



# The Food Industry and the Manipulation of the Masses Through Advertising

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## ABSTRACT

The food industry emerged in the seventeenth century, after the Industrial Revolution, and gained strength with globalization and the rise of capitalism in the 90s. This was due to the new format of society, which went from primarily agrarian and pastoral, with a lifestyle that followed the patterns of nature, to almost completely urban, with the notion of time modified and much more accelerated. The growing demand for productivity, at first in factory work, and now in large companies, has made adaptations in people's lives, and in this way eating habits have also changed, becoming more practical and, consequently, less conscious. Alienation, lack of free time and stress form the perfect scenario for the food industry to sell its products, even though it is harmful to the health of consumers. Advertising has become the main driver of industrialized products, selling a distorted image that manipulates the choice of buyers. Neuromarketing strategies, chromatic scales, slogans, songs, and packaging with images of famous characters and artists divert attention from controversial ingredients, making the person unaware of what they are consuming. The use of substances with high addictive power, such as sugar, fats, sodium and chemical additives, create dependence in the body, leading the consumer to always look for that food, in increasing quantities and more frequently. All this makes the food industry create its own consumer market, in a cycle that is only possible to escape with awareness, food education and, above all, critical thinking, so that the population can choose what to eat freely and consciously, knowing the impacts of their decisions.

**Keywords:** Food industry, Handling, Propaganda.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Man's relationship with food is something natural and instinctive, which began with the hunts of prehistory, through the development of agriculture, until the creation of the food industry in the present day. (FRAGA, MARQUES, 2016). This relationship has always been marked by changes, ranging from food for the need for survival to the development of the food trade, which moved the economy for long periods, such as the maritime expeditions in the sixteenth century, and which brought with it cultural exchange, improvements in technologies related to logistics, in addition to structuring an entire society in all its aspects. (ASSAD, ALMEIDA, 2004)

However, with the Industrial Revolution, starting in the seventeenth century, and later with the advent of globalization, in the 90s, combined with advances in food production technology, a change never seen before in all of human history occurred: the industrialization of food. (FRANCE, et.al., 2012). At first, this new technology was seen as revolutionary, something that would finally put an end to world hunger,



as production increased exponentially, in line with population growth. With the encouragement of governments and the approval of specialists, the food industry was born, being a promise of well-being for the population and profit for the capitalists.

What was not expected, however, were the problems this would entail. The indiscriminate use of chemical additives and dangerous ingredients, such as flavor enhancers, the exaggerated use of salt, sugar and fats, artificial colors and flavorings, and all kinds of preservatives and stabilizers, have brought with them a series of physical diseases and endocrine disorders, which are now widely combated by the medical community. (WHO, 2016), (OLIVEIRA, et.al. 2011)

In addition, the mental, psychological, and emotional health of the population has also been compromised, since these hyperpalatable foods create dependence, in the same way that illicit drugs do (LIMA, 2014). Added to this are also the context in which the foods were inserted and the association that people make with them, linking good taste to momentary pleasure. (SAWAYA, FILGUEIRAS, 2013)

All of these factors contribute to the creation of a mass of consumers who often don't know what they're buying. And knowing that, you go in On the scene, the entity that makes up this whole context and feeds it back: the media, through its advertisements. Using colorful and attractive packaging, emphasizing only what suits them, the advertisement induces the consumer to maintain their eating habits, giving continuity to the industrialized market. (MACHADO, 2006)

The tricks used by the food industry are as clever as possible. The induction of a thought in which there is no questioning about what is consumed, the lack of information about the origin of the raw materials used, and the makeup applied to something extremely harmful, giving it a beautiful and safe appearance, are some of them. But the most important thing is the method by which the market itself is created, attacking the most defenceless: children. (PONTES, 2009). If the industry has children as its main consumers, the chances of them continuing to consume in adulthood are very high, (WHO, 2016) creating a cycle in which the person is trapped, not knowing how to get out, or even not knowing that they are in it.

In the face of this serious and present problem in today's society, this work aims to explain, using a literature review, such as articles, books and booklets, how advertising, at the behest of the food industry, can induce and manipulate consumers to buy products that harm them, taking away from them the critical sense and the right to choose. (MACHADO, 2006).

## **2 THEORETICAL CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THE PROBLEMATIZATION**

### **2.1 THE FOOD INDUSTRY**

The industrialization of food began in the Industrial Revolution, in the seventeenth century, after the development of factories and the transformation of society from rural to urban. This change in lifestyle, which had previously been calmer and followed the rhythm and time of nature, became more agitated, and



the hours began to be counted by the hands of the clock, and the day increased by electric lights. The need to achieve production and sales standards and targets took away from workers the time that was dedicated to other activities, including growing their own food. The term "lack of time" comes into existence in the collective unconscious, and at that moment, the tasks considered superfluous or demanding a lot Work had to take a back seat, and one of them was food. (FRANCE, et.al., 2012), (AQUINO, C., MARTINS, J., 2007), (LEONARDO, 2009).

It is in this context that the food industry emerges, meeting new needs by offering ready-to-eat packaged foods. Even going through several changes and evolutions, the concept of processed foods is the same: to sell practicality, something to be consumed and quickly discarded. However, this speed has reached a point where food spends so little time in the hands of consumers that they are not aware of what they are consuming, which is dangerous in the sense of causing alienation and misinformation. (DAMO, et.al., 2015)

This system began to collapse when, with globalization and the rapid diffusion of information, from the 90s onwards, the increasing cases of poisoning by chemical additives began to gain prominence, as well as the development of chronic non-communicable diseases, NCDs, due to the exacerbated consumption of sodium, sugar of all kinds and fats. mainly hydrogenated, also called *trans* (WHO, 2016), (SAWAYA, FILGUEIRAS, 2013), (MIRANDA, 2005). Even with health entities, such as the World Health Organization and the Ministry of Health itself, giving guidance on a correct diet, the fast pace makes a life completely free of these products inaccessible, which creates and maintains the cycle of consumption. All this facilitates the exchange of healthy foods for industrialized ones, in addition to the influence of advertising, which induces and directs the population's choice, shapes habits and transforms food culture. (GreeMe, accessed 2019-05-21)

## 2.2 IMPACTS OF FOOD ON HEALTH

### 2.2.1 Healthy Eating

The basis of a balanced diet should contain all food groups and be suitable for each person individually. The consumption of vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, eggs and low-fat dairy products are the most common indications of experts, in addition to the consumption of plenty of water. (BRAZIL, 2014) The priority given to fresh or minimally processed foods, to the detriment of the excess of processed and ultra-processed foods, is due to the fact that they are fresher and more natural, therefore, richer in nutrients, such as vitamins and minerals, carbohydrates, amino acids, fatty acids, among others, ECYCLE (2019), favoring the proper functioning of the body and the prevention of diseases.

Figure 1, Food Traffic Light. Source: [www.inutrischool.com.br](http://www.inutrischool.com.br)



### 2.2.2 Processed foods

When a food undergoes a major change in its shape, color, flavor, texture, etc., it is configured as a processed food. This goes from homemade recipes, such as pasta and all kinds of dishes, to completely synthetic products, such as candies and soft drinks. (BARCELOS, et.al., 2014). In view of this, experts in the field of nutrition recommend the conscious and moderate use of processed foods, since any modification leads to a decrease in the properties of that food, and the extremely restricted use or, if possible, the complete elimination of ultra-processed foods from the diet, since these products are considered nutritionally empty, that is, they do not add nutritional value, calories only. (FRANCE, et.al., 2012)

The ultra-processed group are the real villains of health nowadays, as they contain high levels of sodium, sugars, fats, including hydrogenated, and chemical additives, all with the function of adding a hyperpalatable flavor that causes levels of dependence as high as those of drugs, (SAWAYA, FILGUEIRAS, 2013) in order to create addiction to maintain the cycle of purchase and consumption.

### 2.2.3 Addicting Ingredients

#### 2.2.3.1 Sugars

In addition to all the harmful effects of sugar on the health of the body, such as diabetes, obesity, dental caries, etc., studies indicate that refined sugar produces the same type of brain stimulus as cocaine and other drugs (CARRETTA, 2006), (SAWAYA, FILGUEIRAS, 2013). This highlights the power of this ingredient to create physiological addiction and emotional dependence.

The food industry uses it on a large scale in almost all of its products, as it has the power to increase the flavor of food, making it as tasty as possible. This indiscriminate use of sugar has generated worldwide commotion about its implications for the physical health and mental integrity of consumers. (MOSS, 2015)



#### 2.2.3.2 Sodium

Used both as a flavor enhancer and as a preservative, salt, in excess, can cause high blood pressure and other cardiovascular problems, kidney problems, edema, among others. (SOUZA, et.al., 2016) The industry uses it even in sweet foods, to enhance the flavor and increase shelf life, but to the detriment of the health of its consumers.

#### 2.2.3.3 Fats

Fats are necessary for our body and perform several functions, however, their excess can cause atherosclerosis, obesity, cardiovascular and hormonal problems, etc., having the ability to increase palatability and maintaining the proper texture and consistency, the industry uses it widely, especially in its hydrogenated form, made in the laboratory and extremely harmful, since it is not recognized as food. (SBC, 2013)

#### 2.2.3.4 Chemical additives

Used on a large scale for the most diverse functions, such as in colorings and flavorings, stabilizers, preservatives and flavor enhancers, chemical additives can cause allergies, hyperactivity, liver and kidney problems, in addition to worsening cases of obesity and diseases resulting from it. (JUNQUEIRA, et.al., 2011), (VOLTERA, et.al, 2008)

### 2.3 MARKETING AND ADVERTISING

In 264 B.C. Romans painted walls to advertise their gladiatorial fights, but there are older records dating back to 3000 B.C. with the Phoenicians painting figures to show their articles on rocks, always on routes with a lot of movement to attract the public. More than five thousand years later, in 2019, advertising has evolved with the help of more sophisticated resources and in-depth studies about the consumer, how their critical sense works when choosing and buying.

Marketing takes advantage of a crucial tool when it comes to persuading the consumer at the time of purchase: color psychology – It consists of the study and combination of colors to attract customers. Here's how it works: Warm colors reflect passion, enthusiasm, energy, and happiness, while cool colors give a sense of calm and professionalism. This happens because the human brain has the so-called mirror neurons that can be activated by visual and sound stimuli, by implicit deduction of the continuity of an action, communicative facial actions and speech observation (LAMEIRA et al, 2006).

According to Gallese (2005) and Rizzolatti et. al., (2006) (apud LAMEIRA et al, 2006), these neurons are associated with several modalities of human behavior: imitation, theory of mind, learning new



skills, and reading intention in other humans. According to Lindstrom (2009, p. 61) "this concept of imitation is an important factor in our motivation to buy what we buy". But this craving is also linked to dopamine, a neurotransmitter. Dopamine is a chemical messenger synthesized by certain cells and promotes, among other effects, the feeling of pleasure and motivation (MANDAL, 2013), released at the time of sex, physical activities and anything else you like to do.

When choosing what to take home, he takes into account several factors, namely: psychological, which represent personal characteristics such as favorite color; They can also be socio-cultural characteristics such as the influence of the place and culture where they are inserted, for example, a Brazilian when buying a ball, will give preference to "traditional football" instead of Hugby's ball or Amaerican football. However, currently 93% of people look at visual aspects to buy, and of these, 84.7% believe that color is more important than other aspects when buying a product. Two out of three consumers only take home the product if it's in their favorite color. These choices are most of the time unconscious, people do not have the discernment that this happens when they see an advertisement of disability food highlighted in red - Among the characteristics of warm colors is the opening of appetite.

Neuroscience is responsible for studying behavioral psychic aspects and together, marketing has been working to understand the consumer, then neuromarketing emerged, which aims to understand the social psychic behavior of the consumer and what leads him to make choices at the time of purchase.

Nothing happens by chance, for example, in the intervals of football games on Sunday, only advertisements of women with little clothing advertising brands of beer are shown; or when it's Saturday morning, at the time of children's programs and toy advertisements are on and even on weekdays during the break of the afternoon soap opera in which perfumes and/or household products are shown. This is due to the fact that the industry is increasingly creating its target audience. That's right, big brands have invested even more in media channels to advertise their products at specific times, and their main target is children. On the market shelves, sweets, snacks and even ramen noodles with the image of Monica's gang are close to the floor, all to attract children.

### **3 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH**

This study was carried out using the qualitative research method, based on literature reviews. The main sources of research were scientific articles, booklets and books on the subject addressed, directly or indirectly; specific sources to clarify external points that are important for the construction of understanding, more comprehensive to prove the facts presented. The conclusions were drawn after reading and studying various sources, old and recent, and mainly, after many conversations, reflections and observation of reality in general and also personally.



## **4 RESULTS**

By making a more in-depth analysis of the mechanisms of action of the food industry, it is evident that advertising has a direct effect on people's critical sense and decision, since it uses artifices, such as choosing colors when developing a packaging or a logo, distributing advertisements in videos at times targeted to the target audience, such as beer advertisements at half-time of football games, or sugary food commercials during children's programs.

Based on this fact, it is analyzed that the food industry is capable of modifying eating habits, as well as the entire culture embedded in them, through marketing strategies and using ingredients that generate addictions, such as refined sugar and fats. Together, they create a manipulable mass that doesn't understand that they're inside a market cycle, or if they do, they can't get out of it.

## **5 CONCLUSION**

Therefore, it is evident the importance of raising awareness about the mechanisms of action of the food industry, especially about how the advertising that conveys industrialized products is capable of shaping the choice of consumers, as well as the entire eating habit of a society and, consequently, its culture. The development of a critical sense is essential to put an end to the market cycle created by the industry itself, and to enable everyone to choose consciously, ensuring good health to the body and freedom to the mind.





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