

Pack it Up

Lesson Summary: This lesson will introduce students to the ways in which companies use packaging designs to attract youth. Students will learn about packaging and how the design, promotions, and product placement all make the product attractive to consumers. Students will compare similar food products based on packaging and on taste and assess which they would prefer to buy.

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Identify techniques manufacturers and advertisers use to sell food products.
- Determine that products may be similar, despite differences in packaging.
- Describe the effects of marketing and labeling on food choice.

Time Required:

30-35 minutes

Background Information:

The following background information is taken from the Teaching the Food System curriculum development by John Hopkins Center for Livable Future.

Food Marketing

All businesses from small-scale farms to multi-national food manufacturers, depend on marketing to promote their products and build relationships with consumers. Food marketing takes many forms, including advertising, raising brand awareness and paying stores for shelf space.

Direct Advertising

In the United States, food manufactures, restaurants, and stores spend roughly \$11 billion annually on direct advertising, including television, magazine, radio and internet ads.

Most food advertisements promote products that Americans already consume in excess, such as convenience foods, candy, snacks, and soft drinks. In contracts, food manufacturers spent only 2 percent (\$159 million) of their direct advertising budget to promote sales of fruits, vegetables, grains, and beans, while the USDA spent only \$300 million annuals on nutrition education.

Marketing to Children

Marketing campaigns are carefully tailored to appeal to specific groups. Children, in particular, make attractive customers. In 1997, American children spent close to \$8 billion of their own money on food and beverages. In addition, children influences (through asking or nagging) over \$100 billion of spending on foods and beverages by their parents. Most of the purchases were

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for carbonated beverages, candy and salty snacks. Food companies spend an estimated \$10 billion annually marketing to youth in America. Research has shown that children under the age of 8 years old do not understand that the purpose of commercials is to persuade people to buy the product.

Materials:

- Food packaging labels for students
- Brand awareness worksheets or computers/IPads to complete activity online
- Brand awareness answer key and/or laminated copy of brand logos
- Optional: Taste testing materials (Bring in two kinds of cereal, juice, or crackers. One that is a name brand and one that is an off-brand).
- Soufflé cups, plates, cups for taste testing

Procedures:

- 1) Ask students: What is marketing?
 - a) Marketing- the action or business of promoting and selling products or services, including market research and advertising.
 - i) Examples: Prizes in cereal boxes, using celebrities on boxes, logos, food packaging, etc.
- 2) Ask students: What is advertising?
 - a) Advertising- the activity or profession of producing advertisements for commercial products or services.
 - i) Examples: Commercials, Advertisements, Signs, Billboards, see others below.
- 3) Ask students: What are different forms of advertising that companies use to get you to buy their products?
 - a) Television commercials, signs, billboards, coupons, magazine advertisements, radio commercials, etc.
- 4) Explain to students that advertisements are just one way to get a customer's attention. Another way is through packaging and design.
 - a) Have students imagine a grocery store shelf with each product vying for their attention and wanting to be "purchased".
 - b) Have them imagine what they might do to make the customer choose them, and not the "product" next to them. Ask students: What would you do?
 - i) Students may mention to include attention-grabbing graphics and colors, recipes for sweet goodies, or 'gimmicks' such as premiums (free gifts inside), sweepstakes (contests to win great prizes) or kids clubs (making kids connect to the product). If not, ask them if any of these gimmicks would make them want to buy the item.

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- c) Ask students to consider the amount, or size, of a product in relationship to the package size: Have you ever noticed a small amount of potato chips in those nice big bags?
- d) Have students think about the placement of certain products in the grocery store. Who might the products on the lower shelf be aimed at rather than those on the top shelf?
- 5) In order to show the importance of packaging to students, explain how manufacturers want customers to be able to recognize their product when they see it on the grocery store shelf.
Brand Awareness Activity:
 - a) Use this website <http://quizible.com/quiz/famous-logo-quiz/3748> to test students' knowledge of brands OR:
 - b) Make copies of the Brand Awareness Activity and pass out to each student. Have students complete the worksheet on their own or in groups.
- 6) Go through and give students the correct answers. Show them the correct labels provided.
- 7) After the activity, ask students the following:
 - i) How much do you think marketing affects your food choices?
 - ii) Would the manufactures be pleased that you recognized their product logos?
- 8) In groups, let students examine a series of packages that depict two similar products. Ask them to consider how similar or different they are. What do they like and find attractive about each product? Which product would they choose? You could also lead the discussion with the following questions:
 - a) How is the product depicted? (Examples: a celebrity, a sports figure) Is it scattered among different characters? If there are kids on the package, what do they look like? How are they dressed? What are they doing? Is the picture of the actual product a small or large part of the package? What is the relative size of the product? Is it larger than the package?
 - b) How does the food product appear to look on the outside? Do you think that it looks like that on the inside?
 - c) If this was something that you had never tasted before, would the packaging make you want to try it?
 - d) Have the students discuss which package they prefer and why?
- 9) Taste testing activity- Bring in two examples of cereal, juice or crackers with one being a name brand and one being an off brand. Mask each kind of item by labeling the plates or cups A or B so the students do not know which item is which. Allow students to taste each product. **Ask students:**
 - a) Is it easy to tell each product apart?
 - b) Does one taste better than the other or do they taste the same?
 - c) Encourage students to think about the different marketing strategies used on the packages and judge which package is the better buy.

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10) Conclusion- Ask students: Has this lesson changed your perception on food packages and what food you want to eat? Will any of you choose to purchase and try a brand that is cheaper verse a name brand?

Assessment:

Brand awareness activity and taste testing activity (optional)

Supporting Materials:

Teaching the Food System, John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health - [http://www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/teaching-the-food-system/curriculum/pdf/Marketing and Labeling Lesson.pdf](http://www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/teaching-the-food-system/curriculum/pdf/Marketing_and_Labeling_Lesson.pdf)

References/Resources:

This lesson was adapted from Media Smarts, Packaging Tricks lesson: <http://mediasmarts.ca/lessonplan/packaging-tricks-lesson>