The more nutritious food offerings were also associated with greater perceptions of congruence ($F(1,191) = 11.61, p = .001$). External attributions of responsibility were also related to congruence perceptions ($F(1,191) = 27.84, p = .000$). (See Table 14 - Congruence)

TABLE 14**Congruence**

Source	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	11.99	.000
Intercept	41.47	.000
Pretest attitude	16.19	.000
Involvement	7.16	.008
Skepticism to Food Advertising	1.01	.317
Skepticism to advertising	0.24	.623
Parental Concern	0.13	.723
Attribute Blame external	27.84	.000
Attribute Blame internal	0.56	.457
Company	11.60	.001
Strategy Change	0.03	.856
Company X Strategy Change	0.47	.494

R Squared = .386 (Adjusted R Squared = .354)

Source credibility was not a function of the company making the change ($F(1,190) = 3.10, p = .08$) or the strategy itself ($F(1,190) = 2.81, p = .10$), thus disconfirming H12. While both strategies received higher than midpoint ratings of credibility, the elimination ($m = 3.72$) strategy was viewed as a more credible strategy than the healthy lifestyle strategy ($m = 3.66$) but the difference was not significant. Source credibility was a function of parental involvement with nutrition ($F(1,190) = 5.28, p = .023$), pre-existing attitudes toward the company ($F(1,190) = 42.08, p = .000$), external blame attributions ($F(1,190) = 24.91, p = .000$), internal blame attributions

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($F(1,190) = 3.85, p = .05$) and skepticism toward food advertising ($F(1,190) = 10.89, p = .00$). (See Table 15 – Source Credibility).

TABLE 15
Source Credibility

Source	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	16.76	.000
Intercept	67.44	.000
Pretest attitude	42.08	.000
Involvement	5.28	.023
Skepticism to Food Advertising	10.89	.000
Skepticism to Advertising	1.94	.165
Parental Concern	0.54	.463
Attribute Blame external	24.56	.000
Attribute Blame internal	3.80	0.52
Company	2.70	.102
Strategy Change	3.08	.081
Company X Strategy Change	.01	.941

R Squared = .469 (Adjusted R Squared = .441)

Finally, attitude toward the company making the strategy change was significantly different based on the strategy posed ($F(1,191) = 9.29, p = .003$), but not on the company making the change ($F(1,191) = 0.46, p > .05$), supporting H13. Both companies received positive ratings above the scale's midpoint (McDonald's $m = 5.18$, Subway $m = 5.28$). The elimination strategy ($m = 5.44$) was viewed more positively than the healthy lifestyle strategy ($m = 5.02$), supporting H13. There was no significant interaction. Pre-existing attitude toward the company ($F(1,191) = 227.74, p = .000$) was

directly related to attitude toward the company, as was skepticism to advertising (F (1,191) = 4.62, p = .033). (See Table 16 – Attitude to the Company)

TABLE 16
Attitude to the Company

Source	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	40.05	.000
Intercept	13.07	.000
Pretest Attitude	227.74	.000
Involvement	0.83	.364
Skepticism to Food Advertising	3.57	.060
Skepticism to Advertising	4.62	.033
Parental Concern	2.57	.111
Attribute Blame external	4.68	.032
Attribute Blame internal	0.06	.800
Company	0.46	.497
Strategy Change	9.29	.003
Company X	0.01	.936
Strategy Change		
Error	191	
Total	202	
Corrected Total	201	

R Squared = .677 (Adjusted R Squared = .650)

The Model

To test the explanatory value of the model and hypotheses 9, 10, and 11, a step down ANCOVA was performed. When credibility is introduced as a covariate, the significance of the strategy change on attitude toward the company is significant (F (1,175) = 4.70, p = .032). Source credibility is significantly related to attitude to the company (F (1,175) = 34.31, p = .000), as is preexisting attitude toward the company (F (1,175) = 104.01, p = .000). Introducing the three types of attributions as covariates, the

effect of strategy change on attitude is significant. Two of the three motive attributions were significantly related to the attitude to the company. For altruism, $F(1,175) = 26.453$, $p = .000$; for avoidance attributions, $F(1,175) = 6.47$, $p = .012$; for profit motive attributions, $F(1,175) = 1.54$, $p > .05$). Introducing the three types of attributions as covariates, the effect of strategy change on credibility becomes non-significant. Altruistic motive attributions are significantly related to credibility ($F(1,179) = 36.66$, $p = .000$), as are avoidance motive attributions ($F(1,179) = 5.92$, $p = .016$). (See Table 17 – Stepdown ANCOVA) H9, H10, and H11 are supported.

TABLE 17
Stepdown ANCOVA
Attitude to Company

Source	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	46.90	.000
Intercept	3.58	.060
Pretest attitude	104.01	.000
Involvement	0.00	.978
Skepticism to Food Advertising	0.11	.744
Skepticism to Advertising	0.22	.639
Parental Concern	0.93	.336
Attribute Blame external	0.15	.702
Attribute Blame internal	1.72	.191
Altruistic Motive Attribution	26.45	.000
Avoidance Motive Attribution	6.47	.012
Profit Motive Attribution	1.54	.216
Source Credibility	34.43	.000
Company	6.28	.013
Strategy Change	4.70	.032
Company X Strategy Change	0.06	.800

R Squared = .790 (Adjusted R Squared = .773)

Table 17 (cont'd)**Source Credibility**

Source	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	19.489	.000
Intercept	25.57	.000
Pretest attitude	17.78	.000
Involvement	2.89	.091
Parental Concern	0.20	.653
Altruistic Motive Attribution	36.66	.000
Avoidance Motive Attribution	5.92	.016
Profit Motive Attribution	4.63	.033
Attribute Blame external	10.31	.002
Attribute Blame internal	4.93	.026
Skepticism to Food Advertising	7.86	.006
Skepticism to Advertising	0.04	.841
Company	7.62	.006
Strategy Change	1.19	.276
Company X Strategy Change	0.00	.981

R Squared = .586 (Adjusted R Squared = .556)

A linear regression using the enter method in SPSS was performed using perceptions of the nutritiousness of food offerings, involvement with nutrition, pre-existing company attitude, skepticism to advertising, skepticism to food advertising, parental concern with food advertising, external blame, internal blame, congruence perceived in the strategy, motive attributions, source credibility, and strategy (See Table 18 – Multiple Regression - Attitude to Company) A significant regression equation was found ($F(14,172) = 46.46$, $p = .000$; $R = .889$, $R^2 = .774$). The strongest predictors of attitude toward the company making the change were pretest attitude toward the

company, source credibility, altruistic motive attributions, and avoidance motive attributions. The type of company and strategy were also significant. The more nutritious company (Subway), elimination strategy, altruistic motive attributions, avoidance motive attributions, source credibility, and pretest attitude toward the company, were all positively statistically significant with respect to posttest attitude to the company.

TABLE 18

**Multiple Regression
Attitude to Company**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	392.832	14	28.059	46.460	.000
Residual	103.878	172	.239		
Total	496.709	186			

	Standardized Coefficients		
	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)		-1.739	.084
Company Treatment	.100	2.452	.015
Strategy Change	-.082	-2.293	.023
Congruence	-.018	-0.345	.731
Involvement	-.001	-0.022	.982
Parental Concern with Food Adv.	.048	0.980	.329
Skepticism to Food Advertising	.016	0.317	.752
Skepticism to Advertising	-.030	-0.656	.513
Altruism Motive Attribution	.275	5.115	.000
Avoidance Motive Attribution	.102	2.144	.033
Profit Motive Attribution	-.047	-1.000	.319
Attribute blame external	-.010	-0.239	.812
Attribute blame internal	-.052	-1.211	.227
Pretest Attitude toward company	.469	10.072	.000
Source Credibility	.320	5.866	.000

To ensure that the variables were not interdependent, multicollinearity diagnostics were calculated for the scales used in the model. The VIF for all variables ranged from

1.06 to 2.45, below the suggested cut-off of 10 (Mason and Perrault 1991) and thus not considered problematic.

Social Desirability

Because the questionnaires asked about attitudes and behaviors regarding child-rearing and parental responsibility, it is feasible that parents responded with socially acceptable answers. Social desirability scales were correlated with the other variable scales to ensure that social bias did not influence parents' responses. There were no significant correlations between social desirability and parental concern with advertising, skepticism to food advertising, avoidance motive attribution, profit motive attribution, external (company) blame attribution, or internal (parent) blame attribution. There were significant correlations between social desirability and involvement with nutrition, ($r = .210, p < .01$), advertising skepticism ($r = .241, p < .01$), pretest attitude ($r = .186, p < .01$), posttest attitude ($r = .210, p < .01$), and source credibility ($r = .143, p < .05$). However, calculating the r^2 for each pair identified the relatively minor contribution of social desirability to responses (involvement $r^2 = .044$, advertising skepticism $r^2 = .058$, pretest attitude $r^2 = .034$, posttest attitude $r^2 = .044$, and source credibility $r^2 = .020$). This indicates that while there might be some variation attributable to parents providing socially desirable responses, the magnitude of that contribution to overall response is negligible.

Summary

A summary of the results of hypothesis testing is shown in Table 18, below.

TABLE 19
Hypothesis Tests

HYPOTHESIS	RESULTS
H1: Elimination of food adv generates altruistic attributions	Not supported
H2: Elimination of food advertising more congruent	Not supported
H3: Congruence mediates ad strategy-attributions relationship	Not supported
H4: External blame leads to altruistic attributions	Supported
H5: Internal blame leads to profit motives for healthy lifestyle, altruistic motives for elimination	Not supported
H6: High involvement related to congruence	Supported
H7: High skepticism related to profit attributions	Supported
H8: Parental concern associated with altruistic motives	Not supported
H9: Altruistic motives generate greater credibility perceptions	Supported
H10: Credibility mediates relationship between attributions and attitude to company	Supported
H11: Altruistic motives lead to greater credibility, profit motives lead to less credibility	Supported
H12: Elimination strategy leads to stronger credibility perceptions than healthy lifestyles	Not supported
H13: Elimination strategy leads to more positive attitude to company	Supported

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

When this research was conceived, public attention to increasing rates of childhood obesity in the U.S. was expanding, and the lens began to focus on the role of food marketers. While those companies had been subjected to numerous bouts of criticism through the years, ranging from outrage over the contribution of sugared foods to dental problems to marketers' role in provoking eating disorders (Livingstone and Helsper 2006), the volume of the debate seemed to have increased. Public hearings sponsored by the Federal Trade Commission and Department of Health and Human Services (Federal Trade Commission and Department of Health & Human Services 2006) followed the publication of an extensive analysis of the issue (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies 2006). Marketers, individually and jointly, have publicly addressed concerns in news releases, with product modifications, and in revisions to their marketing approaches; at the same time policy makers and politicians have continued to call for action (Better Business Bureau 2006; Eggerton 2007; Kamp 2007; Martin 2007; Martin 2006; Teinowitz 2007a; United States Department of Health & Human Services 2007). In April 2007, Congressman Edward Markey, chair of the House Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet, in a letter to the Federal Communications Commission, observed "While the growing problem of childhood obesity cannot be attributed solely to advertising, and parents have an undeniable responsibility to steer their children toward healthy choices, numerous experts in the fields of pediatrics and public health have identified advertising – and television advertising, in particular – as one of the most pernicious factors driving this alarming trend" (Markey 2007b).

As the pace of the debate and associated action has quickened, the need for research to support decision-making has also hastened. In this study, a key stakeholder group in the childhood obesity debate, parents of children aged twelve and younger, was studied. Parents' responses to advertising strategies were explored using a model developed to explain consumer response to cause marketing. There, congruence between company and cause generated greater consumer perceptions of altruistic company motives, which in turn led to enhanced perceptions of company credibility and more positive attitudes toward the company (Rifon et al. 2004). In this study, the expected congruence was not found. It is not clear if the problem was with the stimulus, or the construct itself. It is possible that congruence is not an important variable influencing parental response to food advertising. It may be more likely that whether a strategy is viewed as a good "fit" with a company is more complex than conceived here.

The results indicate that the company's pre-existing reputation for healthy versus unhealthy food is a key indicator of how parents expect the company to operate. If the company is already perceived as offering healthy products, either strategy fits. If it is not, then neither changing to healthy lifestyle messages nor eliminating ads to children is viewed as a good fit. In this study, congruence was conceived as representing the expectancy and relevancy of a company's planned actions grounded in the company's pre-existing schema as offering healthy or unhealthy foods. The results indicate that consumers instead base their expectations on their attitude toward the company, not on the fit between the company and its planned actions. In fact, they seemed to define that fit solely by the company's product offerings. If the company was known for nutritious foods, then either strategy change was believed to be congruent. If the company was

known instead for unhealthy foods, then neither strategy was seen as a good fit. But in either case, eliminating advertising to children was preferred over changing to healthy lifestyle messages.

Building on the Rifon et al. model (2004), this research introduced individual characteristics as influencing motive attributions. Skepticism toward food advertising was found to play a role in attributions, but its role is mediated by parental concerns with food advertising, at least regarding profit motive attributions. Parental concern, a situational variable gauging concerns with both quantity and quality of advertising targeting children, was related to both profit and avoidance motive attributions. Where skepticism focuses predominantly on the believability of advertising claims, parental concern encompasses some skepticism-related ideas along with concerns about both the amount of food advertising targeting children and its effects on families and children. The more concerned parents are about food advertising to children, the more likely they are to attribute avoidance or profit motives to food marketers. Skepticism did influence overall attitude toward the company, being significantly related to posttest attitudes, but its effects were mediated by attributions. Skepticism also influenced source credibility, even after including motive attributions as covariates. Further examination of these two constructs would provide additional insight into how consumers answer their “why” questions regarding marketers’ intents.

Originally, two broad categories of motive attributions, internal or altruistic and external or profit, were expected to influence parents’ responses to food advertising strategies. The mediating role of motives was confirmed in this research, along with the introduction of a third motive category, avoidance. In fact, the avoidance motive

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accounted for more of the variance than the external profit motive attribution. Like profit, avoidance is externally driven, with parents inferring that companies are changing to pacify parents like themselves or to avoid negative future consequences such as government intervention. Consumers understand that companies not only exist to make profits, but also must function in a sometimes-contentious environment where stakeholders' needs can be in conflict. The conclusion that decisions are made with an eye to future negative results is likely, and, at least for the parents in this study, played a prominent role.

This research has implications for marketing practitioners as well. Even as companies modify their practices to meet today's concerns, it is likely that other issues will arise in the future. Further, not all companies have announced or enacted plans to alter their practices when children are a target market. The findings here, that eliminating advertising to children leads to more positive outcomes than changing message strategies, can provide support for marketers considering such action. The positive outcomes in terms of credibility and attitude that emanate from either elimination or even a change in message offer encouragement for food marketers who have not yet acted. Balancing shareholder pressure for profit and earnings growth with public pressure for accountability and responsibility, marketers must decide whether and how to act. Here, parents responded positively to either change, offering encouragement to act now rather than wait.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

As the food wars continue to rage, policy makers and advertisers alike seek solutions. Food marketers and their advocates continue to emphasize their fiduciary responsibilities and First Amendment rights, while critics emphasize the negative effects of advertising to vulnerable children. Given the unlikelihood of resolution, a new approach is needed.

Even under the umbrella of the industry's self-regulation program announced in 2006 (Better Business Bureau 2006), companies have wide latitude to determine their advertising strategies. The guidelines allow companies to choose their own strategies including their own categorizations of nutritious vs. non-nutritious foods, to make their own decisions about whether to target children at all, and to make their own determinations about content of healthy lifestyle messages. The looming possibility of regulation may encourage some food marketers to self-regulate; others may opt to continue aggressive lobbying against regulation. No empirical evidence exists to aid them in choosing the best approach. They can take guidance from studies of environmental advertising and cause related marketing, but the concepts have not been applied to food advertising or more specifically, to advertising directed to children. Can companies refute a link between advertising and obesity without losing credibility or market share? Or will those companies that continue advertising to children face the fate of tobacco companies, with a combination of consumer skepticism and public policy forcing change upon them? If change is necessary, which message appeal will be most effective, one that involves parents by announcing that the advertiser will no longer target children, or one that shifts

the message from selling nutritionally poor products to one that promotes healthy eating and physical activity? The results of this study will help answer some of these questions, and provide guidance for policy makers and advertisers alike.

Limitations

While the studies described here used real brands as stimuli and “real people” as subjects, the surveys were not random samples of the adult population of the United States. Participants in Study 2 were faculty and staff of Michigan State University, a more highly educated group than the general population. Participants in the Main Study were randomly sampled from the virtual panel operated by the University of Texas-Austin, but the panel itself is not random. Further, while a random sample of the panel was invited to participate, only six percent of those invited actually participated. It is possible that the respondents were more involved with the issue than non-respondents. Future research with a more representative adult sample would be desirable.

Another limitation of the current research relates to its timing. Between the time the study was conceived and the main study was launched, there was substantial publicity about the issues involved in food marketing to children. CARU released revised guidelines; several companies announced revisions in their marketing strategies regarding children, public hearings were held, and studies were published. Parents responding to the survey could have been influenced by media coverage of the issue.

Several methodological limitations could have influenced these results as well. The stimuli were news stories announcing a company’s planned strategy change, but no actual advertising stimuli were presented. While external validity was enhanced by the use of actual, rather than fictitious, companies, utilizing advertisements and other

promotional materials rather than a simple statement of the company's intentions could further enhance it. In addition, the dependent variables were source credibility and attitude toward the company; purchase intentions and actual purchasing behavior were not explored. As noted previously, the congruence construct did not function as expected. It is not clear if the problem was in the development of the stimulus materials or in the application of congruence to food advertising to children.

Future Research

The concepts reviewed here are applicable to both the specific domain of food marketing to children and the more general category of corporate social responsibility. Future research in both directions can build on the foundation established here.

The results of this research raise further questions regarding several of the concepts. For example, the influence of skepticism toward advertising in general, and food advertising specifically, could be further explored. Further, attributions of blame (internal vs. external) had differing effects, warranting further examination.

This research looked specifically at fast food brands. Would parents respond similarly to other categories, including other foods such as packaged goods, or other categories frequently promoted to children, such as toys? Future research could replicate this study in different product categories. Also, additional studies that address the limitations noted above would be of value, i.e. a national random sample of parents and promotional materials as stimuli. In addition, this research looked at fast food marketing in isolation. Do parents respond differently depending on the available choices? Would their reactions to strategies intended to present companies as socially responsible differ if other options were available? How do demographic factors, including income and

geographic location, affect the results? It seems likely, as recently studied by Grier et al. (2007), that access to both fast food and alternatives would influence parents' choices.

Much as the studies described here replicated and extended prior research, future studies could build on this theoretical foundation. Applying the model to other domains of corporate social responsibility would provide additional support for its utility. While past research focused on sponsorships and cause related marketing, the concepts could similarly be explored with respect to green marketing, corporate philanthropy, social marketing, corporate investment policies, employee volunteerism, or other activities practiced today or in the future. The avoidance attribution is fertile ground for future research, as it has not been examined in the CSR literature but emerged here as contributing to perceptions of social responsibility and influencing consumers' attitudes about corporate reputations.

Conclusion

This research has both practical and theoretical implications. In this study, parents respond more positively to elimination of advertisements targeting children than to healthy lifestyles messages, regardless of other factors. This provides support for food marketers to adopt such a strategy despite its apparent inconsistency with accepted marketing dictums, and calls for further regulation may in fact be quieted. However, it could be argued that the addition of healthy lifestyle messages to food advertising targeted to children is sustainable and more appealing to the companies. Building on Calfee's observations about the ability of the private sector to communicate health benefits more effectively than government (Calfee 1988), such advertising might, in fact, provide a broader public service message and contribute to solving, rather than

compounding, the childhood obesity problem. In this study, the stimulus company representing a food marketer known for non-nutritious offerings received positive credibility and attitude ratings for just such a strategy, indicating that this may, perhaps, offer a happy medium for both parents and food marketers.

Further, the findings build on the scholarly foundation for understanding the effects of corporate socially responsible marketing activities on consumers, supplementing studies that have typically focused on cause related marketing, corporate philanthropy, and environmental responsibility (Ellen et al. 2006). This research introduces a new domain, advertising to children, to the CSR literature.

The results of this study support the role of attributions for the creation of positive corporate reputational effects when making a strategic decision that may be viewed for its socially responsible implications. This not only supports the validity of the attribution model (Rifon et al. 2004), but also its utility in other domains. The explication of three motive attributions further extends the model with the introduction of avoidance as a motive parents attribute to marketers. This avoidance motive should be of particular interest to policy makers, reflecting a company's desire to avoid public pressure and regulation.

As parents, educators, policy makers, and food marketers continue to struggle with finding optimal solutions to children's dietary challenges, research can provide guidance. Parents are important stakeholders when it comes to the regulation of advertising targeted to children. Understanding their views on this issue, and incorporating them in policy discussions and marketing decisions, adds a critical

dimension. Further, understanding their views on this issue may offer insights to advertising regulation in other domains.

APPENDIX A

Hypotheses

H1: Companies that eliminate food advertising targeting children will generate stronger consumer attributions of internal (altruistic) motives and weaker attributions of external motives than will companies that target children with food advertising, including healthy lifestyle messages.

H2: The elimination of food advertising to children will be viewed as more congruent with companies viewed as having nutritious offerings than with companies viewed as offering non-nutritious products.

H3: Congruence will mediate the relationship between advertising strategy and motive attributions.

H4: Consumers who attribute blame externally will be more likely to attribute altruistic motives to the company than will consumers who attribute blame internally.

H5: Consumers who attribute blame internally will be more likely to attribute profit motives to a company that uses healthy lifestyle messages in advertising to children, and altruistic motives to a company that eliminates advertising to children.

H6: Consumers with high levels of involvement with nutrition will be less likely to perceive congruence between company schema and planned behavior than will consumers with low involvement.

H7: Consumers with high skepticism about advertising will be more likely to attribute external profit motives than will consumers with low skepticism about advertising.

H8: Consumers with high levels of parental concern about food advertising to children will be less likely to attribute altruistic motives for companies that change advertising strategies to children than will parents with low levels of concern about food advertising.

H9: Attributions of altruistic company motives will generate stronger consumer perceptions of company credibility than will attributions of external motives.

H10: Consumer perceptions of company credibility will mediate the relationship between attributions of the sponsor's motive and consumer attitude toward the company.

H11: Attributions of altruistic sponsor motives will lead to greater perceptions of credibility, which will generate positive attitude toward the company, while attributions of profit motives will lead to perceptions of less credibility, which will have a negative effect on attitude toward the company.

H12: Elimination of food advertising targeted to children will yield stronger perceptions of source credibility than a change to a healthy lifestyle strategy.

H13: Elimination of food advertising targeted to children will yield more positive attitudes toward the company than a change to a healthy lifestyle strategy.

APPENDIX B

STIMULUS MATERIALS

The following news stories were used as stimulus materials. In study 2, all nine scenarios were used. In study 3, #2, #5, and #8 were eliminated.

1. High congruence between schema and company behavior: non-nutritious, eliminate advertising

New York, June 15 - McDonald's, a fast food company that is popular with families, announced a new advertising strategy. Known for its French fries, hamburgers, and milk shakes, the company recently engaged a new advertising agency. The new agency has been concentrating on McDonald's children's advertising, and will unveil their first campaign next month.

A cornerstone of the newly announced program is McDonald's plan to eliminate commercials on television programs intended for children. They will continue to advertise a variety of products to adults, and will continue to encourage adults to bring their families to McDonald's restaurants. In announcing this program, the company stated that it is part of their program to help families encourage nutritious eating and exercise to improve the diets of America's youth and battle childhood obesity.

2. High congruence between schema and company behavior: non-nutritious, eliminate advertising

New York, June 15 – Burger King, a fast food company that is popular with families, announced a new advertising strategy. Known for its French fries, hamburgers, and milk shakes, the company recently engaged a new advertising agency. The new agency has been concentrating on Burger King's children's advertising, and will unveil their first campaign next month.

A cornerstone of the newly announced program is Burger King's plan to eliminate commercials on television programs intended for children. They will continue to advertise a variety of products to adults, and will continue to encourage adults to bring their families to Burger King restaurants. In announcing this program, the company stated that it is part of their program to help families encourage nutritious eating and exercise to improve the diets of America's youth and battle childhood obesity.

3. High congruence: nutritious, healthy lifestyles message

New York, June 15 - Subway, a fast food company that is popular with families, announced a new advertising strategy. Known for its fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grain breads, and low carbohydrate options, the company recently engaged a new

advertising agency. The new agency has been concentrating on Subway's children's advertising, and will unveil their first campaign next month.

A cornerstone of the newly announced program is Subway's plan to introduce commercials on children's television programs that emphasize exercise and nutritious eating. They will continue to advertise a variety of products to adults, and will continue to encourage adults to bring their families to Subway restaurants. In announcing this program, the company stated that it is part of their program to help families encourage nutritious eating and exercise to improve the diets of America's youth and battle childhood obesity.

4. High incongruence: non-nutritious, healthy lifestyles message

New York, June 15 - McDonald's, a fast food company that is popular with families, announced a new advertising strategy. Known for its French fries, hamburgers, and milk shakes, the company recently engaged a new advertising agency. The new agency has been concentrating on McDonald's children's advertising, and will unveil their first campaign next month.

A cornerstone of the newly announced program is McDonald's plan to introduce commercials on children's television programs that emphasize exercise and nutritious eating. They will continue to advertise a variety of products to adults, and will continue to encourage adults to bring their families to McDonald's restaurants. In announcing this program, the company stated that it is part of their program to help families encourage nutritious eating and exercise to improve the diets of America's youth and battle childhood obesity.

5. High incongruence: non-nutritious, healthy lifestyles message

New York, June 15 – Burger King, a fast food company that is popular with families, announced a new advertising strategy. Known for its French fries, hamburgers, and milk shakes, the company recently engaged a new advertising agency. The new agency has been concentrating on Burger King's children's advertising, and will unveil their first campaign next month.

A cornerstone of the newly announced program is Burger King's plan to introduce commercials on children's television programs that emphasize exercise and nutritious eating. They will continue to advertise a variety of products to adults, and will continue to encourage adults to bring their families to Burger King restaurants. In announcing this program, the company stated that it is part of their program to help families encourage nutritious eating and exercise to improve the diets of America's youth and battle childhood obesity.

6. Moderate incongruence: Nutritious, eliminate advertising

New York, June 15 - Subway, a fast food company that is popular with families, announced a new advertising strategy. Known for its fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grain breads, and low carbohydrate options, the company recently engaged a new advertising agency. The new agency has been concentrating on Subway's children's advertising, and will unveil their first campaign next month.

A cornerstone of the newly announced program is Subway's plan to eliminate commercials on television programs intended for children. They will continue to advertise a variety of products to adults, and will continue to encourage adults to bring their families to Subway restaurants. In announcing this program, the company stated that it is part of their program to help families encourage nutritious eating and exercise to improve the diets of America's youth and battle childhood obesity.

7. Control group: Non-nutritious, no change in children's advertising

New York, June 15 – McDonald's, a fast food company that is popular with families, announced a new advertising strategy. Known for its French fries, hamburgers, and milk shakes, the company recently engaged a new advertising agency. The new agency has been concentrating on McDonald's children's advertising, and will unveil their first campaign next month.

A cornerstone of the newly announced campaign is McDonald's plan to develop new commercials to run on television programs intended for children, promoting a variety of products. They will also continue to advertise a variety of products to adults, and will continue to encourage adults to bring their families to McDonald's restaurants.

8. Control group: Non-nutritious, no change in children's advertising

New York, June 15 – Burger King, a fast food company that is popular with families, announced a new advertising strategy. Known for its French fries, hamburgers, and milk shakes, the company recently engaged a new advertising agency. The new agency has been concentrating on Burger King's children's advertising, and will unveil their first campaign next month.

A cornerstone of the newly announced campaign is Burger King's plan to develop new commercials to run on television programs intended for children, promoting a variety of products. They will also continue to advertise a variety of products to adults, and will continue to encourage adults to bring their families to Burger King restaurants.

9. Control group: Nutritious, no change in children's advertising

New York, June 15 – Subway, a fast food company that is popular with families, announced a new advertising strategy. Known for its French fries, hamburgers, and milk shakes, the company recently engaged a new advertising agency. The new agency has been concentrating on Subway's children's advertising, and will unveil their first campaign next month.

A cornerstone of the newly announced campaign is Subway's plan to develop new commercials to run on television programs intended for children, promoting a variety of products. They will also continue to advertise a variety of products to, and will continue to encourage adults to bring their families to Subway restaurants.

APPENDIX C

INSTRUMENTS

I. Study 1

FOOD MARKETING

I. We would like to know how you perceive some food companies. Below you will see a set of word pairs. For each of the companies, please mark closest to the word which best reflects your feelings about the company. For example, if you think that McDonald's matters to you, you might respond like this:

Matters to me X _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ Doesn't matter

A. McDonald's

Familiar to me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Unfamiliar to me
Nutritious food	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Non-nutritious food
Good	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Bad
Unpleasant	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Pleasant
Favorable	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Unfavorable
Unhealthy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Healthy

B. Burger King

Familiar to me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Unfamiliar to me
Nutritious food	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Non-nutritious food
Good	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Bad
Unpleasant	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Pleasant
Favorable	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Unfavorable
Unhealthy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Healthy

C. Taco Bell

Familiar to me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Unfamiliar to me
Nutritious food	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Non-nutritious food
Good	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Bad
Unpleasant	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Pleasant
Favorable	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Unfavorable
Unhealthy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Healthy

D. Subway

Familiar to me								Unfamiliar to me
Nutritious food								Non-nutritious food
Good								Bad
Unpleasant								Pleasant
Favorable								Unfavorable
Unhealthy								Healthy

E. KFC

Familiar to me								Unfamiliar to me
Nutritious food								Non-nutritious food
Good								Bad
Unpleasant								Pleasant
Favorable								Unfavorable
Unhealthy								Healthy

F. Wendy's

Familiar to me								Unfamiliar to me
Nutritious food								Non-nutritious food
Good								Bad
Unpleasant								Pleasant
Favorable								Unfavorable
Unhealthy								Healthy

II. Please answer the following questions by circling the correct answer or filling in the blank.

1. Are you...(please circle)

Male Female

2. What is your current academic status?

Freshman
Sophomore
Junior
Senior
Graduate Student
Other

3. In what year were you born? 19____

This is the end of the survey. Thank you for your participation.

II. Study 2



Food Marketing and Children

We're conducting a study to learn more about how parents feel about food marketing and children. We are asking you, and other parents like you, to help us with this research.

We would like the adult who is responsible for most of the family's food shopping to read and respond to the attached questions, which should take about 15 minutes to complete. There are no right or wrong answers; we are interested in your opinions.

Your answers will be kept completely confidential.

Thank you for your participation.



First, we have a few questions about how you perceive some companies. Below you will see a set of word pairs. For each of the companies, please mark closest to the word which best reflects your feelings about the company. For example, if the question is about Mattel and you think that Mattel is familiar to you, you would choose (1) Familiar.

A. Taco Bell									
Familiar	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unfamiliar	
Good	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Bad	
Unpleasant	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Pleasant	
Favorable	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unfavorable	
B. Wendy's									
Familiar	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unfamiliar	
Good	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Bad	
Unpleasant	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Pleasant	
Favorable	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unfavorable	
C. McDonald's									
Familiar	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unfamiliar	
Good	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Bad	
Unpleasant	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Pleasant	
Favorable	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unfavorable	
D. KFC									
Familiar	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unfamiliar	
Good	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Bad	
Unpleasant	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Pleasant	
Favorable	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unfavorable	
E. Subway									
Familiar	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unfamiliar	
Good	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Bad	
Unpleasant	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Pleasant	
Favorable	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unfavorable	
F. Burger King									
Familiar	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unfamiliar	
Good	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Bad	
Unpleasant	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Pleasant	
Favorable	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unfavorable	

In the last month, how many times have you visited each of the following companies?

Subway	0	1 – 3	4 – 6	7 – 9	10 or more
Burger King	0	1 – 3	4 – 6	7 – 9	10 or more
Taco Bell	0	1 – 3	4 – 6	7 – 9	10 or more
KFC	0	1 – 3	4 – 6	7 – 9	10 or more
McDonald's	0	1 – 3	4 – 6	7 – 9	10 or more
Wendy's	0	1 – 3	4 – 6	7 – 9	10 or more

Online Activities

Next, we have some questions about what you do online. Please tell us how often you do each of the activities when you are online. If you do something every time you access the Internet, select the number 5. If you never take part in the activity, choose the number 1.

	Never				Always
E-mail	1	2	3	4	5
Read or watch news	1	2	3	4	5
Check weather reports or forecasts	1	2	3	4	5
Read sports reports	1	2	3	4	5
Online shopping (purchase)	1	2	3	4	5
Health-related search	1	2	3	4	5
Watch TV programs	1	2	3	4	5
Listen to radio programs	1	2	3	4	5
Online banking or financial transactions	1	2	3	4	5
Chat room	1	2	3	4	5
Instant message	1	2	3	4	5
Play games	1	2	3	4	5

Now, we would like you to read the following short news story. You will be asked a few questions about your reaction to it after you finish.

[random presentation of one of the nine stimulus stories]

II. Next, we have a few questions about your reaction to the story you just read. Please select the number that best indicates your agreement or disagreement with each statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree somewhat	Neither agree or disagree	Agree somewhat	Strongly Agree
I believe that the company offers mostly nutritious products.	1	2	3	4	5
For the most part, the company's products are not part of a nutritious diet.	1	2	3	4	5
The company has a reputation for having healthy product offerings.	1	2	3	4	5
This company is well known for its junk food.	1	2	3	4	5
The new advertising plans make sense for a company like this.	1	2	3	4	5
The new advertising plans are consistent with what I would expect from a company like this.	1	2	3	4	5
I think there is a better strategy for a company like this to use.	1	2	3	4	5
I am surprised that the company is doing this.	1	2	3	4	5
I agree with the company's advertising strategy	1	2	3	4	5
I don't have any problems with the company's advertising strategy.	1	2	3	4	5
More companies should do something like this company's advertising strategy.	1	2	3	4	5
The company's advertising strategy is a bad idea.	1	2	3	4	5
I reject the company's advertising strategy.	1	2	3	4	5
I approve of the company's advertising strategy.	1	2	3	4	5
This company's strategy will help my child.	1	2	3	4	5
The company's new advertising will not make any difference in childhood obesity.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree somewhat	Neither agree or disagree	Agree somewhat	Strongly agree
The company's new strategy will reduce the incidence of childhood obesity.	1	2	3	4	5
The company is doing this because they care about children and childhood obesity.	1	2	3	4	5
The company is doing this to persuade me to buy their products.	1	2	3	4	5
The company is doing this because it will increase their profits.	1	2	3	4	5
The company is doing this to create a positive corporate image.	1	2	3	4	5
The company is doing this because it is the ethical thing to do.	1	2	3	4	5
The company does not have a genuine concern for the welfare of children.	1	2	3	4	5
The company really cares about getting nutrition information to their customers.	1	2	3	4	5
Ultimately, the company benefits by this action.	1	2	3	4	5
The company is changing to this strategy because customers like it.	1	2	3	4	5
The company is changing their advertising because other companies are using similar strategies.	1	2	3	4	5
The company is changing their advertising to avoid government regulation.	1	2	3	4	5

Based on what you just read, how do you feel about the company in the story? Please us select the word closest to how you feel for each of the next three questions.

Good	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Bad
Unpleasant	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Pleasant
Favorable	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unfavorable

Now, we would like your opinions about the current advertising by the company you just read about. Please answer these questions based on your opinions about what you have seen, heard, or read previously, NOT based on what you read in the story today. Tell us how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the company's advertising.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree somewhat	Neither agree or disagree	Agree somewhat	Strongly agree
The company advertises to children.	1	2	3	4	5
The company promotes a variety of food products in its advertising.	1	2	3	4	5
Most of the advertised products are nutritious.	1	2	3	4	5
Recent advertising for this company has promoted healthy lifestyles.	1	2	3	4	5
The advertisements for this company feature non-nutritious foods.	1	2	3	4	5
In its advertising to children, the company emphasizes healthy lifestyle choices.	1	2	3	4	5

Please answer the following questions, providing general information about yourself and your family, by circling the correct answer or filling in the blank.

What best describes your marital status?

Married
Single, Living with Significant Other
Single
Divorced
Widowed

What is your sex? Male Female

In what year were you born? _____

What was the highest level of education that you completed?

Less than high school graduate
High school graduate
Some college
Junior college or technical degree
Bachelors (college) degree
Some graduate school
Graduate degree

What is your family's total household income, before taxes?

Under \$20,000
\$20,000 to \$34,999
\$35,000 to \$49,999
\$50,000 to \$74,999
\$75,000 to \$99,999
\$100,000 or more

This is the end of the survey. Thank you for your participation.

III. Main Study Instrument



Food Marketing and Children

We're conducting a study to learn more about what parents think about food marketing and children. We are asking you, and other parents like you, to help us with this research.

If you have a child or children aged twelve and younger living with you, and you are responsible for most of your family's food shopping, please read and respond to the attached questions. The survey should take about 30 minutes to complete. There are no right or wrong answers; we are interested in your opinions.

Your answers will be kept completely confidential.

Thank you for your participation.



Advertising

First, we have some questions about advertising. For each of the following statements, please select the number that best indicates how much you agree or disagree. The higher the number, the more you agree with the statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree Somewhat	Strongly Agree
We can depend on getting the truth in most advertising.	1	2	3	4	5
Advertising's aim is to inform the consumer.	1	2	3	4	5
I believe advertising is informative.	1	2	3	4	5
Advertising is generally truthful.	1	2	3	4	5
Advertising is a reliable source of information about the quality and performance of products.	1	2	3	4	5
Advertising is truth well told.	1	2	3	4	5
In general, advertising presents a true picture of the product being advertised.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel I've been accurately informed after viewing most advertisements.	1	2	3	4	5
Most advertising provides consumers with essential information.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree Somewhat	Strongly Agree
Most claims made in food advertising are true.	1	2	3	4	5
Nutritional claims in food advertising are exaggerated.	1	2	3	4	5
Consumers would be better off if nutritional claims in advertising were eliminated.	1	2	3	4	5
Most claims in food advertising are intended to mislead rather than to inform consumers.	1	2	3	4	5
I do not believe most claims made on in food advertising.	1	2	3	4	5
There are too many food ads.	1	2	3	4	5
Food ads employ tricks and gimmicks to get children to buy.	1	2	3	4	5
Food ads make false nutritional claims.	1	2	3	4	5
There is too much sugar in advertised foods.	1	2	3	4	5
Food ads teach children bad eating habits.	1	2	3	4	5
Food ads lead to family conflict.	1	2	3	4	5

Nutrition

How do you perceive nutrition? Please judge how you feel about the topic of nutrition against these descriptive items. Then mark closest to the word that represents your reaction to each pair. Mark each item below as a separate and independent judgment. Do not worry or puzzle over individual items. It is your first impression, the immediate feelings about the items, which we want. On the other hand, please do not be careless, because we want your true impressions.

To me, nutrition is:

Important	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unimportant
Boring	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Interesting
Relevant	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Irrelevant
Exciting	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unexciting
Means Nothing	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Means a lot to me
Appealing	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unappealing
Fascinating	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Mundane
Worthless	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Valuable
Involving	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Uninvolving
Not needed	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Needed

Please select the number that best represents your answer to each of the following questions. The larger the number, the more you agree with the statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree Somewhat	Strongly Agree
I talk to my friends about nutrition.	1	2	3	4	5
I read food labels before I buy a product for the first time.	1	2	3	4	5
When I eat out, I do not pay attention to nutritional information.	1	2	3	4	5
I talk to my children about food and nutrition.	1	2	3	4	5
I know pretty much about nutrition.	1	2	3	4	5
I do not feel very knowledgeable about nutrition.	1	2	3	4	5

Among my circle of friends, I'm one of the "experts" on nutrition.	1	2	3	4	5
Compared to most other people, I know less about nutrition.	1	2	3	4	5
When it comes to nutrition, I really don't know a whole lot.	1	2	3	4	5

Food Companies

We would like to know how you perceive some food companies. Below you will see a set of word pairs. For each of the companies, please mark closest to the word which best reflects your feelings about the company.

A. Taco Bell									
Familiar	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unfamiliar	
Good	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Bad	
Unpleasant	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Pleasant	
Favorable	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unfavorable	
B. Wendy's									
Familiar	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unfamiliar	
Good	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Bad	
Unpleasant	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Pleasant	
Favorable	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unfavorable	
C. McDonald's									
Familiar	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unfamiliar	
Good	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Bad	
Unpleasant	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Pleasant	
Favorable	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unfavorable	
D. KFC									
Familiar	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unfamiliar	
Good	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Bad	
Unpleasant	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Pleasant	
Favorable	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unfavorable	
E. Subway									
Familiar	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unfamiliar	
Good	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Bad	
Unpleasant	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Pleasant	
Favorable	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unfavorable	
F. Burger King									
Familiar	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unfamiliar	
Good	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Bad	
Unpleasant	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Pleasant	
Favorable	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unfavorable	

In the last month, how many times have you visited each of the following companies?

Subway	0	1 – 3	4 – 6	7 – 9	10 or more
Burger King	0	1 – 3	4 – 6	7 – 9	10 or more
Taco Bell	0	1 – 3	4 – 6	7 – 9	10 or more
KFC	0	1 – 3	4 – 6	7 – 9	10 or more
McDonald's	0	1 – 3	4 – 6	7 – 9	10 or more
Wendy's	0	1 – 3	4 – 6	7 – 9	10 or more

Online Activities

Next, we have some questions about what you do online. Please tell us how often you do each of the activities when you are online. If you do something every time you access the Internet, select the number 5. If you never take part in the activity, choose the number 1.

	Never				Always
E-mail	1	2	3	4	5
Read or watch news	1	2	3	4	5
Check weather reports or forecasts	1	2	3	4	5
Read sports reports	1	2	3	4	5
Online shopping (purchase)	1	2	3	4	5
Health-related search	1	2	3	4	5
Watch TV programs	1	2	3	4	5
Listen to radio programs	1	2	3	4	5
Online banking or financial transactions	1	2	3	4	5
Chat room	1	2	3	4	5
Instant message	1	2	3	4	5
Play games	1	2	3	4	5

Recent News [stimulus news story presented here. Subjects randomly assigned to one of the six conditions]

Now we would like you to please read the following short news story. You will be asked a few questions about your reaction to it after you finish.

[random presentation of one of the following 6 stories]

New York, August 15 - McDonald's, a fast food company that is popular with families, announced a new advertising strategy. Known for its French fries, hamburgers, and milk shakes, the company recently engaged a new advertising agency. The new agency has been concentrating on McDonald's children's advertising, and will unveil their first campaign next month.

A cornerstone of the newly announced campaign is McDonald's plan to introduce commercials on children's television programs that emphasize exercise and nutritious eating. They will continue to advertise a variety of products to adults, and will continue to encourage adults to bring their families to McDonald's restaurants. In announcing this plan, the company stated that it is part of their program to help families encourage nutritious eating and exercise to improve the diets of America's youth and battle childhood obesity.

OR

New York, August 15 - McDonald's, a fast food company that is popular with families, announced a new advertising strategy. Known for its French fries, hamburgers, and milk shakes, the company recently engaged a new advertising agency. The new agency has been concentrating on McDonald's children's advertising, and will unveil their first campaign next month.

A cornerstone of the newly announced campaign is McDonald's plan to eliminate commercials for non-nutritious food products on television programs intended for children. They will continue to advertise a variety of products to adults, and will continue to encourage adults to bring their families to McDonald's restaurants. In announcing this plan, the company stated that it is part of their program to help families encourage nutritious eating and exercise to improve the diets of America's youth and battle childhood obesity.

OR

New York, August 15 – McDonald's, a fast food company that is popular with families, announced a new advertising strategy. Known for its French fries, hamburgers, and milk shakes, the company recently engaged a new advertising agency. The new agency has been concentrating on McDonald's children's advertising, and will unveil their first campaign next month.

A cornerstone of the newly announced campaign is McDonald's plan to develop new commercials to run on television programs intended for children, promoting a variety of

products. They will also continue to advertise a variety of products to adults, and will continue to encourage adults to bring their families to McDonald's restaurants.

OR

New York, August 15 - Subway, a fast food company that is popular with families, announced a new advertising strategy. Known for its fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grain breads, and low carbohydrate options, the company recently engaged a new advertising agency. The new agency has been concentrating on Subway's children's advertising, and will unveil their first campaign next month.

A cornerstone of the newly announced campaign is Subway's plan to introduce commercials on children's television programs that emphasize exercise and nutritious eating. They will continue to advertise a variety of products to adults, and will continue to encourage adults to bring their families to Subway restaurants. In announcing this plan, the company stated that it is part of their program to help families encourage nutritious eating and exercise to improve the diets of America's youth and battle childhood obesity.

OR

New York, August 15 - Subway, a fast food company that is popular with families, announced a new advertising strategy. Known for its fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grain breads, and low carbohydrate options, the company recently engaged a new advertising agency. The new agency has been concentrating on Subway's children's advertising, and will unveil their first campaign next month.

A cornerstone of the newly announced campaign is Subway's plan to eliminate commercials for non-nutritious food products on television programs intended for children. They will continue to advertise a variety of products to adults, and will continue to encourage adults to bring their families to Subway restaurants. In announcing this plan, the company stated that it is part of their plan to help families encourage nutritious eating and exercise to improve the diets of America's youth and battle childhood obesity.

OR

New York, August 15 – Subway, a fast food company that is popular with families, announced a new advertising strategy. Known for its French fries, hamburgers, and milk shakes, the company recently engaged a new advertising agency. The new agency has been concentrating on Subway's children's advertising, and will unveil their first campaign next month.

A cornerstone of the newly announced campaign is Subway's plan to develop new commercials to run on television programs intended for children, promoting a variety of products. They will also continue to advertise a variety of products to, and will continue to encourage adults to bring their families to Subway restaurants.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree somewhat	Neither agree or disagree	Agree Somewhat	Strongly Agree
I believe that the company offers mostly nutritious products.	1	2	3	4	5
For the most part, the company's products are not part of a nutritious diet.	1	2	3	4	5
The company has a reputation for having healthy product offerings.	1	2	3	4	5
This company is well known for its junk food.	1	2	3	4	5
The new advertising plans make sense for a company like this.	1	2	3	4	5
The new advertising plans are consistent with what I would expect from a company like this.	1	2	3	4	5
I think there is a better strategy for a company like this to use.	1	2	3	4	5
I am surprised that the company is doing this.	1	2	3	4	5
I would not expect a company like this to take this action.	1	2	3	4	5
The company's new advertising plans fit my expectations.	1	2	3	4	5
I agree with the company's advertising strategy	1	2	3	4	5
I don't have any problems with the company's advertising strategy.	1	2	3	4	5
More companies should do something like this company's advertising strategy.	1	2	3	4	5
The company's advertising strategy is a bad idea.	1	2	3	4	5
I reject the company's advertising strategy.	1	2	3	4	5
I approve of the company's advertising strategy.	1	2	3	4	5
This company's strategy will help my child.	1	2	3	4	5
The company's new advertising will not make any difference in childhood obesity.	1	2	3	4	5
The company's new strategy will reduce the incidence of childhood obesity.	1	2	3	4	5
The company is doing this because they care about children and childhood obesity.	1	2	3	4	5
The company is doing this to persuade me to buy their products.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree somewhat	Neither agree or disagree	Agree somewhat	Strongly Agree
The company is doing this because it will increase their profits.	1	2	3	4	5
The company is doing this to create a positive corporate image.	1	2	3	4	5
The company is doing this because it is the ethical thing to do.	1	2	3	4	5
The company does not have a genuine concern for the welfare of children.	1	2	3	4	5
The company really cares about getting nutrition information to their customers.	1	2	3	4	5
Ultimately, the company benefits by this action.	1	2	3	4	5
The company is changing to this strategy because customers like it.	1	2	3	4	5
The company is changing its advertising because other companies are using similar strategies.	1	2	3	4	5
The company is changing its advertising to avoid government regulation.	1	2	3	4	5
The company is changing its advertising to pacify parents who might not want their children to eat their food.	1	2	3	4	5
The company is changing advertising strategies because they think it will help improve their reputation.	1	2	3	4	5
The company is changing advertising strategies to demonstrate that they are good "corporate citizens."	1	2	3	4	5
The new advertising strategy demonstrates the company's commitment to helping its customers.	1	2	3	4	5
The company is afraid that laws will be passed limiting their ability to advertise unless they take actions like their new advertising plans.	1	2	3	4	5
The new advertising is intended to change the company's public image.	1	2	3	4	5

We have a few more questions about the company in the story you read. Please answer each of the following by selecting the number that best indicates your reaction. Higher numbers indicate greater blame or responsibility.

	None				Completely
How much do you blame the company for children's diet related problems?	1	2	3	4	5
How responsible is the company for children's diet-related problems?	1	2	3	4	5
How much blame do you place on parents like you for children's diet related problems?	1	2	3	4	5
How responsible are parents like you for children's diet related problems?	1	2	3	4	5

For each of the following statements, please tell us whether you agree or disagree by selecting the appropriate number. The higher the number, the more you agree.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree Somewhat	Strongly Agree
I think advertisers like this company are responsible for childhood obesity.	1	2	3	4	5
I think that parents are responsible for childhood obesity.	1	2	3	4	5

Based on what you just read, how do you feel about the company in the story? Please select the word closest to how you feel for each of the next three questions.

Good	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Bad
Unpleasant	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Pleasant
Favorable	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Unfavorable

Please tell us whether you agree or disagree with each of the statements about the company you just read about by selecting the appropriate number. The higher the number, the more you agree with the statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree Somewhat	Strongly Agree
The company has a great amount of experience.	1	2	3	4	5
The company is skilled at what they do.	1	2	3	4	5
The company has great expertise.	1	2	3	4	5
The company does not have much experience.	1	2	3	4	5
I trust the company.	1	2	3	4	5
The company makes truthful claims.	1	2	3	4	5
The company is honest.	1	2	3	4	5
I do not believe what the company tells me.	1	2	3	4	5
I have a good feeling about the company	1	2	3	4	5
I admire and respect the company.	1	2	3	4	5
I trust the company a great deal.	1	2	3	5	6

Now, we would like your opinions about the current advertising by the company you just read about. Please answer these questions based on your opinions about what you have seen, heard, or read previously, NOT based on what you read in the story today. Tell us how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the company's advertising.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree somewhat	Neither agree or disagree	Agree somewhat	Strongly agree
The company advertises to children.	1	2	3	4	5
The company promotes a variety of food products in its advertising.	1	2	3	4	5
Most of the advertised products are nutritious.	1	2	3	4	5
Recent advertising for this company has promoted healthy lifestyles.	1	2	3	4	5
The advertisements for this company feature non-nutritious foods.	1	2	3	4	5
In its advertising to children, the company emphasizes healthy lifestyle choices.	1	2	3	4	5

Some Questions About You

Listed below are some statements concerning personal attitudes and traits. Read each item and decide whether it describes you personally, then select True or False.

I am always willing to admit it when I make a mistake	True	False
I always try to practice what I preach	True	False
I never resent being asked to return a favor	True	False
I have never been annoyed when people expressed ideas very different from my own.	True	False
I have never deliberately said something that hurt someone's feelings	True	False
I like to gossip at times	True	False
There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone	True	False
I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget	True	False
At times I have really insisted on having things my own way	True	False
There have been occasions when I felt like smashing things	True	False

Please answer the following questions, providing information about yourself and your family, by selecting the correct answer or filling in the blank.

1. What best describes your marital status?

- Married
- Single, Living with Significant Other
- Single
- Divorced
- Widowed

2. What is your sex? Male Female

3. How many children age 12 and under live with you? _____

4. In what year were you born? _____

5. What was the highest level of education that you completed?

- Less than high school graduate
- High school graduate
- Some college
- Junior college or technical degree
- Bachelors (college) degree
- Some graduate school
- Graduate degree

6. What is your family's total household income, before taxes?

- Under \$20,000
- \$20,000 to \$34,999
- \$35,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$74,999
- \$75,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 or more

This is the end of the survey. Thank you for your participation.

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