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Framed Golden Arch Messages: A Content Analysis Of Mcdonald's Television Commercials In Correlation With The Obesity Epidemic Around The Globe

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FRAMED GOLDEN ARCH MESSAGES: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF MCDONALD'S
TELEVISION COMMERCIALS IN CORRELATION WITH THE
OBESITY EPIDEMIC AROUND THE GLOBE

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by

LAURA MACAULEY, B.A.

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

Obesity is a growing problem all around the world. Fast food companies invest billions of dollars every year intending to sell their new and improved menu items. This study examined one of the largest fast food companies in the world, McDonalds. The present study investigated how McDonalds communicates nutritional claims as well as portion size throughout television commercial messages. The countries that took part in this examination were the United States, Canada, India, and Japan. Each of these countries has much different percentage rates of obese citizens. A content analysis examined one commercial in each of the four countries. In addition, a generation was researched in twelve McDonald's commercials. The results showed that the majority of the portions advertised were visual. While analyzing the nutritional content of the commercials it was obvious that McDonalds misleads their viewer many. The research compared what each commercial stated with the nutritional facts found online. The framing theory was then used to show how McDonalds frames their nutritional claims in television commercial messages. The results of this research indicated in countries with higher obesity rates, McDonalds framed their commercials more than in countries with lower obesity rates.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

BMI	Body Mass Index
RDI	Recommended Daily Intake
RQ1	Research Question 1
RQ2	Research Question 2
US	United States of America
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
JASSO	Japan Society for the Study of Obesity
WHO	World Health Organization

INTRODUCTION

1.1 DEFINITION OF OBESITY

The World Health Organization describes obesity as one of the most neglected public health problems around the world today. Obesity is defined as an “abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that may impair health” (WHO). Obesity occurs not only in countries with an abundant amount of food, but in third world countries as well. Over 65 percent of the world's population lives in countries where being overweight and obese kills more people than being underweight. In fact, since 1980 obesity has more than doubled in the world. The astonishing realization is that the condition of obesity is preventable.

Obesity is such an emerging concern because of the many health risks it creates. Christel Le Petit (2006) stated “obesity has been linked with type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and hypertension, stroke, and gallbladder disease, some forms of cancer, osteoarthritis and physical problems. The impact on life expectancy is considerable” (82). These effects should influence people not to eat the type of food leading to obesity, but unfortunately this is not the case.

One barrier in reducing calorie consumption may be the potent and misleading marketing environment of less healthy food and inadequate marketing of healthy foods. Individuals often decide what food they should purchase from advertisements on television. “The food and alcohol industry accounted for more than one-sixth of the \$73-billion mass media advertising market; only the automobile industry spent more on advertising” (Byrd-Bredbenner & Grasso, 2001, p. 38). Much of what advertisers focus on is the nutritional content of their food. Companies take one healthy ingredient of the food and dramatically emphasize only that part. This makes the food appear to be healthier than it really is.

Another obsession commercials have is emphasizing larger portion sizes. Companies promote their food portion as bigger than ever before. Many consumers believe this to be a positive aspect

however this is one of the underlying issues of obesity. Companies market an increase in portion size to be a positive aspect of their product, and viewers begin to believe this to be true. This successful marketing causes companies to continue to increase the size of their portions even more.

Nutrition is arguably one of the leading causes behind obesity in the world today. People make a conscious decision when they intake unhealthy food. Although many countries are diverse, a generalization of the world population is that it is continuously becoming more obese. Four countries seem to be very different in this aspect. These countries are India, Japan, Canada, and the United States of America. These countries are so different because of the amount of food their citizens consume as well as the different types of food they eat. One common theme in all of these countries is that they all have fast food. One of the largest fast food companies in the world is McDonalds. This company appears to frame their messages in television commercials to adults. McDonalds also uses visual image tactics as well as verbal statements to target adults. Not only do the adults purchase the food but it misleads people as to what is healthy. McDonalds is not just selling their food; it is selling the McDonalds brand. This brand is now an empire. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine how McDonald's advertisers frame television commercial messages differently in Japan, India, Canada, and the United States. The investigation compared the nutritional content and portion size that differs in each country. This information will then be analyzed to view how this correlates to the obesity rates in each of the countries. McDonalds is not causing all of the obesity but it is certainly contributing to it.

1.2 OBJECTIVE

The main objective of this thesis is to get a better understanding of obesity around the world by providing readers with an accurate perception of how McDonalds frames their commercial messages. This thesis will research commercials from four different countries. After analyzing commercials through a content analysis, the commercials will be viewed by various students at the University of

Texas at El Paso from four different countries. They will code twelve commercials to compare their results with the researcher's results.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research is relevant to an extremely critical world problem: obesity. Firstly, obesity is currently reporting its highest numbers in history, so it is important that research is being conducted to find out why this is happening. This study will provide insight into how television commercial messages are adding to this increasing problem. Secondly, this research provides insight into understanding how McDonald's has adapted their marketing in various cultures where obesity rates vary.

The problem of obesity is of course not McDonalds; however this study provides examples of the types of commercials that have been used in advertising, which misleads people with their daily food choices. As stated in the literature review, what viewers see on television directly affects what they eat. McDonald's is framing the food that they are advertising then this has contributed to the increase of obesity in all of the countries.

1.4 ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

Many assumptions make this study different from other studies. The first is that McDonald's is a worldwide fast food restaurant therefore, McDonalds communicates their messages similarly all around the world. Therefore, in all four countries McDonalds will communicate nutritional content as well as portion size similarly. Next, commercials in all four countries will communicate portion size as a positive aspect and communication that will frame the McDonalds food as larger. This is a huge issue that misleads consumers. The McDonald's business may have actors in each commercial that correlate with the country the commercial is being broadcast in, however the messages assumingly will be the same. The final prediction is that McDonalds only communicates positive aspects of their food and none of the negatives. This will provide readers proof that commercial messages mislead their viewers. All of

these predictions pertain to the framing theory. Overall, McDonalds will frame all of their commercials in a positive way and mislead viewers.

1.5 THESIS ORGANIZATION

Chapter 1 provides the main objective, significance, and assumptions of the study. This chapter will also introduce the increasing issue of obesity.

Chapter 2 provides a summary of the history of obesity in the four countries that have been researched. This chapter will provide an in-depth literature review of the impact television has on obesity, how portion sizes are continuing to grow, the history of McDonalds, and finally the framing theory will be introduced.

Chapter 3 will cover the purpose of the study. The three research questions will also be introduced.

Chapter 4 will be an overview of the research design and methodology, and how this study will take place.

Chapter 5 will provide an in-depth content analysis of one commercial in each of the four countries. An overview will also review the results of cross-cultural coding.

Chapter 6 will be the conclusion of this study. This chapter will also end with the coding instrument that was used for cross-cultural coding as well as the USDA food pyramid guide and the USDA Portion control chart. Finally, this chapter will discuss the limitations of the study as well as ideas for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 OBESITY RESEARCH

Obesity is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as an “abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that might impair health” (2000). Obesity results from excess body fat. It is produced when the food levels ingested are higher than what the body is utilizing as energy (Montague, 2003). Advertising is a primary reason why so many people are obese in the world today. According to the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 65 percent of Americans over the age of twenty years old are overweight, of these people thirty percent are obese and five percent are extremely obese” (Henderson & Kelly, 2005, p. 191).

In most countries around the globe, one is considered obese if their body mass index (BMI) is over 30. A body mass index is a measurement to determine if one is underweight, in normal range, overweight, or obese. The percentage of fat and muscle mass in the human body is analyzed. Kilograms are divided by height in meters and then are squared and the result is used as an index of obesity. A Normal BMI is between 18.5-24.9 kg/m, overweight is between 25.0-29.9 kg/m, clinical obesity is between 30.0-34.9 kg/m, morbid obesity is when the BMI is over 40.0 kg/m (Bray, 2003).

This study does not specifically concentrate on one's BMI however the BMI is a quantitative calculation to explain the difference between a normal, overweight, and an obese person. Therefore, these calculated numbers help decipher between each of the categories. Much research has demonstrated that many people received their nutritional information from television messages. If television commercials are misleading and only displaying unhealthy food than not only will people be deceived but they will continue eating it because they do not know any other way.

2.2 DIFFERENT OBESITY RATES

A general assumption is that the world is becoming more obese however; there are a few countries around the world that understand the consequences of obesity. One of the healthiest countries in the world is Japan. The following research will provide a background to readers about the obesity rates of the four countries that are included in this study.

JAPAN

Japan is known as the country with the smallest waistline in the world. Yoshiike (2003) stated it is illegal to have a BMI over 25. Japan considers one obese if their BMI is over 25, unlike most countries that consider one obese if their BMI is over 30. The Japanese government is very aware of the negative effects obesity can have on their citizen's health. Japan wanted to cut out obesity all together. In 1992, the Japan Society for the Study of Obesity (JASSO) decided to recommend a standard body weight scale based on scientific healthy weight evidence.

Masao Kanazawa (2009) notes, "the average body usually consists of 82% lean body mass, which is essential for sustaining daily life and physical activities, and 18% body fat, which in essence is energy stored for emergency situations". After the government demanded that every citizen had to have a BMI under 30, people were still sick and unhealthy. Researchers could not understand if it was what they were eating, their lifestyle, or heredity. JASSO then decided to mandate that every citizen be under a BMI of 25. This small difference helped tremendously as citizens became much healthier.

Today in Japan, adults between the ages of 40-74 must have an annual "belly check" to ensure that their bellies are in the legal range. David Nakamura (2009) stated, "in Japan, already the slimmest industrialized nation, people are fighting fat to ward off dreaded metabolic syndrome and comply with a government-imposed waistline standard" (477).

Jenny Stamos Kovacs (2006) stated, "thanks to the relatively healthier Japanese diet and lifestyle; Japanese women and men live longer and healthier than everyone else on Earth" (11). Only 3 percent of Japanese residents are currently obese. One of the ways that the Japanese explain this low number is that they have excellent portion control.

INDIA

Obesity has arisen in developing countries as well. Obesity rates are greater than ever in India. "India is one of the capitals of diabetes and cardiovascular diseases" (Unnikrishnan, 2012, p. 4). Fulton (2012) explains that this is causing many consequences much like the rest of the world. Obesity has grown most in rural areas. Since 1989, the prevalence of overweight individuals has risen from 2 to 17.1 percent.

In India, many individuals are in the category as being of normal weight. Despite this, many citizens have a lean BMI but have a greater potential of being obese. This is because their body fat is actually higher due to lack of nutritious foods.

CANADA

Soaring obesity has recently begun in Canada. Ian Janssen (2006) writes, "fifteen percent of 11-16 year old Canadian youth were overweight (preobese) and 4.6% were obese in 2002" (360). One of the main causes of these astonishing rising numbers is because of television. Television viewing has been higher over the years, which directly relates to obesity. Tremblay (2002) states being overweight or obese increase while watching overflowing amounts of television by nearly half. Jepkema (2006) stated, "overweight and obesity are caused by an imbalance between energy intake and expenditure, but the exact reasons behind this phenomenon in adolescents is unclear. Changes in dietary patterns in the past

few decades, such as an increase in the consumption of high fat and sugar foods, have been implicated in the increase in obesity” (367).

It is well known that Canadians obtain free health care. Obesity-related health problems are gradually becoming a substantial portion of total health care costs. Twenty-four percent of Canadians are obese. This causes serious health problems. Laird Birmingham (1997) stated it was estimated this was costing Canada \$1.8 billion dollars. This is 2.4 percent of all of the total health care expenses. If Canadians learn how to prevent obesity it would save them an astonishing amount of money.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

35 percent of America is currently obese. Type 2 diabetes was only known among adults however because of obesity, now children are being diagnosed with this disease as well. American citizens are not becoming alert to their increasing numbers. Ogden (2002) stated, “in 2003-2004, 17.1% of US children and adolescents were overweight and 32.2% of adults were obese” (1729). Men have increased obesity rates from 27.5 percent in 2000 to 31.1 percent in 2004. That is almost a 4 percent increase in only four years. 35.7 percent of Americans are currently obese (82). These numbers translate into 78 million adults and 12.5 million children and adolescents being obese in 2010 in the United States (Ogden, 2010, p. 82).

The American government reported online that annual hospital visits have tripled in the past two decades due to obesity. Obesity is also responsible for 17 percent of medical bills that Americans pay every year. The Journal of Health Economics (2012) stated obesity accounts for 21 percent of the U.S. health care costs. Obesity is not only costing Americans a sufficient amount of money from their pockets but it is also costing them their lives.

2.3 RESEARCH ON PORTION SIZE

Portion Size around the world has grown along with people's waistline. Lisa R. Young (2002) pushes the issue of portion size being the main problem behind obesity by stating that at 7-eleven, a double gulp now contains nearly 800 calories. This is ten times the size of a Coca-Cola when it was first introduced. Lisa Monte (2012) expresses how portions have increased by comparing different foods. Twenty years ago two pieces of pizza were 500 calories. Today, two pieces of pizza are 850 calories. Twenty years ago a bagel had a small 3-inch diameter. Today, they have an astonishing 5-6 inch diameter. This means that a simple bagel has nearly doubled. A typical cheeseburger had 333 calories twenty years ago. Today, the average cheeseburger has 590 calories. William Vermeer (2009) provided additional evidence by using a focus group "a majority of the participants thought that in fast-food restaurants, portion sizes have increased and are too large" (133). Many citizens not only realize that portions have grown significantly but now are not able to finish their plate.

Young (2002) stated "fast-food companies promote larger items with signs, staff pins, and placemats; manufacturers of diet meals such as Lean Cuisine and Weight Watchers frozen dinners advertise larger meal sizes; restaurant reviews refer to large portions; and national chain restaurants promote large-size items directly on menus. Restaurants are using larger dinner plates, bakers are selling larger muffin tins, pizzerias are using larger pans, and fast-food companies are using larger drink and French fry containers" (247). It is not simply the food becoming larger but it is everything to do with food. If a plate size increases then so will the food portion.

Pennsylvania State University (2013) stated just as portions are larger in food, so are the beverage containers. Flood (2006) demonstrated if a person has a larger beverage in front of them then they will drink more than if the beverage container was smaller. Barbara J. Rolls (2003) studied this theory and placed a 6-inch sandwich, 8-inch sandwich, and a 12-inch deli style sandwich in front of different people. Almost all of the subjects consumed the entire 6-inch sandwich. When they were

served a 12-inch sandwich compared to an 8-inch sandwich, female's consumer 12 percent more calories and males consumed 23 percent more calories. This repeatedly proves that larger portion sizes lead to eating more, which causes obesity.

2.4 OBESITY AND THE MEDIA

The media influences what people talk about as well as what consumers buy. This can range in terms of beliefs, behavior, and perceptions (Morton & Duck, 2001; Wyatt, Katz, & Kim, 2000). It can give the public information as fact, including the reports on food portions, obesity, and health choices. Attitudes towards obesity are communicated through the media (Greenberg, Eastin, Hofschire, Lachian, & Brownell, 2003). Claims state that television commercials are the main reason why consumers make the purchases that they do. Zywicki et al. comments on this very topic saying:

Truthful, non-misleading health information can benefit consumers and increase competition.

First, such information helps consumers make better-informed weight-conscious choices.

Second, as health consequences of obesity become a more important consideration for consumers and thus guide their purchase decisions, marketers have an incentive to develop and market products based on their calorie content. This, in turn can provide consumers with even healthier products and more information to aid their weight control effort. (p. 39)

To many individuals, food marketing is considered to be one cause of obesity. Pierre Chandon and Brian Wansink (2012) provide readers with additional insight on how this is one of the main causes. They stated:

Marketing communication informs people about product attributes, like the price or where it can be purchased. Marketing communication also increases awareness of the brand and food, which leads consumers, particularly children, to try fewer foods and to only search for brands they

already know rather than the brand that would have the highest nutritional and hedonic qualities.
(p. 574)

2.5 FAST FOOD AND THE MEDIA

Since 1990, deaths accredited to poor diet and physical inactivity amplified to be more than one-third. (Mokdad, Marks, Stroup, & Gerberding, 2004). Food is not the only item that is getting larger; but advertising is also increasing. National chain restaurants want people to know that what they are selling is bigger than ever before. This does not only draw people to the food and make them want it, but it also increases the calories that they are consuming. The media wants to insure that buyers know they are getting a big drink or meal.

Television advertising is among the most effective media for health communication, and therefore represents a potentially important and viable component of any public health obesity prevention strategy (Emergy, Szczypka, Powell, & Chaloupka, 2007, p. 257). Therefore, this research proves that in order to make a nation healthy, there must be a prevention strategy.

Another reason that people turn to fast food is because of the price. One dollar can continue to go a long way in the ever-expanding empire of fast food. Fast food appears to many individuals be the cheapest food; however it is truly the most processed food. This does not seem to stop people from eating it. David Card (1993) writes when wages increased, restaurant prices also increased. This does not seem to correlate to the cost in fast food restaurants. Fast food restaurants have not changed drastically in the past decade. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011) “Inflation for eating at home has accelerated faster than dining out during the past year, reaching its widest gap since 1990 last month”. This indicates that food prices are increasing which makes it more expensive than ever to eat at home. Fast food restaurants seem to be only increasing slightly. This provides addition reasons why people eat fast food.

2.6 RESEARCH ON FOOD ADVERTISEMENTS

There is a monumental amount of research confirming the negative effects of obesity. Notably, the consumption of advertised food is higher than the consumption of foods that are not advertised at all (Bryd-Bredbenner, 1992). Therefore, since healthy foods are not advertised as often as unhealthy foods, television viewers are more likely to gravitate towards unhealthy food. Abbatangelo-Gray, Byrd-Bredbenner, & Austin, 2008; Byrd-Bredbenner & Grasso have different aspects of food advertisements including nutrition throughout their research (2011). Various nutritional claims are alleged to contribute to obesity. These claims are found on television food commercials. Proof of this has been stated in Kozup, Creyer, and Burton's (2004) study stated, "'Low fat' and 'high fiber' are specific claims that pertain to food's nutrient-content. Health claims address the relationship between a specific nutrient and a disease or health condition" (p. 20). These claims were investigated in the present study.

2.7 ASSUMPTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

The contemplation that advertising is one cause of obesity and alters a consumers' consumption is greater for advertisements that relate to food than non-food advertisements (Zywicki, Holt, & Ohlhausen, 2004). Advertisements can be extremely deceptive while making nutritional claims. A television audience is easily misled by messages that are transmitted. Zywicki et al. says the following:

First, such information helps consumers make better-informed weight-conscious choices.

Second, as health consequences of obesity become a more important consideration for consumers and thus guide their purchase decisions, marketers have an incentive to develop and market products based on their calorie content. This, in turn can provide consumers with even healthier products and more information to aid their weight control efforts. (p 39)

2.8 TELEVISION CONTRIBUTES TO OBESITY

The Obesity Prevention Source (2012) stated, “Globally, people are spending more time sitting at work and at home, and there is mounting evidence that this sit time is a major contributor to the obesity epidemic”. Harvard University first linked television watching to obesity around the world over twenty-five years ago. The Nurses’ Health Study (2006) followed over 50,000 middle-aged women around the world. The study proved that if women watch television for over two hours every day they have a 23 percent greater chance of being obese and sixteen percent chance of developing a chronic disease. These studies confirm that the food and beverage marketing on television is a leading cause of obesity.

Foods that are considered low in nutrition and high in sugar and fat appear in television commercials nearly fourteen times more than foods low in the same nutrients (Bryd-Bredbenner & Grasso, 2001). The Henderson and Kelly study proved that:

An individual watching 2 hours of popular prime-time television per day, 5 days per week, 52 weeks a year might view up to 4888 food advertisements. A typical advertisement length of 30 seconds, this means that one will be exposed to over forty hours of food marketing over the course of one year. (p 193)

This research confirms that viewers get much of their nutrition information from the television.

2.9 FRAMING THEORY

“Framing refers to the process where the media selects certain aspects of reality and make them more salient, while leaving other aspects out of the package” (Kim & Willis, 2007, p. 361). Wicks and Wicks (2005) explain that message framing may influence the perception of an advertisement. The framing theory was “a concept borrowed from social psychology; frames are knowledge structures that define features and relevant attributes of some stimulus domain” (Makoul & Peer, 2004, p. 247).

Businesses use this extremely deceitful strategy, which causes harm to one's health. J. Wicks (2005) stated commercial message framing is a very important technique in the world of advertising. Message framing even extends to images, sounds, and emotional appeals in the commercial. By pulling at consumers' emotions, customers will see the positive nutritional benefits in a commercial. J. Wicks also discusses about a Kellogg's message that was conveyed in 1984 that said:

Kellogg's All-Bran market share increased 47% after ads stressing that a high-fiber, low-fat diet helped to prevent some types of cancer aired. Thus, an advertisement or an advertiser's representative may be perceived as a credible source to consumers. (Wicks & Wicks, p. 5)

Chang (2007) stated, "researchers argue that advertisers should pay attention to how advertisement messages are presented to consumers because the way information is labeled or framed may significantly influence consumer judgment and decisions about products" (144). This enforces the idea of the framing theory being used in commercials. These advertisements can be misleading and ultimately incorrectly communicate nutrition.

Portions of message frame the ability to look at what is in the frame. An example of advertising is:

The salesman in the Sumerian marketplace in 3,000 B.C. had three advertising media: his voice, perhaps a few tricks and his merchandise display. Actually, he had everything expensive TV commercial offers today. He could show his produce to the people in the marketplace. He could make a sales "pitch" about it and do a little singing if he wanted to. He could arrange the produce as attractively as possible. But when the world became too large for the marketplace, his successors had to resort to the printed word and signs. (Forster, 1967, p. 141)

The problem is that companies are aware of what they are communicating to their viewers. The companies realize that they intentionally showed their audience the positives in their food rather than the negatives.

Researchers have examined how the media presents food this way. Kim & Willis (2009) stated the food industry is a leading cause of obesity. The message framing theory is an extremely important part of this research. This is because it will express to the audience that fast food companies frame their commercials so that the audience believes that the food they are consuming is healthy for them even when it is not.

2.10 MCDONALDS

Fast food restaurant commercials are advertised more frequently than any other television commercial (Story & Faulkner). According to McDonalds.com, McDonalds has been around many decades. McDonalds first opened in 1940 in San Bernardino, California. Today, there are approximately 56 restaurants in India, 1,154 outlets in Canada, 3,598 restaurants in Japan, and 13,381 in the United States. Lubin (2010) stated McDonalds is in over one hundred countries all over the world. It serves approximately sixty eight million people every single day. McDonalds sells more than seventy-five hamburgers every single minute around the world. Although McDonalds is slightly different in each country, the results seem to be similar; obesity.

Wright (2005) suggested, “Without a strong recognizable brand name a product is no more than a commodity, without advertising there is no recognizable brand name” (89). Thomas R. Robinson (2007) showed that children like the food from McDonalds simply because it has the name. He gave sixty-three children unbranded food and put it in McDonalds packaging. He also gave those same children the same unbranded food but in McDonalds packaging. The children preferred the McDonalds food. This study illustrated to the public that the McDonalds Company is not in business to sell their food, but to sell their company. The company works with many engineers to put images in the community and on the television that stays in their audiences’ minds. Because of this, McDonalds is the world’s largest hamburger fast food restaurant.

This study will look at what the advertising messages are communicating in the specific content. Firstly, this will show readers that McDonald's commercials talk abundantly about portion size that is a primary cause of obesity. Secondly, this will shed light on McDonalds blatantly stating that the food they serve is healthy when in fact it is not.

MCDONALDS IN JAPAN

McDonalds was introduced in Japan in 1971. It was a gamble for McDonalds to enter into countries such as Japan because it is generally known as a healthy country. However, McDonalds succeeded in bringing their company there. Koichi (2008) stated, "McDonalds employed an aggressive strategy of starting several hundred new restaurants every year. Today, Japan has the second most McDonalds restaurants in the world at about 3,600" (22). The strategy in which McDonalds has today in Japan is to adapt and tailor their products to fit the consumer's demands. Koichi (2013) stated McDonalds' restaurants are commonly a lot cleaner, staff seems to be a little friendlier, and everything is a little more upscale (56).

PRODUCT

Although McDonalds is similar in food content than in a more obese country such as the United States, it has many differences. In fact, Elliot Hannon (2012) discusses these very differences. "The large size fountain drink container at the McDonalds in Japan is much smaller than a large one [here] in America. Along with that, free refills in Japan are not usually allowed" (13). Portion size also is strongly discussed with the size of soda. In Japan, a large soda contains 181 calories. In America, the large soda contains 310 calories. This means that the size of the soda container is almost double in the American soda portion size. This is the same for fries. The fries containers in Japan are smaller as well as the quantity.

MCDONALDS IN INDIA

India is not known to be a wealthy country. McDonalds has succeeded in fitting the demands of the citizens in the country and has thrived. April Fulton (2012) stated that when McDonalds first came to India it ditched the Big Macs and Quarter Pounders. Many of India's citizens believe that cows are sacred; therefore many do not eat beef. McDonalds switched their approach when entering India by changing their menu and experimented by having vegetarian burgers on their menu. The gamble has paid off.

PRODUCT

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (2013) "McDonald's introduced homegrown alternatives like vegetarian McAloo Tikki potato burger to go along with its non-beef standards like chicken nuggets and fish sandwiches (Fulton, p. 13). At first, McDonalds' menu was only half vegetarian. However, because of the positive response it got on the vegetarian side, McDonalds is now 100% vegetarian since the beginning of 2013. Portion size in India is similar to America with minor differences. The portions are harder to compare because the menu is so different. India's menu is loaded with choices such as McAloo Tikki burger, which has fried potatoes on the patty and is very spicy.

MCDONALDS IN CANADA

McDonalds first opened their first Canadian restaurant in British Columbia in 1967. According to the McDonalds.ca website, in 2007, McDonalds had 1,400 stores in Canada. With more than 77,000 employees, McDonalds in Canada is booming.

PRODUCT

In Canada, McDonalds has a campaign called, "Our Food, Your Questions." This campaign was aimed at persuading Canadians that McDonalds is not actually unhealthy for them. One of the

episodes shows Canadians a close look at what goes into the beef patties. This shows that there are no additives or fillers like in the American McDonalds.

MCDONALDS IN THE UNITED STATES

The United States of America was the started off all McDonald's restaurants. This is one of the very reasons why the USA has by far the most McDonalds restaurants. McDonald's states that one in every eight American claims that they have worked at McDonalds at some point in their lives. Americans alone consume over one billion pounds of beef at McDonald's in one year. These numbers not only make America the most obese country in the world but they are the most involved in the McDonald's restaurant.

PRODUCT

McDonalds has a "secret sauce." The sauce varies in each country. The sauce in the United States is the unhealthiest of all of the countries. Three of the first five ingredients in the sauce are associated with sugar. Hanna Olsen (2012) stated McDonalds has said that the "secret sauce" is full of ingredients found in a typical refrigerator. When looking at the list however, if one uses the worst kind of preservative-laden relish, mustard, and soy lechtin in one's refrigerator, then yes it is." This means that these ingredients could be household products, however that is very unlikely.

Josh Sanburn (2012) wrote in "Time" Magazine about the beef that McDonalds used that is now known as the "pink slime." In fact, Jamie Oliver from the "Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution" campaigned for months about this very slime. This slime was actually approved to consumed by Americans by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) at the time. The Daily (2012) reported, "the beef is soaked in ammonium hydroxide then grounded into a pinkish form that looks something like hamburger meat. It is then cooked and served to McDonald's customers". The television show talked about this after pictures surfaced of the pink slime, so McDonald's stated to all Americans that they will

no longer use this meat by releasing a statement that said “we made a decision to discontinue to the use of ammonia-treated beef in our hamburgers.”

CHAPTER THREE

PURPOSE OF STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.1 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The present study researched different McDonald's commercials. Throughout the commercials, nutritional claims, portion size, and the framing theory were analyzed. Prior research has been conducted in America regarding this subject. Research has not been done to compare the commercials in these four countries: Japan, India, Canada, and the United States. A small amount of research has been prepared to show that adult-targeted television food commercials are linked with the framing theory. The current research will provide insight into not only the framing theory but the world of commercial messages as well.

This research focused on adult targeted commercials. Much prior research has been conducted pertaining to childhood obesity. Prior research stated that McDonalds contributes to childhood obesity because children enjoy interacting with Ronald McDonald. Much of these advertisements are compared with adult advertisements.

The present study aimed to provide readers insight regarding portion sizes and nutritional content as it correlates with obesity. It also shows to commercial viewers that television commercials can be framed by misleading viewers to believe that what they are eating is healthy when in fact it is not.

3.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

Qualitative analysis will examine the McDonalds food commercial message content. The intent was to better understand how advertising messages are framed in correlation with nutritional content and portion size. Qualitative analysis will interpret the data on the commercials. Qualitative research analyzed each commercial to see the different ways in which McDonalds frames their products. This

will be analyzed through words on the screen, music, verbal messages, how the food appears to the audience, and much more. In addition, qualitative analysis obtained research online to show the ingredients in the food that McDonalds is advertising. Another aspect that qualitative analysis will look at is the emotional message McDonalds presents to their audience. By doing this research, it will show when the framing theory is being used.

Qualitative analysis was chosen for the specific reason of being able to view the framing theory being used through an extensive examination in each of the four countries. Three commercials from each country were chosen because each will portray ample examples pertaining to how the framing theory is used.

3.3 PURPOSE OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Prior research to this paper does show that food advertisement messages play a key role in obesity (Andrews, Burton, & Netemeyer, 2000; Dodds, Tseelon, & Weitekamp, 2008; Story & Faulkner, 1990). Three different mechanisms verify having a strong link between obesity and television viewing. The first one is that while people watch television they are rarely exercising. The second is that people often eat while viewing the television. Lastly, the exposure to advertised food leads to eating these foods. This final reason was what the present research attempted to provide evidence of. Therefore, if people are not only eating McDonalds because they view it on television but they believe that it is healthy then this contributes to obesity.

The three research questions were formed around portion size and nutritional content in conjunction with the four countries. In addition, nutritional content and portion size were compared to observe if they corresponded with the country's obesity rate. The three research questions were also centered on the ideas behind the framing theory. Readers will become conscious of the fact that

McDonalds hides information from their audience such as unhealthy ingredients. After researching online, it will be demonstrated that McDonalds does not acknowledge unhealthy ingredients.

3.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

There are three research questions that this study attempts to answer:

RQ1: How does McDonald's frame their commercial messages to present nutritional claims to viewers in the United States, Canada, India, and Japan?

RQ2: How does McDonalds frame their commercial messages to present portion size to their consumers to viewers in the United States, Canada, India, and Japan?

RQ3: How do these findings contribute to one's understanding of obesity caused by television commercial framing?

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 CONTENT ANALYSIS

Kolbe and Burnett's (1991) definition of content analysis was "an observational research method that is used to systematically evaluate the symbolic content of all forms of recorded communication. These communications were analyzed at many levels, therefore creating a realm of research opportunities" (p. 243). "Content analysis can help researchers understand how television advertisements may develop nutrition knowledge and attitudes" (Byrd-Bredbenner & Grasso, 1999, p. 171). The current study was constructed using several different sections. Firstly, two commercials on YouTube from each of the following countries will be selected: Japan, India, Canada, and the United States. The first step was to break down and analyze the commercials. They were investigated from the view of *RQ1*, *RQ2*, and *RQ3*. The second part of the research was to conduct a cross-cultural coding procedure and review the conclusion of the content analysis. With these two results, readers will be made more aware when McDonalds does mislead their viewers by framing their messages.

"Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the contexts of their use" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18). Each of the twelve commercials was coded into different categories to see the overall effects the commercial has on its viewers. One of the main objectives in the present study was to observe the nutritional claims and portion size techniques that were communicated in each commercial.

4.2 PROCEDURE

Television is the primary way that food was advertised. For that reason, television advertising was used as the sample in this study. The McDonalds commercials that were analyzed were chosen for a

few different reasons. In Japan and India, English is not their first language therefore it was difficult to find an English speaking commercial. The commercials that were chosen from those two countries were selected because English was spoken throughout the entire commercial. In Canada and the United States, English is the primary official language. These commercials were chosen based on popularity on YouTube. Since they are popularly viewed commercials, the McDonalds audience has seen them many times. The research still accurately demonstrates how the countries with a higher obesity population will portray portion size as well as nutrition content claims differently than countries with a lower obesity rate.

The present study focuses on adult-targeted television food commercials. The data collected is used for analysis. For the purpose of this study, an adult is defined as a person between the ages of eighteen-to-sixty-four. The term targeted refers to the intended adult viewing or purchasing the advertised product. See Appendix A for coding framework. “The test re-test method was used to determine intra-observer reliability” (Byrd-Bredbenner & Grasso, 1999, p. 172). This means that the commercial is watched and then watched again later for further observation of the content.

4.3 CROSS-CULTURAL ANALYSIS

Neuendorf (2002) stated, “given that a goal of content analysis is to identify and record relatively objective characteristics of messages, reliability is paramount. Without the establishment of reliability, content analysis measures are useless” (p. 14). The purpose of cross cultural coding, also known as inter coder reliability in this research, was to see if students from each country view McDonald’s commercials similarly. The coding scheme that was used was based upon a previous researcher’s instrument model. Four coders were used for this research. Each coder currently attends the University of Texas at El Paso and was originally from one of the four countries. Each of the four coders went through two hours of training to understand how each nutritional claim and portion size claim was to be

properly analyzed. Each coder was given the script of the commercial, the 2012 FDA Food Labeling Guide (United States Food and Drug Administration [FDA], 2012), and the USDA Portion Control Guide. Each coder then presented their results and the percentages were calculated for each of the categories using the Abbatangelo-Gray et. Al., 2008; Byrd-Breedbenner & Grasso, 2001; and Warren et al., 2008 typology models. These categories were then calculated and an agreement was made between the researcher and the coders. This was coded in April 2013 for all twelve commercials.

4.4 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

The present study called for qualitative analysis research. Qualitative analysis was examined through the content in the commercials by looking later at the nutrition that was being advertised as well as the portion sizes. The content that was examined was the calories, fat, protein, and sodium levels. Qualitative analysis was utilized as well in this research by providing four detailed summaries of what was in each commercial. Although content analysis and inter-coder reliability historically is a quantitative approach to research, the present study used these methods of research qualitatively.

4.5 DATA ANALYSIS

After watching all of the commercials, the data was coded, cross-cultural coding was completed, and qualitative analysis was finished to evaluate the results. The main material that was reviewed was the underlying messages presented from the McDonalds commercials. Throughout this research, uncovering the answers to the research questions presented in this study was considered at all times. The steps presented were used to expose the answers to the research questions.

RQ1 asked how McDonald's frames commercial messages to present nutrient claims to viewers in the United States, Canada, India, and Japan. Qualitative Analysis provided interpretative summaries regarding the messages that McDonalds advertises to their audiences. These were measured and analyzed based on the categories outlined in the Coding Instrument; see Appendix B. After viewing

these commercials, online data compared the USDA Food Guide Pyramid (See Appendix C) and the USDA Portion control size chart (See Appendix D) to conclude if McDonalds is framing their commercial messages.

RQ2 asked how McDonalds frames commercial messages to present portion size to viewers in the United States, Canada, India, and Japan. This was analyzed similarly to *RQ1*. Research analyzed how McDonalds communicated their portion sizes to their audience in the four countries. This was researched through words on the television screen, what the audience saw pictorially, and words the voice-over and actors used.

RQ3: asked how these findings contribute to one's understanding of obesity caused by television commercial framing. The final research compared the obesity rates in each of the four countries. Not only will this research enhance the readers understanding of obesity but it will educate them on how commercial messages can mislead individuals in which food choices they make. Since prior research has established that people are more likely to gain weight from watching television commercials that are depicting unhealthy food this research will continue beyond that and analyze which areas of the commercial are framed. This thesis will provide insight showing how McDonald's commercials communicate portion size and nutritional content differently according to which country they are shown in. Cross-cultural evidence will be used to contribute additional evidence in the research findings. Because each of the four coders were from different countries, they will be able to better decipher the differences in the way McDonalds frames it's portion sizes and nutritional content.

Each commercial also considered the emotional appeals that were communicated. This provides additional information on how the messages are framed. The different moods being researched come from a typology concept, which was adopted from part of previous research (Warren, Wicks, Fosu, & Chung, 2008, p. 237).

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS

5.1 OVERVIEW OF COMMERCIALS

The YouTube video commercials came from different time periods. A Japanese McDonalds commercial appeared as early as the 1990's but a Canadian McDonalds commercial appeared as recent as January 2013. They were analyzed in the month of April 2013. The final count was a total of twelve commercials that were watched which included three from each country. Six of these commercials discussed portion size, four of these commercials discussed a nutritional aspect, and two of the commercials communicated both nutrition and portion size.

A nutrient content claim addresses the relationship between a nutrient and a health condition that is advertised. The nutritional content claims advertised were specific to the food nutritional content in the commercial. Portion sizes were both verbal and visual. Overall, portion claims were visual which correlates strongly with the framing theory.

5.2 OVERVIEW OF CLAIMS IN JAPAN

As stated in previous chapters, Japan has an obesity rate of 3 percent. This is revealed in the way McDonalds portrays their food in commercials in this country. Japanese McDonalds commercials did not focus their efforts on communicating nutrition or portion size to the audience. In fact, Japanese McDonald's commercial focused more on a simple commercial to promote their product. Overall, these commercials produced the least amount of framing regarding portion size as well as nutritional content. The only problem within the commercials in Japan was how it misled individuals by only having very thin models in every commercial. This was an ideal example of the framing theory because it communicated to the public that if they eat McDonalds then they too would look like the models. This

was the only problem of miscommunication in Japanese commercial messages. Overall, not once was portion size or nutritional content communicated in Japanese commercials. This indicates that McDonalds does not use the framing theory while talking about nutrition and portion size to Japanese citizens.

5.3 OVERVIEW OF CLAIMS IN INDIA

India's obesity rate is at 17 percent. Nutritional content and portion sizes were communicated minimally throughout these commercials. In fact, India was the only country that had actors that were overweight appearing in one commercial. The framing theory therefore was not used once throughout the three McDonalds commercials that were analyzed from India. Neither portion size nor nutritional content appeared at all in any of the three commercials analyzed. The only instance in which the framing theory was used in commercials in India was an emotional communication.

5.4 OVERVIEW OF CLAIMS IN CANADA

Canada's obesity rate has risen to an astonishing 26 percent from 19 percent only twelve years ago. This is visibly higher than both Japan and India. The ways in which commercials were communicated using the framing theory was clear to the researcher and each of the coders. In the three Canadian McDonald's commercials that were analyzed, too thin. Models framed the image that was being presented. It was misleading to viewers and communicated incorrectly that the food will not make them obese. Canadian commercials communicated both nutrition and portion size. One way in particular that portion size was communicated was the angle of the camera. This was very deceiving and framed the burger to make it appear larger when it was not. This also communicates to the audience that it is better if the food portions are larger. Nutrition was communicated both visually as well as verbally. For example, in the first Canadian McDonalds commercial that was analyzed it showed different people on the street asking various questions about McDonalds to the McDonalds employees who did not actually

answer the questions. For example, one question was “Is McDonald’s beef 100% real beef?” By asking this, it appears that because McDonalds is communicating this to the audience the answer is yes, however the answer is not stated. It continues to ask question after question without real answers. This was a marketing strategy McDonalds used that involves the framing theory. It frames McDonalds to appear healthier than it really is because the questions were not answered, but healthy answers were implied. Another commercial visually framed fresh vegetables being placed onto a burger. This communicated nutrition once again. The vegetables are healthy, however the burger is not. McDonalds frames the burger to make it appear to be healthy because vegetables are being placed on it. These results reveal that both nutrition and portion size were framed in McDonalds commercials in Canada.

5.5. OVERVIEW OF CLAIMS IN THE UNITED STATES

The United States obesity rate is currently an astonishing 63 percent. This is the highest in the world. The commercials that were analyzed throughout this research continued to have large burgers shown. They were shown primarily through the angle of the camera and also how large the burger appeared on the television screen. All of the actors and actresses were very thin in the commercials, which was also misleading. Other examples of the framing theory were the emotional appeals McDonalds showed throughout these commercials. The research analyzed commercials in the United States showed that both portion size and nutrition were framed. McDonald’s misleads people about what is healthy for them and also what entails a healthy portion size. This was clear throughout all three American commercial messages.

5.6 NUTRITIONAL CONTENT CLAIMS

The next section will discuss the findings based on what McDonald’s expressed in their nutritional content messages and also how they were delivered using the framing theory (*RQ1*). This information is based from qualitative research. The intent on these findings was to provide extensive

awareness to the audience that McDonalds does frame their commercials in a way that their audience does not realize. Nutrition typically was communicated visually, for example, placing vegetables on the burger, slowly picking up lettuce dripping with water, or words appearing on the screen such as “100% real beef”. Nutrition was also communicated verbally. A McDonald’s commercial in the United States stated, “the iceberg lettuce that McDonalds uses is the best in the country”. These examples frame nutrition to the audience and mislead them. Every food product that McDonalds advertised in the four commercials was researched online to reveal calories, fat, protein, and sodium. After observing online details, it was discovered that the nutritional content was misleading to television viewers. All McDonalds had done was add a small amount of marginally healthy food to an unhealthy meal. This does not make the meal healthy; it simply adds minimal nutritional value. The main outcome of this research revealed that the nutritional content was predominantly framed in countries with higher obesity rates.

5.7 PORTION SIZE

Each selected commercial was summarized using a verbal, written, and visual category. This approach allowed the commercials to be dissected by interpreting what McDonalds’ intent was in each commercial in every country. Each commercial’s portion size was observed in great detail using the framing theory (*RQ2*). Every commercial stated portion size differently, however they were all primarily similar. For example, portion size was always visually or verbally stated in a positive way. Just like nutritional content, portion size claims appeared more frequently in commercials with higher obesity rates. The framing theory was used to mislead American viewers into believing that bigger portions are better. Portion size generally appeared visually which made it more difficult to detect, however once all of the coders were trained properly, they were able to see how McDonalds commercials frame portion size abundantly primarily in the United States.

5.8 COMMERCIALS CAUSE OBESITY

In each country, three commercials were analyzed. Content analysis was performed for one commercial in each of the four countries. *RQ3* opted to find out how these results contributed to previous research that stated obesity is one of the causes of television message framing. The results of this study contribute extensively to television messaging. It gives many examples of how McDonalds does frame their messages. Since every single commercial that was analyzed framed at least one area of the commercial it is clear that McDonald's commercial messages contribute to the obesity rates in countries with higher obesity rates because of the way they mislead television viewers.

5.9 BENEFITS COMMUNICATED

The benefits were not always stated clearly for viewers to understand precisely. In most of the commercials, portion size or a nutritional aspect was communicated visually. Each benefit was communicated differently. One framed benefit that was stated in almost every commercial was a thin actor or actress eating McDonald's food.

5.10 EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

McDonalds uses the audience's emotions to help sell their product. The emotions that were analyzed in this research paper were various mood-enhancing feelings. This type of feeling is essentially an oxymoron for McDonalds because the food does the opposite. McDonald's food has an abundance of added sugars, fats, sodium, and pesticides in it that instead of making one feel healthy it makes people feel good for an hour followed by feeling worse. Reuters (2011) stated the brain essentially engages the same sensation when it sees a sweet such as a milkshake as it does if a drug addict saw cocaine. This is why many people consider food a drug. It has many similar qualities to drugs.

One example of a commercial with emotional appeal is in the American commercial where friends who are eating at McDonalds are happy and laughing. At the beginning of the same commercial, the son is with his family enjoying McDonalds. They too are laughing which expresses to the audience that they are enjoying themselves. This misleads McDonald's viewers into believing that if they eat McDonalds, they will be happy and will get along with their family. This is only one example of using an emotional appeal through commercials. This example shows the audience another way that McDonalds utilizes the framing theory. People want to feel happy, accepted, and attractive. McDonalds attends to the needs to their audience by making them believe that if they eat this food it will makes them feel this way too. This list is an important element in the study because it shows readers another way the framing theory is used in their commercials.

The following section will present a content analysis of one commercial from each of the four countries. Readers will begin to understand how nutritional content and portion sizes are framed differently in each country.

5.11 COMMERCIAL IN JAPAN

Part 1:

Date Aired on Television: December 2007

Length of Commercial: 15 Seconds

Number of YouTube views: 18,119,625 Views

McDonalds Product Advertised: Tomato McGrand

Part 2:

1) Nutritional Claims

Verbal:

None.

Written:

None.

Visual:

The audience observes Ronald McDonald's daughter during the entire commercial. She has an extremely low BMI and very sexual images of her are displayed. This indicates to viewers that she eats the tomato McGrand and is still very skinny; therefore viewers can eat this burger and still be very thin. However, this is not the case. This type of marketing strategy is widely used because viewers display similar characteristics as the actors in their commercials and therefore can relate to them and buy the McDonalds food too. This commercial is an example of the framing theory.

2) Portion Size

Verbal:

None.

Written:

The name of the burger has the word grand in it. This indicates that it is a large burger.

Visual:

At the end of the commercial a large burger takes up the whole screen. It takes up the actor(s) whole hand, which shows the audience that the burger will be very large.

Part 3:

Online nutritional content:

Online, this is called the *Tomato Big Chicken*. It has 544 calories in the entire sandwich and has 3800 mg of sodium in this sandwich. Overall this is a relatively healthy sandwich that is served in the Japanese McDonalds. Although it does not express in the commercial that the sandwich has any nutritional value, therefore viewers are not misled by this advertisement.

Part 4:

Actor(s) making the claims:

Age: In mid-20's.

Gender: Female

Race: White

Body Type: Low BMI

Part 5:

Type of Advertising Appeal:

Improved appearance was shown in this commercial as an emotional appeal. This emotion is shown from Ronald McDonald's daughter. She is in her 20's and is very thin. She has the sandwich that is being advertised in her hand that implies that if the viewers

eat this sandwich too than they will be very thin. Ronald McDonalds daughter appears in the commercial. It implies that Ronald McDonald's daughter would have eaten an abundance of this kind of food, and that it has had no detrimental effect on her health from prolonged indulgence.

Part 6:

Ways in which this commercial was framed:

There were two main ways that this commercial was framed. Firstly, the size of the very large burger took up Ronald McDonald's daughter's whole face and secondly, the person eating it was very thin.

5.12 COMMERCIAL IN INDIA

Part 1:

Date Aired on Television: 2008

Length of Commercial: 25 Seconds.

Number of YouTube views: 46,064 Views.

McDonalds Product Advertised: Spicy Paneer

Part 2:

1) Nutritional Claims

Verbal:

None.

Written:

None.

Visual:

None.

2) Portion Size

Verbal:

None.

Written:

None.

Visual:

Visually, the audience sees a humorous commercial. At the end of the commercial McDonalds finally displays their food product. Typically when the camera shows a close up of food followed by slowly raising the angle of the camera, it produces a larger view of the product. By doing this, McDonalds framed their food and gives the impression that their food is bigger than it actually is. This strategy took place in this commercial. A sandwich, a large fries, a Big Mac, and a strawberry milkshake are all shown. Because the actor indicates that he is extremely hungry, it gives the impression that the present McDonald's portion would be able to fill him up.

Part 3:

Online nutritional content:

In India the food is much different than in other countries. The food that was advertised appeared visually to be foods like in America, however since India generally has much different foods from North America that it was difficult to decipher exactly what was in the food advertised. Next, general foods offered in the McDonalds in India will be examined to determine what kinds of healthy and unhealthy foods can be purchased.

One of the most popular items on the menu in India is the McAloo Tikki. However, it is one of the higher calorie items on this menu. It has 424 calories, 9 grams of protein, 5 grams of sugar, and 940 mg of sodium. The Big Mac is the largest selling item that McDonalds has in the United States. When comparing these two items subtle differences were found. The Big Mac has 550 calories, 25 grams of protein, 9 grams of sugar, and 970 mg of sodium. As readers can undoubtedly see, the top selling product in India's McDonalds is healthier than the top selling product in the McDonald's in the United States. However, it is interesting to note that while three of the categories are less in India, the sodium content is nearly the same. Both of the sizes of the actual *Chicken McNuggets* are the same, however while comparing the two online another noticeable difference occurs. In India, the McNuggets only come in 4, 6, and 9 piece meals. In America the McNuggets come in 5, 6, 10, and 20 piece meals. Larger serving sizes present potential obesity problems. As stated earlier in this research paper, people will eat more food if larger portions are put in front of them.

Lastly, while comparing these two menus, many breakfast items in India are very different. For example, Veg McMuffin, Veg Supreme Muffin, and Veg Pizza McPuff's are all offered. These foods in India are much lower in calories. This demonstrates that India, a country with a relatively low obesity rate, has healthier food choices than in Canada or the United States, countries with higher obesity rates.

Part 4:

Actor(s) making the claims:

Age: 20-25

Gender: Male

Race: Indian

Body Type: Very Thin

Part 5:

Type of Advertising Appeal:

Mood alteration was an emotional appeal that was used in this commercial. This is because the actor knew that if he had McDonalds he would feel better.

Part 6:

Ways in which this commercial was framed:

This commercial was an example of the framing theory because the actor that was about to order pizza was thin. The commercial indicates that he is about to purchase a large burger, a large tray of fries, a chicken sandwich, and a milkshake. If anyone ate this much food at any given time on a regular basis they would put on a substantial amount of

weight. On average, a male adult should consume 2200 calories to sustain a healthy weight. If one ingested this meal then they would go over the recommended calorie intake and therefore gain weight. Overall however, this commercial was very straightforward to viewers and was not misleading.

5.13 COMMERCIAL IN CANADA

Part 1:

Date Aired on Television: June 2012

Length of Commercial: 33 Seconds.

Number of YouTube views: 28,799 Views.

McDonalds Product Advertised: McBistro

Part 2:

1) Nutritional Claims

Verbal:

There is no talking in this commercial until the very end. The voice over in the commercial stated “all the ingredients to make something great”. The ingredients the audience saw were very healthy ingredients. This then appears to the audience that the ingredients are great and healthy and therefore the burger is also.

Written:

None.

Visual:

This commercial is concentrating on persuading the audience that the food in the McBistro Burger is healthy. In the first few segments of the commercial, fresh shiny tomatoes appear. A few seconds later, a healthy chicken being cooked is shown in a close up shot, and then after that a worker places cheese onto the burger. Finally in the last segment, grilled mushrooms are put onto of the burger followed by McDonald's employees dancing around with iceberg lettuce and again fresh tomatoes in containers. These vegetables appear to be very fresh. While the burger is being placed into a container the camera shows different vegetables such as pickles, onions, and tomatoes.

The commercial is also advertising fries to go with this burger. Since the ingredients in the commercial are being sold as a healthy choice, they slide the fries in and hope that the audience sees the fries as healthy as well. Because McDonalds chooses water to go with this meal it indicates that it is a healthy meal because water is the healthiest choice for a beverage. On average, McDonald's meals are sold with a drink. Even though the commercial is advertising water, people are more likely to drink a sugar, artificially colored drink instead.

2) Portion Size

Verbal:

None.

Written:

None.

Visual:

None.

Part 3:

Online nutritional content:

This burger is only served in Canada and is a healthier choice than most burgers. It has 480 calories, which is a lot, however it is not excessive if eaten by itself without any sides dishes. With only 3 grams of sugar and 33 grams of protein, viewers in fact do see a somewhat healthy meal option in a Canadian McDonalds. Another positive observation about this commercial is that it is advertising water as its beverage of choice. Soda and juice is loaded with sugar and calories. The fact that the Canadian McDonalds advertised water is a step in the right direction.

The negative part to this commercial was the fries. The large fries appeared to be advertised with the burger. Fries have 500 calories in a large container. Of the 500 calories 220 are from fat, which also includes 350 grams of sodium, and only 6 grams of protein. This is one of the unhealthiest foods in the world. Therefore, even if the viewers are eating the relatively healthy sandwich, the meal becomes very unhealthy when adding the fries.

Part 4:

Actor(s) making the claims:

Age: All are 16-25 years old.

Gender: There are 4 males and 5 females

Race: 3 White females, 2 Caucasian females, 1 Asian male, 1 African-American male, and 1 African-American female.

Body Type: All actors and actresses had a low BMI.

Part 5:

Type of Advertising Appeal:

This commercial was advertised through positive feelings. The background music in the commercial is very upbeat. The employees working at the McDonalds are also having a great time cooking the food. This comes across to the audience as a positive feeling. The happy music and the happy employees communicate to viewers that if they go to McDonalds than they too will be happy.

Part 6:

Ways in which this commercial was framed:

This commercial was framed in the words that were said by the lady at the end. “All of the ingredients to make something great”. They are simply telling the audience that this will be a great and implying that it will be a healthy meal. Another way that this was framed was showing all of the vegetables to make the McBistro burger appear to be very healthy. At the end of the commercial McDonalds decided to include the fries with this burger. The framing theory was used here to make people believe that it is all healthy when in fact it was only the McBistro Burger that had any nutritional value.

5.14 COMMERCIAL IN THE UNITED STATES

Part 1:

Date Aired on Television: April 2012

Length of Commercial: 33 Seconds

Number of YouTube views: 10,722 Views

McDonalds Product Advertised: Bacon Angus Third Pounder

Part 2:

1) Nutritional Claims

Verbal:

The commercial over-embellished the content of the burger by stating that it is made with 100% pure Canadian Angus beef. The word pure implies that it has no additives in it.

Written:

None.

Visual:

The actress in the commercial was shown eating a salad, but this was in the background. The main food that was featured in the commercial was a *Bacon Angus Third Pounder*.

2) Portion Size

Verbal:

None.

Written:

At the end of the commercial it says “NEW smoky BBQ bacon Angus THIRD POUNDERS”. These words show increased portion size because of the word third pounder. This indicates to the audience that it is not a small burger. It also has an “s” on pounders. Therefore, viewers can come and buy more than one. Another factor in analyzing the content in this commercial is that third pounders are capitalized. This makes it stand out. The writing is also in white, which makes the McDonalds audience notice it even more because the background is black. The other writing is in red.

Visual:

This commercial is packed with different visual cues to communicate to the audience that this is an extremely large burger. At the beginning of the commercial a young lady is talking with a male but gets side tracked right after a woman in her forties drops all of her change because something caught her attention. Finally, the audience finds out what it was that had everyone’s attention. It was a male about twenty years old eating the *Bacon Angus Burger*. It looks very large. It takes up about half of the actor’s face and has bacon, pickles, and cheese coming out from the sides of the bun. This communicates to viewers that the beef and condiments are so large that they cannot even fit inside the bun.

Next, viewers see a man in his thirties spill ketchup because he is intrigued by this burger. Finally, a woman in her thirties is caught dead in her tracks and even drops her fry as she is putting it into her mouth. McDonalds showed the people giving all of their attention to this amazing burger, so the audience should also drop what they are doing and be startled and amazed at this large delicious product. Next, a twenty-year-old male with the burger looks over and sees an attractive woman in her twenties eating the same burger. The way that she is eating it is the same as how the male was eating it. The burger is spilling out of the sides, it takes up half of the actresses face, and her hands have a hard time even getting around the burger.

At the end of this commercial is a close up of the burger where it takes up the whole screen. The background has a type of fireworks coming out of nowhere as if it is a very exciting and new product that McDonalds now has and something to really celebrate.

Part 3:

Online nutritional content:

As readers can predict, this burger is very unhealthy. With 750 calories it is one of the unhealthiest products at McDonalds. There are also 39 grams of fat and 61 grams of carbohydrates. Along with this burger being very unhealthy, McDonalds also advertised other product in the commercial. At the beginning a female was eating a salad and a drink. The man that she was sitting with was eating chicken McNuggets. The man that spilled the ketchup had large fries beside him, and the women also had a fry in her mouth before dropping it. All of these products are unhealthy. In fact, the healthiest product that

was shown was the salad. This appears to be healthy to the McDonalds audience, however the salad appeared to be a premium Caesar salad with crispy chicken. This has 350 calories in it and an astonishing 740 grams of sodium. That means that it has more sodium than the large burger that was being advertised.

Part 4:

Actor(s) making the claims:

Age: 4 actors were in their twenties and 3 actors in their thirties.

Gender: 3 males and 4 female.

Race: 1 African American and 6 Caucasian men and women.

Body Type: All actors and actresses were of healthy weight

Part 5:

Type of Advertising Appeal:

This commercial was advertised using positive feelings, peer acceptance, and peer approval. Firstly, this commercial connects positive feelings from eating McDonalds. The main actor has a grin on his face as he is about to eat the McDonalds burger. This indicates that he will be happy once he has the McDonalds food. The next emotion displayed is a feeling of peer acceptance. Once again the main actor is looking around to see that many other McDonald's customers are staring at him. This reinforces his feelings of acceptance because others are noticing his food choice and think more highly of him. Lastly, the feeling of being more attractive is displayed in the commercial. When the actor is about to eat the burger, girls begin to look at him as if he is more desirable. A girl

is on what appears to be a date and becomes side tracked when she sees the actor pull out the burger. Another girl drops her change at the cash register, a woman drops her fry right before putting it into her mouth, and finally a man sprays ketchup. All of these actions make the actor appear more attractive and sexually more attractive by eating this McDonalds burger.

Part 6:

Ways in which this commercial was framed:

Firstly, the commercial only had actors and actresses that had a low BMI. This indicates to television viewers that they will be thin as well if they eat the food. This commercial was also framed by the emotion that it shows. For example, the actor is suddenly more desirable to women as soon as he eats this burger.

5.15 CROSS-CULTURAL CODING RESULTS

The coding procedure that took place in this study was much like inter-coder reliability. The results are slightly altered because the present research was conducted using qualitative analysis and not quantitative analysis. In the present research, coding was used to add additional evidence to each of the three findings. Cross-cultural coding that was used in this research had four students from each of the four countries partake in coding each of the twelve commercials. These results were combined with the researcher's results of each of the twelve commercials. Two of the students were males and two were females. Each of the coders had been in the United States anywhere from one to three years. Each of the coders was selected primarily because of their country of origin. They were also selected because they all watch television between one and three hours per day, and therefore see ample amounts of

commercials regularly. All four coders were of a healthy body weight. This revealed that the coders were knowledgeable about nutrition as well as portion sizes.

The results of the coding procedure revealed 100% reliability for framing the portion sizes verbally and visually. Nutritional content also had a 100% reliability rate which reveals that countries of higher obesity rates do communicate and frame portion size and nutritional content more often than countries with less of an obesity problem. An initial hypothesis was that each of the four coders would view the commercials differently depending of which country they were from. This was not the case. Each coder viewed commercials similarly therefore seeing how often the McDonalds commercials in the United States frame their messages. Advertising appeals had an 80% reliability rate. Although the coders agreed that many of the commercials were framed for nutritional content and portion size, they did not all agree on the framed emotions communicated in each commercial. One reason for this would be because of the cultural differences as a result of where they grew up.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION & RESEARCH OVERVIEW

6.1 CONTENT ANALYSIS OVERVIEW

A content analysis was performed throughout this research to provide insight as to how McDonalds frames their commercials differently around the world. The McDonald's company does this in many different ways including: spoken words, writing on the screen and visual images to further gain its audience's attention. Obesity lies at the center of this research. The primary reason for this study was to gain insight into the adult-target McDonalds television commercial messages in four different countries around the world with very different obesity rates. Research has already shown that "consumers are willing to use any available nutrition information when forming product evaluations and purchase intentions for menu items" (Kozup et al., 2003, p. 31). By performance the content analysis, the McDonald's audience was able to see samples of different commercials that make different nutritional claims (*RQ1*). The findings of *RQ1* were that nutritional claims were presented verbally as well as visually. One unexpected find in the study was that a country such as the United States with a higher obesity rate discussed nutritional content verbally and visually much more throughout the commercials. A country with lower obesity rates, such as Japan did not frame the nutritional content throughout the commercial.

The study also researched portion sizes and how they too were communicated differently in each of the commercials in conjunction with the framing theory (*RQ2*). This was shown primarily by images on the screen, such as extremely large burgers, that captured the entire screen. Portion size was also shown when an actor or actress attempted to consume the large McDonalds product. Failing to be able to consume the entire burger framed portion size to the audience by the size of the burger and it also communicated that having an extremely large burger is positive.

To conclude the findings of this research question, portion size was always communicated as a positive aspect of the McDonalds food. Through these images, viewers saw McDonald's products as oversized. Unfortunately, because McDonalds communicates portion size as positive, it affirms this thought to television viewers as well. Not all people realize that larger portions are not a healthy option. This certainly contributes to the obesity epidemic around the world.

Lastly, this study sought to better understand how obesity is caused by television commercial messages. A popular theme that appeared in each of the three Japanese commercials was how straight forward the commercials were. These commercials were not framed and the audience was not misled by what appeared on the screen and what the actor or voice over stated. Previous research has focused on the consumer's perception of the advertisement, which leads to purchasing the advertisement product (Dodds, Tseelon, & Weitkamp, 2008). The result of this study was that the television viewers believe what they are seeing on television to be correct and true. Therefore, based on this study it can be believed that the audience to the McDonalds commercials also believe what McDonalds is telling them and believe that much of the food is healthy when in fact most was not.

Finally, while observing the different commercial results, it clearly shows that McDonald's commercials are different in these four countries, which correlates and contributes to the citizens in the countries being more obese. The content analysis comparing the four countries did show many different findings. In the United States, the commercials had more to do with portion size. Also, after looking online, McDonald's food is simply unhealthier in America. The only correlation between countries with high obesity rates and countries with low obesity rates were that they all framed the nutrition of the food by having extremely thin models eating McDonald's food.

6.2 CONCLUSION TO THE FRAMING THEORY

The main theory that was analyzed in the research was the framing theory. As discussed in the literature review, the framing theory is a concept that frames the knowledge structure and defines features and attributes of stimulus domain (Makoul & Peter, 2004). Chapter two of this paper spoke about how a frame highlights a certain topic suggesting a relationship as well as a solution to a particular problem. For example, when a person eats McDonald's food they will suddenly have more self-esteem than before eating at McDonalds.

The framing theory was not only used for nutrient content commercials but also with portion size commercials. The framing theory was clearly shown throughout this research to frame McDonald's commercials in a positive way. McDonalds also used the framing theory to communicate to their audience that larger portions are positive. When this is being communicated constantly, viewers then believe those bigger portions are better. These large portion sizes are now a primary contribution to obesity.

6.3 INITIAL ASSUMPTIONS

Message framing inaccurately portrays the food that McDonalds actually serves in the restaurant. All of the four coders and the researcher observed that the American McDonalds commercials framed nutritional content to their audience much more often than in Japan. One of the assumptions before the research began was that the countries with higher obesity rates would communicate nutritional content less aggressively than countries with lower obesity rates. The results of this study indicated the opposite. When a country had a higher obesity rate they will communicate nutrition content more. For example, in the Canadian McDonalds commercial that was analyzed, the entire commercial is about nutrition. The commercial resulted in being a fairly nutritious product, however the country is not. The commercials from countries such as Japan did provide a more accurate representation of the food. Therefore, in these

countries the framing theory is not used as often. One reason for this would be because McDonalds sells their product in the United States for an everyday purchase item. By marketing that one can eat it every day they must make it appear nutritious. In Japan, it is communicated as a treat therefore McDonalds do not need to communicate nutrition to this country because they know that the Japanese citizens will not eat it every day. The countries with the higher obesity rates not only communicate nutrition more often to their viewers but they also use the framing theory more often. This results in misleading messages.

6.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The first limitation that was encountered in the present study was that not all of the four countries spoke English. Therefore, the commercials were not able to be chosen at random and were only able to be chosen online. Secondly, not every McDonald's commercial that appears on television also appears on You Tube. Even though a wide representation was used throughout the twelve commercials this may have altered the results. Lastly, the commercials were chosen from very different time periods. One of the main reasons for this was that the commercials all needed to be in English so that each coder could understand what was being said. If the commercials were all in the past year the results of the study could also have been altered. McDonalds was used in this research simply because it is one of the largest name brands for fast food items. Other fast food companies will have similar unhealthy products.

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study's results indicate that advertisers use specific techniques to frame their messages. One example of this is commercials using light and small fonts. The font is almost illegible for viewers to see depending on the television size. McDonald's, like many companies, are able to use the framing theory to their advantage. By framing their message, they can choose not to disclose certain nutritional information. The government needs to push for the truth to be stated in each commercial.

Technology is at the fingertips of many citizens in these countries. McDonald's customers are able to view all of the nutritional information at the touch of a button at any time. All of the four countries had their McDonalds nutritional content online, however it was not easy to find. McDonalds should have nutritional information more easily available their websites so that customers can view the nutritional content at any time.

6.6 FUTURE RESEARCH

A great deal needs to change in the United States, not only with commercials but also with the country's obesity rates. If American citizens were educated about potential health risks for eating this type of food, it may result in McDonalds needing to make their menu healthier. Although McDonalds has changed their menu by adding salads in the last decade, they also have increased the sizes of everything.

A further content analysis should also be completed in future research to further analyze the obesity issues in America. A broader content analysis ought to be completed of cable network programs that are popularly viewed. This research also is targeted at adults. Further research could be targeted more towards women and how they view these commercials. Any of the proposed studies listed above would be helpful because it would provide longer tracking patterns. All the present research was aimed at having a deeper understanding of the problems within message framing in television commercial messages around the world.

APPENDIX A: CODING FRAMEWORK

CODING FRAMEWORK

Part 1. General Information about the Television YouTube McDonald's Commercial Messages.

This section is based on previous research (Abbatangelo-Gray et al., 2008, p. 171).

- McDonalds Product
 - Example: Big Mac Meal.
- Commercial Duration.
 - Example: 35 seconds.
- Country of Commercial.
 - Example: Japan.
- Commercial Number
 - Example: Number 3.
- Country Coder is from.
 - Example: Japan.

Part 2. Nutritional Claims and Delivery from YouTube McDonald's Commercials.

This section is based on previous research (Bryd-Bredbenner & Grasso, 2001, p. 39).

Identify the method of the claim that appears:

- Verbal
 - Identify if delivered from an audio recording
 - Example: “A healthy start to a healthy day.”

- If any on screen actor was used proceed to identify actor's body type.
- Visual
 - Identify if words were written on screen.
 - Identify if delivered product looks healthy on screen.
 - Example: Lettuce being placed on a burger.
- Both
 - Claims have expressed both verbal and visual.

Part 3. Portion Size Delivery from McDonald's Commercials on YouTube.

This section was based on previous research (Bryd-Bredbenner & Grasso, 2001).

Identify the method of the claim:

- Verbal
 - Identify if Actor or Voice over states increased portion size claim.
 - Example: "Our name burger is bigger than ever!"
- Visual
 - Identify if camera angle is deceiving.
 - Example: Burger takes up actor's entire face.
- Both
 - Claims have expressed both verbal and visual.

Part 4. Types of Advertising Appeals that were used in the McDonald's Commercials appearing on YouTube.

This section was based on previous research (Warren, Wicks, Wicks, Fosu, & Chung, 2008, p. 237).

- Achievement
 - Suggests that consumer will obtain a desired goal
 - Example: Reach diet goals
- Action
 - Suggests product will make consumer more daring
 - Example: Actor is asking a girl out on a date.
- Adult Approval
 - Suggests product is linked to an adult receiving approval from another.
 - Example: Child is happy with parent.
- Appearance
 - Suggests appearance as the main reason for buying the product.
 - Example: Actor is happy with how they appear.
- Energy
 - Suggests actor will have more energy
 - Actor's energy improves after eating McDonald's product.
- Enhance positive feelings.
 - Suggests that product will create or enhance positive feelings.
 - Example: Happiness.
- Peer Acceptance
 - Suggests product is associated with being accepted by one's peers.
 - Example: Teenager now is popular at school.
- Remove negative feelings.
 - Suggests that product will remove negative feelings.
 - Example: Stressful day followed by eating McDonalds.

- Other appeals.
- None.

APPENDIX B: CODING INSTRUMENT

Coding Instrument

Part 1. General Information

1. McDonalds Product _____
2. Commercial Duration _____
3. Country of Commercial _____
4. Commercial Number _____
5. Country Coder is from _____

Part 2. Types of Nutritional claims Advertised – Check all that apply

Type:

1. Visual _____

a. Detailed statement, if applicable:

2. Verbal _____

a. Detailed statement, if applicable:

Part 3. Types of Portion Size Claims Advertised – Check all that apply

Type:

1. Visual _____

- a. Detailed statement, if applicable:

2. Verbal _____

- a. Detailed statement, if applicable:

Part 4. Types of Advertising Appeals – Check all that apply.

Type:

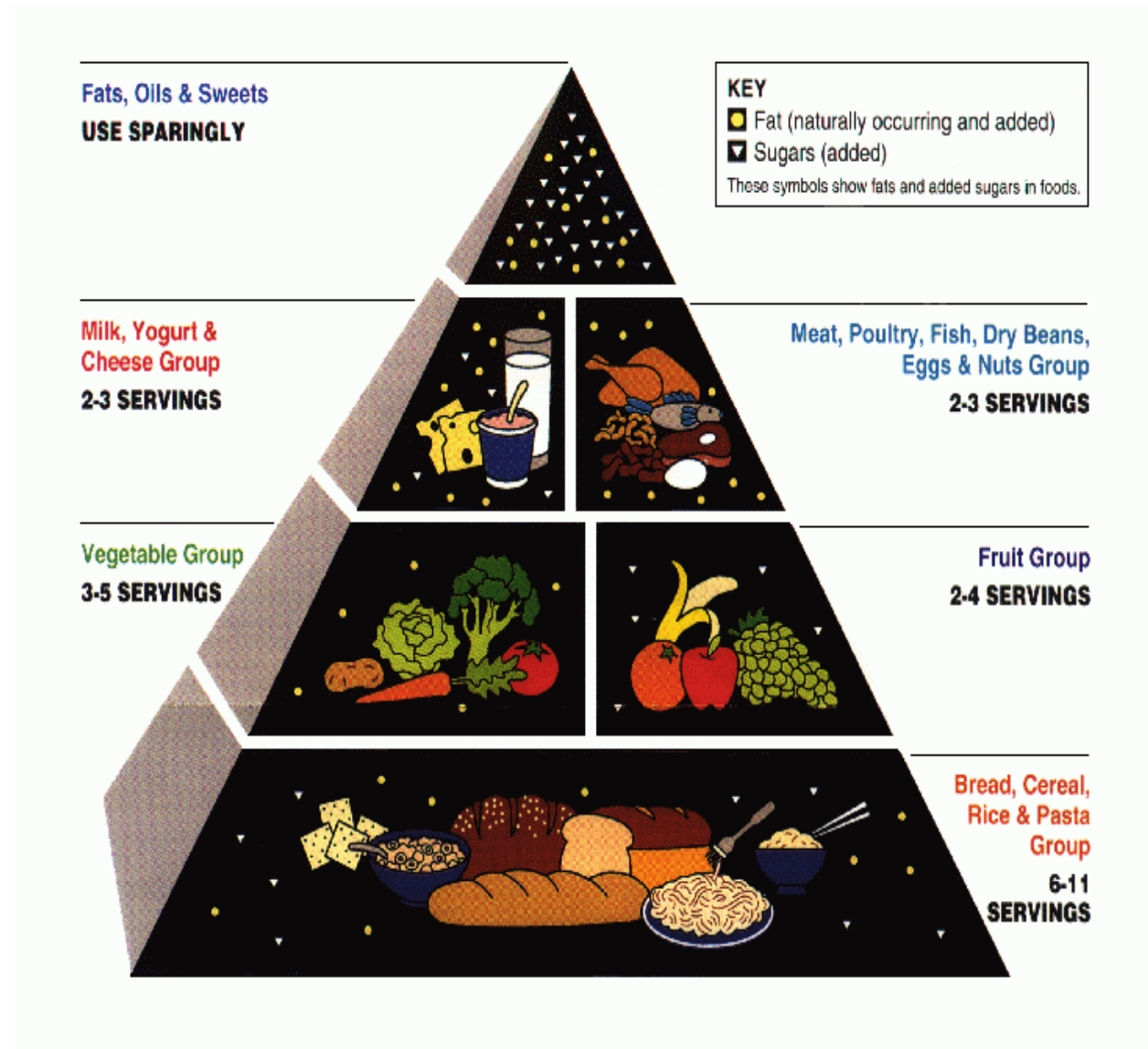
- 1. Enhanced Positive Feelings _____
- 2. Remove Negative Feelings _____
- 3. Achievement _____
- 4. Action _____
- 5. Peer Acceptance _____
- 6. Adult Approval _____
- 7. Appearance _____
- 8. Energy _____
- 9. Other _____
- 10. None _____

- a. Describe any that apply:

Please hand this paper to the Researcher. Thank you!

APPENDIX C: USDA FOOD GUIDE PYRAMID

The USDA Food Guide Pyramid
(United States Department of Agriculture [USDA], 2012)



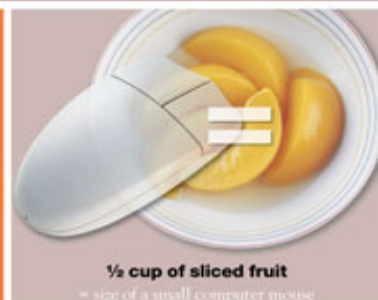
APPENDIX D: USDA PORTION CONTROL GUIDE

How Much Do YOU Eat?

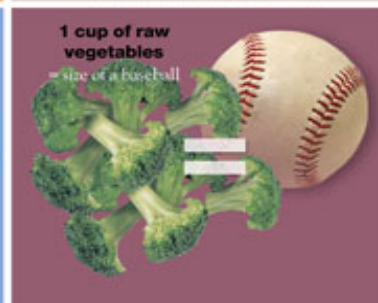
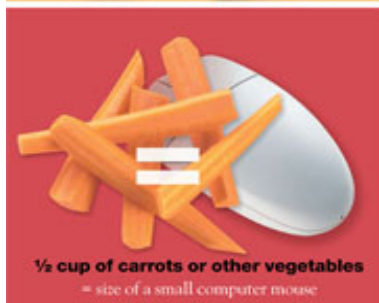
Use these everyday items to estimate the amount you eat.



Amounts of foods
For 2,000 calories



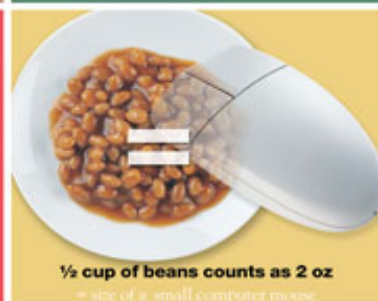
2 cups
Fruit Group



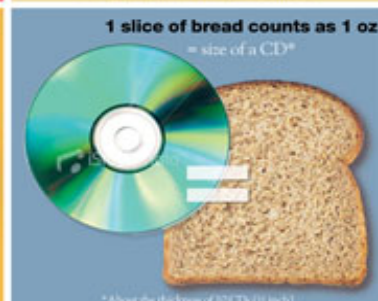
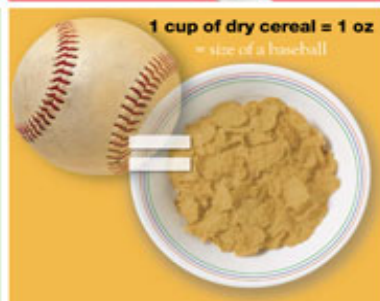
2½ cups
Vegetable Group



3 cups or equivalent
Milk Group



5½ ounces or equivalent
Meat & Beans Group



6 ounces or equivalent
Grains Group

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