

While there has been an increase in America's attention to personal health, as well as developments in research regarding the nutritional quality of food, concerns of obesity remain a problem today. In comparing studies from 1999 to 2000 and from 2017 to March 2020, US obesity prevalence increased from 30.5% to 41.9%. During the same time, the prevalence of severe obesity has increased from 4.7% to 9.2% (“Adult Obesity Facts”). This inexplicable situation is directly influenced by the common practice of misleading labeling in the nutrition industry. Many companies choose to advertise their products as “health-foods”, “organic”, or “nutritional” to increase sales because today’s consumers value health-oriented products that are good for them. But by falsely emphasizing the extent of these health benefits of food products without consumers realizing, food companies could negatively impact consumers’ long-term health.

An example of a falsely advertised food product is the popular hazelnut spread, Nutella. The official Nutella website promotes the product as a convenient, tasty, and balanced breakfast spread. Despite promoting the hazelnut and cocoa components of the spread, a standard Nutella jar is composed of approximately 58% sugar, 25% palm oil, and 8% hazelnuts. Accompanying Nutella visuals on their website and video advertisements also demonstrate more than the 2 tablespoon serving size used. As most consumers are visual learners or act by visual example, they are more likely to use more product than suggested and consume more added sugars than expected, contributing to people’s long-term health issues.

In sugary drink products by Coca-Cola/Minute Maid, Pepsi, V8, and many more, the sugar content often exceeds the recommended daily intake limit. For instance, Coca-Cola’s standard 12 oz drink contains about 39 grams of sugar, a higher consumption concentration than recommended by the American Heart Association who recommends consuming no more than 24 to 36 grams of sugar a day to reduce risk of obesity and heart disease (“Water, Juice, or Soda...”). Minute Maid, a juice brand under Coca-Cola, measures one serving of some fruit juices per 100mL/3.3oz even though the drink container measures 425mL/14.3oz. At first glance, the drink would appear to have regular sugar content for a fruit juice, but after drinking the standard bottle size with “about 4 servings per container,” consumers may not realize they absorbed four times more sugar than intended. This practice is immoral because it misleads customers causing them to be less healthy than they believe they are.

Another deceptive advertising technique used by food industries is through greenwashing and bluewashing. Generally, greenwashing advertising claims that a brand's products, policies and company mission are environmentally friendly, while bluewashing advertising claims that the brand adheres to ethical production practices. For instance, with the push to use more paper or biodegradable straws over plastic ones, Starbucks introduced strawless lids; Michael Kobori, Starbucks’ Chief Sustainability Officer, claimed that “recyclable, strawless lids for customers across the US and Canada is another step in our journey to reduce our environmental footprint” (Goodwin). The issue with these strawless lids is that they contain “more plastic than the old lid and straw combination,” in contrast to their original claims of environmentally friendly products (Spicer).

As representatives of the Fordham Consulting group, we are addressing our solution to the Chief Marketers at the leading health-focused food companies. We believe that through using more honest marketing strategies such as inbound marketing, companies will have greater product transparency and they will gain consumer trust and an increase in market share. Inbound marketing is a strategy that relies on creating content and products that provide value to consumers. Today’s consumers value nutritional products that improve mood, energy, and well-being. Companies that sell superficial nutrition products rely on the lack of consumer awareness and traditional means of marketing. As they shift towards more genuine communication, such companies will also create more genuine relationships with their customers. By creating more satisfied customers, companies can use word-of-mouth marketing to expand their customer base. In this way, not only will companies that provide more transparency and produce healthier products increase their market share, but they will also decrease their marketing expenses, as inbound marketing usually has a much higher ROI than traditional marketing.