

Title:

Cartoon Marketing Turns Healthy

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572

Summary:

Food forums have raised many a discussion on the "difficulty" to get kids to eat fruits and vegetables. Some parents respond saying their kids have no problem eating fruits and vegetables and like them, while others do look for ways to help their kids get the nutrition they need. The question has been raised whether or not societal stigmas are to blame for this problem of unhealthy eating by kids. Perhaps kids are just meeting expectations, or trying to fit in, by not "liking..."

Keywords:

vegetables, advertising, marketing, cartoons, healthy,

Article Body:

Food forums have raised many a discussion on the "difficulty" to get kids to eat fruits and vegetables. Some parents respond saying their kids have no problem eating fruits and vegetables and like them, while others do look for ways to help their kids get the nutrition they need. The question has been raised whether or not societal stigmas are to blame for this problem of unhealthy eating by kids. Perhaps kids are just meeting expectations, or trying to fit in, by not "liking" fruits or vegetables. If a parent expects that a kid might prefer a cookie to an apple, and has one on hand, it's likely the kid may choose the cookie - because they are expected to. While man-made products such as cupcakes and cookies have been loaded with sugar may be appealing to kids, other parents suggest that the media is to blame for marketing such snack foods to kids more often than healthy choices.

Well, kid-friendly brands like Nickelodeon and Disney have been fighting back, trying to put their famous cartoon characters on healthier foods like fruits and vegetables instead. Nickelodeon, owned by Viacom, just announced they joined the "help kids make healthy choices" bandwagon by restricting its cartoon characters from being found on any sort of junk food, according Reuters article.

Nickelodeon characters such as Sponge Bob Square Pants, Jimmy Neutron or the Rugrats will only be used as marketing tools for foods that meet their advised dietary guidelines. Sponge Bob Square Pants now circulates the vegetable aisles instead of snack aisles, as he has been found on snack packs of baby carrots,

and other vegetables. However, Nickelodeon still plans to license their characters to be used on holiday treats or snacks like Valentine's Day chocolates, for example.

Whereas Nickelodeon is restricting its licensing of characters, Disney has released its own whole line of Disney Garden products that include a number of bagged fruits and vegetables like cut up apple slices and even cauliflower. Disney Garden hopes to help kids make healthier choices by choosing their fruits and vegetables. They hope to make the lives of parents easier by creating some incentive to want these fruits and vegetables with their characters. Their Web site offers recipe ideas for kids, as well as hints and tips for parents to help their kids make healthier choices.

But, who benefits more from these relatively new marketing ploys? Have parents fallen to a trap where they buy these products to unsuccessfully appeal to their kids, or have kids actually now been eating their vegetables? In other words, is this "humanitarian" effort really just putting more money in the pockets of Viacom and Disney, or is it actually helping kids to become healthier? Maybe a little bit of both.

Food blogger Kate Hopkins of Accidental Hedonist believes these new marketing concepts have kept public school systems out of the know. Kids are surrounded by food choices while at school, and the school system has a large bearing on what food choices are the right ones to make, as well as what foods show up in vending machines, etc. Questions such as these raise further issues as to what's behind these new marketing schemes.

All in all, these efforts can't necessarily hurt much, unless you're an adult forced to eat Sponge Bob Square Pants carrots instead of a regular old bag of carrots, like me :)

Sources:

Reuters

Accidental Hedonist

Imagination Farms

Viacom Company