*Are they poisoning us?*

Nigel Muchena   
Auburn University in Montgomery  
Montgomery Alabama

[nmuchena@aum.edu Intro to Database systems 3700](mailto:nmuchena@aum.edu)

*Abstract*—This project aims to bring insight on ingredients being used in the processed foods industry that neglect human health and the agendas behind the use of these compounds, emphasis is on how these compounds affect the health of the consumer. I have compiled data to support this claim and articles as well, attached is the database I created, and the necessary code and tables implemented to support my claim.

# Introduction

In my research I have decided to take on an issue I find personal and given the opportunity to tackle this issue it is my pleasure to put it into perspective for you. In the last couple of decades there has been a rise in cancer cases and health concerns in the elderly such Alzheimer’s. It led me to think, with all the advancements man has made, you would think health issues are a thing of the past due to the vast development of the medical industry but it’s baffling to find out that human health was better then than now. In recent times many new chemical substances have been introduced into our food, detergents and more daily use items, as people after hearing FDA approved, we sit back and relax but my project is to bring into perspective what the FDA is approving for us to consume.

Literature Review

In this section I will be referencing and quoting studies made by other institutions and scholars to support my claim of our American diet or rather our mainstream food supply being tailored against the public health of consumers.

In looking at the state of the American diet and food supply, it becomes obvious that the mainstream system is structured in a way that conflicts with the health and well-being of humans. This section presents scholarly research and published works that are tailored to show how production, marketing, and regulation in the United States are contributing to a growing public health crisis.

Michael Moss (2013), in his investigative book *Salt Sugar Fat: How the Food Monopolies Addicted Us*, reveals in his book the coordinated efforts of major food corporations to design products that are not only palatable but addictive. These companies, according to Moss, rely heavily on optimizing levels of salt, sugar, and fat to induce cravings and maximize consumer dependency (Moss, 2013 salt sugar and fat). The reason behind these strategies is not to nourish but to increase sales, even if it means creating an obese society, heart disease weathered, and other chronic condition havocked. Moss stresses on the disconnect between corporate interests and public health priorities (Moss, 2013 salt sugar and fat)

Furthermore, Marion Nestle (2002) offers a comprehensive critique in *Food Politics;* Nestle explains how food companies possess a worrisome amount of power over government officials through lobbying and political contributions. As a result, public dietary norms often follow corporate interests more than scientific research. Consumers are deceived, and nutrition policies are often watered down to protect the money of processed food producers. This creates a systemic problem where the public is subtly poisoned (Nestle, 2002 food politics)

Brownell and Horgen (2004) in their text Food Fight introduce the term “toxic food environment” to convey how modern food availability, portion sizes, and marketing strategies influence consumer behavior. They persist that the issue is not just about individual willpower but about the environment constructed to promote overconsumption of calorie-dense, nutrient-poor foods. Their work links the rise in obesity and diet caused diseases to the orchestration made by food companies and policymakers who enable them.

This claim is reinforced by recent scientific findings. Monteiro (2019) have led critical research into the group of ultra-processed foods, which dominate the American food supply. In their publication in Public Health Nutrition, they explain how these products such as packaged snacks, sugary cereals, soft drinks, and ready-to-eat meals are not just deficient of essential nutrients but are intentionally engineered with additives, preservatives, and artificial flavorings to enhance storage life and taste including an addictive nature. (Monteiro, 2019 ultra-processed foods article) According to their research, these foods now constitute 60% or more of the total caloric intake in the United States and are linked to increased risks of obesity, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and cancer.!

All together the research makes it clear that this poisoning of the public is not a coincidence but systematic degradation of human health. The prioritization of profit and power over public policy, and the pandemic of nutrient, deficient, hyper palatable food items all constitute to a mainstream food supply that is polar to the health needs of consumers. This project aims to provide a strong foundation for arguing that public health is being undermined by a food industry that is more focused on economic gain than nutritional integrity.

##### References

* Moss, M. (2013). Salt Sugar Fat: How the Food Giants Hooked Us. Random House.
* Nestle, M. (2002). Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health. University of California Press.
* Brownell, K. D., & Horgen, K. B. (2004). Food Fight: The Inside Story of the Food Industry, America’s Obesity Crisis, and What We Can Do About It. McGraw-Hill.
* Monteiro, C. A., Cannon, G., Levy, R. B., Moubarac, J. C., Jaime, P., Martins, A. P. B., … & Louzada, M. L. (2019). Ultra-processed foods: what they are and how to identify them. Public Health Nutrition, 22(5), 936–941. doi:10.1017/S1368980018003762
* Science, Public Health Policy and the Law. (2024, September 17). Did big tobacco create the processed food industry? - science, public health policy and the law. https://publichealthpolicyjournal.com/did-big-tobacco-create-the-processed-food-industry/

Methodology

In this section I will use my data collected in my database queries from the database additives that I created for this project to reinforce my claim on how the food industry is tailored against the public health. I have compiled data to support this claim where I have summed up data of key ingredients used in food production that are hazardous to human health. This database contains a compiled list of common food additives used in the processed food industry with the descriptions of what these substances lead to.

We will start with carcinogens which are cancer causing chemical used in food productions such as in artificial flavors, food coloring and additives. In my documents you can see a query that focuses on those chemicals that are cancer causing but I will focus on the food colorings red #2 and 3 or 40. These are dyes used in food production and have been permitted by the FDA since 1956 though research shows carcinogenic properties it is used to color oranges in cases of them not looking ripe enough for sale. Then we have potassium bromate which is added to bread to increase volume but is yet linked to cancer. Even the standardized aluminum used to preserve food but is cancer causing. The list continues and its various components that are cancer causing that we use in our everyday life such as camauba wax, used in chewing gum and candy.

Though cancer is of prime concern, it is not the only disease that has been of result due to the chemicals used in food additives, heart issues and diabetes have also been of result. High fructose corn syrup is a very commonly used artificial sweetener in the food industry derived from GMO corn which has led to diabetes and heart problems. To put this into perspective, it seems to be priority of selling points over actual nutrition, food industries have taken a superficial route of production by prioritizing profit over health.

Artificial corn syrup has shown to have addictive qualities hence making the food it is being used in addictive, this product is commonly used in the food industry and the claim that our food is made to be addictive because with this being the case people will keep buying it and this warrants profits for the food industry. In my references there is an article by Joseph Mercola that conveys a strong argument on the tobacco industry created the processed food industry, in this text we see how the processed food industry has been made out to seek profit and how there is more focus on it being addictive and more palatable.

Conclusion

In conclusion as a population, we need to make it a habit to look at the ingredients section of what we buy and be more cautious of what we consume. The processed food industry has seen years of profit at the expense of human health; this project aims to bring awareness of this and put into perspective what is being approved as part of the human diet.