

Running Head: FROM SUPERSIZING TO HEALTHY

From supersizing to healthy: Can McDonald's change its  
image among today's college students?

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### Abstract

Release of the documentary, “Super Size Me,” initiated a crisis for McDonald’s, which responded with a “corrective action” strategy (Pompper & Higgins, 2007). To evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy, university students responded to a fact sheet highlighting McDonald’s healthy initiatives. Results indicated a greater likelihood of eating at McDonald’s, stronger beliefs that it is possible to maintain a healthy diet at McDonald’s, and a weaker belief in the fast food industry’s role in America’s obesity epidemic. McDonald’s public relations campaign was successful, but awareness of the message among this important segment of the public remained weak.

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Fast food chain restaurants have been under attack for their response to the growing trend of obesity. These restaurants have been criticized for offering menu items that have too many calories and too much fat. As the industry leader, McDonald's Corporation has been the primary target of this criticism. Modeling the success of litigation against the tobacco industry, obese people have filed several lawsuits against McDonald's, alleging that the corporation is responsible for their weight and its consequences to health.

On May 7, 2004, documentary filmmaker Morgan Spurlock released "Super Size Me," and it caused an immediate uproar across the nation. Spurlock chronicled his 30 days of eating only at McDonald's, sampling every item on the menu at least once. As a result of his experiment, Spurlock's weight increased from 185 to 210 pounds, and his body fat composition rose from a fairly lean 11 to 18 percent. His cholesterol moved from a healthy 165 to an alarming 230 ("PCRM, director Morgan Spurlock urge Congress: 'Stop the supersizing of America'; Doctors' group, filmmaker donate DVDs of "Super Size Me" to every member of Congress," 2004).

Not only is McDonald's an industry leader, it is also the most heavily advertised single brand in any product category. Among restaurants, the second most heavily advertised single brand was Burger King Corporation, followed (in order) by Taco Bell, Wendy's, and KFC. Together, those five restaurant chains accounted for nearly 2 percent of all consumer-advertising dollars spent by all U.S. companies in all media (Knutson, 2000). In 2001 alone, McDonald's spent \$1.4 billion just on advertising in order to get and keep the public's attention for their products (McCook, 2004).

After the release of “Super Size Me,” McDonald’s attempted to offset the negative impact of the film in a number of ways, pursuing a “corrective action” strategy to the crisis (Pompper & Higgins, 2007). In Australia, McDonald’s invested in a blanket advertising campaign featuring McDonald’s Australia CEO Guy Russo. The film probably benefited from McDonald’s advertising, and enjoyed the largest opening ever for a documentary in Australia (Sweney, 2004). In the United Kingdom, McDonald’s took a more subtle approach, arguing that overeating and not exercising like Spurlock is unhealthy in general. Soon after the release of “Super Size Me,” McDonald’s issued a statement announcing that they were no longer going to offer their Super Size options for French fries and sodas. They claimed that this decision was not related to the release of the documentary (McCook, 2004).

Using a content analysis of media references to McDonald’s response to “Super Size Me,” Pompper and Higgins (2007) concluded that most journalists seem to have viewed McDonald’s crisis messages favorably. The “corrective action” strategies of removing Super Size options from their menu, adding healthier items like salads and fruits, and adding nutritional tips on their website resulted in an image of McDonald’s as responsible and caring.

Although journalists are definitely opinion leaders, we cannot assume that their favorable response to McDonald’s corrective action crisis strategies necessarily translates to favorable customer opinions. Fourteen percent of Americans consume a diet comprised almost entirely of fast food (American Demographics, November 1, 2001). In particular, an important audience for fast food outlets is adolescents and young adults. “More than 1 in 5 of those ages 18 to 24, or 22 percent, say their diet consists mainly of fast food and convenience food, such as frozen dinners”

(ibid., ¶ 1). Consequently, the current research attempted to explore the success of McDonald's corrective action crisis strategy within a core audience of college students.

Among the variables investigated in this research are college students' awareness of "Super Size Me," their subsequent opinions of fast food and McDonald's in particular, and their response to elements of McDonald's corrective action strategy as summarized in a fact sheet.

## Method

### *Participants*

One hundred nine participants forming a convenience sample were recruited from psychology classes at a large, predominantly undergraduate, public university in California. Seventy-four women and 35 men participated, and their average age was 19.92 years. Thirty-nine participants were first-year students, 16 were second-year, 16 were third year, 28 were fourth-year, and 6 had attended college for more than 5 years.

The average height of participants was 5.62 feet, and their average weight was 143.5 lbs.

Consequently, the participants had an average body mass index, or BMI, of 22.25. The average participant, therefore, was neither overweight nor obese (Malina & Katzmarzyk, 1999).

Participants were not compensated.

### *Materials*

Materials included a questionnaire and a McDonald's fact sheet, both constructed by the researcher (see Appendix A and B).

The questionnaire consisted of 25 questions. The first 5 questions were used to collect demographic information, including the participants' age, sex, height, weight, and year in school. Three additional questions asked participants about their current fast food eating habits, such as how frequently they eat fast food and the identify of their favorite fast food outlets. Twelve

Likert scale items assessed participants' awareness of the documentary "Super Size Me," awareness of McDonald's response, and attitudes about the documentary, McDonald's, healthy eating, and the American obesity epidemic. Finally, an open-ended item allowed participants to share any further reactions they had to the issues raised in the research.

The McDonald's fact sheet was a one-page summary of McDonald's public relations campaign developed in response to "Super Size Me" (McDonald's, n.d.).

### *Procedure*

Prospective participants were given a brief oral description of the experiment by the researcher and an opportunity to read an informed consent form. Students who chose to participate completed an initial questionnaire. Following completion, participants were given the opportunity to review the McDonald's fact sheet at their own pace. Subsequently, they filled out the second part of the questionnaire. The entire procedure took approximately 15 minutes.

### *Results*

Participants showed a high degree of awareness of the documentary "Super Size Me." Only 2 participants indicated that they had neither heard of nor seen the documentary. Sixty participants, or 55 percent, had actually seen the documentary, whereas 49 participants, or 45 percent, had not. Males were somewhat more likely to have seen the documentary, with 19 out of 33 (58%) reporting having seen it. Forty-one of the females (54%) had seen the film. However, the relationship between gender and having seen the documentary was not significant ( $X^2=0.122$ ,  $p>.05$ ; See Figure 1).

However, participants differed significantly on only one question in the questionnaire on the basis of having seen the documentary or not. The question showing a significant difference based on having seen the documentary asked "How much has your knowledge of the

documentary “Super Size Me” influenced your eating habits?” This Likert scale item ranged from 1 (very little) to 7 (significantly). Those having seen the film had average responses of 3.576, whereas those who had not seen the film had average responses of 2.450 ( $F=13.82$ ,  $p<.001$ ). A frequency distribution of these responses may be seen in Figure 2. Results from single factor analyses of variance for each question as a function of having seen the film or not are available in Table 1.

Participants were asked to respond to five questions both before and after viewing a fact sheet prepared by the experimenter that summarized McDonald’s nutrition initiatives.

Comparisons between matched questions were made using paired t-tests, shown in Table 2.

Responses given after viewing the fact sheet were significantly different for four out of the five questions: (9/24) “Compared to other fast food restaurants, how nutritious is the food available at McDonald’s?” ( $t=7.54$ ,  $p<.001$ ); (10/21) “I think you can maintain a healthy diet and eat at McDonald’s” ( $t=7.99$ ,  $p<.001$ ); (11/20) “I plan to eat at McDonald’s at least once within the next week” ( $t=2.71$ ,  $p<.008$ ); and (12/22) “I believe that the fast food industry has contributed to America’s obesity epidemic” ( $t=-5.32$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The remaining question was close to showing significance: (13/23) “I believe that people, not restaurants, are responsible for maintaining weight” ( $t=-1.98$ ,  $p<.051$ ).

There were no significant differences in responses to any of the attitudinal questions (9-14; 17-24) as a function of sex. The only question that approached significance was “How much has your knowledge of ‘Super Size Me’ influenced your eating habits?” ( $F=3.70$ ,  $p<.057$ ). The average response was 3.33 for females and 2.697 for males.

Participants' frequency of eating fast food is illustrated in Figure 2. The largest number of respondents (49) reported that they ate fast food once or twice a month. Twenty-two eat fast food once a week, and 25 eat fast food several times a year.

Participants chose the following reasons for eating fast food most frequently: saves time (78 participants), inexpensive (61 participants), taste (54 participants), and socializing with friends (27 participants). A complete list of their responses may be seen in Table 3.

Participants also noted which fast food restaurants they had patronized in the past year. McDonald's was the third most frequently patronized restaurant (61 participants) behind Taco Bell (85 participants) and Subway (76 participants). However, only 6 participants chose McDonald's as their first choice among fast food restaurants. Taco Bell was selected as a first choice by 36 participants, In 'n Out was the first choice of 19 participants, and Subway was the first choice of 18 participants. Complete rankings of fast food restaurants can be seen in Table 4.

Participants were asked to note if they had seen nutrition advertising for fast food restaurants. With 1 labeled as "never," 4 as "occasionally," and 7 as "frequently," the mean response was 4.3. A frequency distribution of these responses may be seen in Figure 3.

Participants believed that the documentary "Super Size Me" had had a larger influence on the eating habits of other people than it had had on their own eating habits. With 1 labeled as "very little" and 7 labeled as "significantly," participants gave a mean response of 3.12 when asked about influence on their own habits, but a mean response of 4.08 when asked about influence on the habits of others. In addition, their responses to the question about influence on their own habits appeared bimodal, with peaks at 2 and 5, whereas their responses to the question about the influence on others' habits appeared more normal. A frequency distribution of these responses may be seen in Figure 4.

Participants were asked to judge how typical the results shown in “Super Size Me” were. With 1 labeled as “very typical” and 7 labeled as “not at all typical,” their mean response was 3.25.

Participants were also given the opportunity to supply any further comments they wished to make. A complete list of these comments is available in Table 5. Many of these comments raised concerns about McDonald’s efforts to portray themselves as a more nutritious alternative. For instance, one respondent said, “The ‘healthy options’ menu have just as much and more sugar than some of the cheeseburgers.” Another respondent commented, “It seems to me that even the ‘healthy’ choices at McDonalds have more calories than they are worth!” Another said, “It’s good that McDonalds is providing healthier selections but I heard the dressing for those salads is really high in fat and calories.” Not everyone viewed health as a major factor, however. One respondent lamented, “I miss the old fatty McDonalds french fries.

Question 9/24 asked participants to respond to the question “Compared to other fast food restaurants, how nutritious is the food available at McDonald’s?” With 1 labeled “Very Nutritious” and 7 labeled “Much Less Nutritious,” participants responded with a mean of 4.899 before reading the fact sheet and with a mean of 4.349 after reading the fact sheet. As stated previously, this difference is significant ( $t=7.54$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

For questions 10/21, students were asked before and after they saw the fact sheet to respond to the statement “I think you can maintain a healthy diet and eat at McDonald’s.” With 1 labeled as “Strongly Agree” and 7 labeled as “Strongly Disagree,” the mean responses were 5.624 (pre-test) and 4.596 (post-test). These means are significantly different ( $t=7.99$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

Questions 11/20 asked participants to respond to the statement “I plan to eat at McDonald’s at least once within the next week.” With 1 labeled “Strongly Agree” and 7 labeled

“Strongly Disagree,” the mean response before reviewing the fact sheet was 6.537. After reviewing the fact sheet, the mean response was 6.250. Once again, these means were significantly different ( $t=2.71$ ,  $p<.008$ ).

Questions 12/22 asked students to respond to the statement “I believe that the fast food industry has contributed to America’s obesity epidemic.” With 1 labeled as “Strongly Agree” and 7 labeled as “Strongly Disagree,” the mean response was 1.898 before reading the fact sheet and 2.287 after reading the fact sheet. Reading the fact sheet significantly affected responses to this question ( $t=-5.32$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

Questions 13/23 asked students to respond to the statement “I believe that people, not restaurants, are responsible for maintaining healthy weight.” With 1 labeled as “Strongly Agree” and 7 labeled as “Strongly Disagree,” the mean response was 1.944 before reading the fact sheet and 2.120 after reading the fact sheet. The difference between these means was not significant ( $t=-1.98$ ,  $p<.051$ ), although it approached significance.

#### Discussion

This primary research project set out to assess the impact of the documentary “Super Size Me” on the fast food eating habits and attitudes of college students. In addition, the research sought to answer the question of whether or not McDonald’s efforts to counter the documentary’s message were effective with this audience. In both instances, the data provide considerable insights.

The participant pool appears to be representative of the demographic intended by the experimenter. In age, gender, and experience in college, these participants are typical of students at largely residential, public, four-year colleges and universities. Consequently, the results of this study may be safely generalized to other typical student populations.

The participants may not have conformed to estimates that 22% of this age group eats a diet primarily of fast food (American Demographics, November 1, 2001). None of the participants reported eating fast food daily, and only 9 out of 109 (8%) reported eating fast food several times per week. The modal response (49 out of 109 or 45%) reported eating fast food once or twice a month. One possible source of discrepancy is that previous work had included convenience foods prepared at home, such as frozen TV dinners, whereas the current research focused exclusively at fast food eaten at restaurants. In future research, it would be helpful to explicitly and carefully define exactly what is meant by “fast food.”

Participants reported that they ate fast foods for a number of reasons. Fast food was eaten because it saved time (78 participants or 72%), was relatively inexpensive (61 participants or 56%), tastes good (54 participants or 50%), and provides an opportunity to socialize with friends (27 participants or 25%). Only one respondent reported eating fast food because it is nutritious.

The participants’ choice of fast food restaurants to patronize is probably influenced by the location of these establishments in the city of San Luis Obispo. Unlike many universities, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo does not have any chain fast food restaurants operating on campus. Instead, the university’s foundation operates a number of different restaurants for students purchasing meal plans or single meals. However, San Luis Obispo is a relatively small community (approximately 45,000 residents), and many restaurants are located within a short distance of the campus. The nearest McDonald’s restaurant is located within walking distance to the campus.

McDonald’s was patronized by 61 out of 109 participants (56%) within the last year. Only Taco Bell and Subway were listed more frequently by respondents (85 or 78% and 76 or 70% respectively). However, McDonald’s was listed as a first choice by only 6 respondents

(6%). Four restaurants received more first place votes than McDonald's. Thirty-six respondents (33%) chose Taco Bell, 19 (17%) chose In 'n Out, 18 (17%) chose Subway, and 8 (7%) chose Burger King.

Participants were very aware of the documentary "Super Size Me." Only 2 participants out of 109 indicated that they had neither seen nor heard of the documentary. Sixty participants (55%) had actually seen the documentary, whereas 49 (45%) had not. There were no significant gender differences between those who had seen or not seen the documentary. In contrast, participants were much less aware of nutrition advertising for fast food restaurants. In response to a question asking them if they had seen such advertising, the average response was equivalent to "occasionally." This result suggests that McDonald's may wish to devote more advertising resources to their nutrition program in order to counteract the strong awareness of "Super Size Me."

Participants were also asked to judge how typical they believed the results of the documentary to be. With 1 labeled as "very typical" and 7 labeled as "not at all typical," the mean response was 3.25. They appeared to believe that Spurlock's experience was possible, but they seemed to recognize the artificial nature of the situation.

One of the major research questions of this project asked whether or not viewing "Super Size Me" would have a major impact on attitudes towards fast food in general and McDonald's in particular. Only one question produced significantly different answers from respondents who had or had not seen the film. The question that was significant asked "How much has your knowledge of the documentary "Super Size Me" influenced your eating habits?" With 1 meaning "very little" to 7 meaning "significantly," respondents who had seen the film provided a mean answer of 3.576, whereas those who had not seen the film provided a mean answer of 2.450. In

spite of the fact that the two groups did not appear to hold different attitudes about fast food and McDonald's, as represented by the remaining questions on the questionnaire, they appeared to *believe* that they had been somewhat influenced by watching the film.

The failure to find significant differences between people who had and had not seen the film on the remaining questions is interesting, given the fact that exposure to the film was a matter of participant choice rather than random selection. It is likely that people who would go to see "Super Size Me" might already have opinions of fast food that are different from people who did not see the film. It seems unlikely that the people who would attend the film would have more positive views of fast food than people who did not go, and that the film had simply moved the people with positive opinions in a more negative direction. Instead, it seems more likely that the film either had little or no impact on participants' existing attitudes.

Participants believed that the documentary "Super Size Me" had a larger influence on the eating habits of other people than it did on themselves. The overall mean response to the question of how the documentary influenced personal eating habits was 3.12, but the mean response to how much the documentary influenced other people's eating habits was 4.08 (with 1 being "very little" and 7 being "significantly"). This discrepancy may be an example of what social psychologists refer to as the "fundamental attribution error" (Heider, 1958). According to this principle, people are likely to overestimate the contribution of environmental variables, such as watching a film, to the behavior of others. In viewing their own behavior, participants may view themselves as less likely to be swayed by external influences.

A second major question of this research project asked whether or not McDonald's efforts to mitigate the impact of "Super Size Me" were effective with a college-aged sample. The answer to this question appears to be yes. Viewing the fact sheet provided by the experimenter,

summarizing McDonald's efforts to provide healthy, nutritious alternatives, significantly affected the participants' responses to four out of five attitudinal questions. The four items showing significant pre- and post-test differences were "Compared to other fast food restaurants, how nutritious is the food available at McDonald's," "I think you can maintain a healthy diet and eat at McDonald's," "I plan to eat at McDonald's at least once within the next week," and "I believe that the fast food industry has contributed to America's obesity epidemic." The remaining item, "I believe that people, not restaurants, are responsible for maintaining weight," approached significance ( $t=-1.98, p<.051$ ).

These results suggest that McDonald's is on the right track in its efforts to present nutritional alternatives without necessarily alienating its core customers. The weakness of the approach, as stated previously, is that fewer respondents were initially aware of these efforts than of the "Super Size Me" documentary. Based on the data gathered during this study, McDonald's should promote awareness of their health and nutrition initiatives more widely among college-aged customers.

Results of individual items provided further insight into student attitudes towards McDonald's and fast food. Questions 9 and 24 asked respondents how nutritious McDonald's was relative to other fast food outlets. With 1 labeled as "very nutritious" and 7 labeled "much less nutritious," the mean response was 4.899 before reading the fact sheet and 4.349 after reading the fact sheet. Even though reading the fact sheet changed student attitudes in a more positive direction, McDonald's was still viewed slightly more negatively than "other fast food restaurants." McDonald's might benefit from further advertising that would help them gain an advantage relative to their competitors, much like Subway has done in the past.

Viewing the fact sheet had its largest effect on responses to Questions 10 and 21: “I think you can maintain a healthy diet and eat at McDonald’s.” With 1 labeled as “strongly agree” and 7 labeled as “strongly disagree,” the mean response before viewing the fact sheet was 5.624 and after viewing the fact sheet, 4.596. Although significant change took place, it should be noted that responses remained in the “disagree” direction.

In spite of improved attitudes towards McDonald’s and fast food due to viewing the fact sheet, students remained very unlikely to eat at McDonald’s the following week. When asked to respond to the statement “I plan to eat at McDonald’s at least once within the next week,” with 1 meaning “strongly agree” and 7 meaning “strongly disagree,” the mean responses were 6.537 before viewing the fact sheet, and 6.250 after viewing the fact sheet. McDonald’s will need to do additional advertising and communication with the college age group to translate any improvements in attitudes into behavior. One possible clue would be to analyze attitudes towards the chief competitors outlined in this research. Why do students prefer Taco Bell to McDonald’s, for instance? How important is nutrition and health in these consumer decisions? Future research should address these important issues.

Participants appear to be quite convinced that the fast food industry has contributed to America’s obesity epidemic, although viewing the fact sheet softened this opinion somewhat. With 1 labeled “strongly agree” and 7 labeled as “strongly disagree,” the mean response was 1.898 before reading the fact sheet and 2.287 after reading the fact sheet.

In spite of their strong belief that the fast food industry has contributed to American obesity, participants are also quite convinced that weight is a personal responsibility. When asked to respond to the statement, “I believe that people, not restaurants, are responsible for maintaining healthy weight,” the mean response was 1.944 before reading the fact sheet and

2.120 after reading the fact sheet (with 1 labeled as “strongly agree” and 7 labeled as “strongly disagree.”) The difference between responses to these questions before and after viewing the fact sheet approached significance ( $p < .051$ ) but was not significant. Future research might clarify participants’ attitudes about the relative contributions of the fast food industry and personal responsibility to the American obesity epidemic.

The open-ended request for further comments generated a number of skeptical responses. Several participants doubted that the foods labeled as healthy alternatives were actually more healthy than the normal burger and fries fare.

In conclusion, this research project successfully addressed its main goals of investigating the impact of the documentary “Super Size Me” and the effectiveness of McDonald’s efforts to counteract the documentary within a college-aged sample. McDonald’s appears to have an effective strategy, but it is relatively less well known among college students than the documentary. McDonald’s should be advised to publicize their health and nutrition initiatives more thoroughly to this population.

Future research should be directed at comparing McDonald’s health initiatives with its competition.

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Appendix A:

**Eating Attitudes Questionnaire**

**Code:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please fill out the questions in each part below to the best of your ability. If there is a question that you do not know or want to answer, please write down "N/A." Thank you for your time and cooperation.**

**Part One:**

- 1. Age \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Sex (circle one):      M      F
- 3. Height \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Current Weight \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Current year in college (circle one):  
     1      2      3      4      5      6      more than 6

**Part Two:**

6. Which of the following best describes how often you have eaten fast food in the past year (circle one)?

- daily
- several times per week
- once a week
- once or twice a month
- several times per year
- once a year
- never

7. Please check any of the following factors that apply. I eat fast food because:

- \_\_\_\_\_ I like the taste.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I don't cook.
- \_\_\_\_\_ It's relatively inexpensive.
- \_\_\_\_\_ It's consistent.
- \_\_\_\_\_ It saves me time.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The staff is friendly.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The restaurant is clean.
- \_\_\_\_\_ My friends eat there, and I want to be social.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The food is nutritious.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I don't eat fast food
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other (please specify)
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

8. Please rank order the fast food outlets where you have purchased food in the past year. In other words, place a “1” next to the restaurant you patronized most frequently, and so on. If you did not eat fast food at a particular restaurant in the past year, please leave the space blank.

	McDonalds
	Carls Jr.
	Burger King
	Dominos Pizza
	Wendy’s
	Taco Bell
	Subway
	Other (please specify)

**For the following questions, circle your answer based on each statement presented.**

9. Compared to other fast food restaurants, how nutritious is the food available at McDonalds?

Very Nutritious		About the Same		Much Less Nutritious
1	2	3	4	5 6 7

10. I think you can maintain a healthy diet and eat at McDonalds.

Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5 6 7

11. I plan to eat at McDonalds at least once within the next week.

Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5 6 7

12. I believe that the fast food industry has contributed to America’s obesity epidemic.

Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5 6 7

13. I believe that people, not restaurants, are responsible for maintaining healthy weight.

Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5 6 7

14. I have seen advertisements and other communications about the efforts of fast food restaurants to provide nutritious food.

Never	Occasionally	Frequently
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Appendix B:



Fact Sheet for McDonald's / Obesity Questionnaire

**Did you know that McDonald's...**

- Provides nutritional information about their hamburgers and other services in their chains and on their web site?
- Some healthy choices from McDonald's include chicken sandwiches, Fruit 'n Yogurt Parfaits, and salads.
- Have nutrition tips to live a healthier lifestyle and some include:
  - "Simple Steps to Cut Calories"
  - "Simple Steps to Trim Fat"
  - "Simple Steps toward Smart Choices for Kids"
- Has sample healthy choice menus from their products
- Has their own nutritionist, Dr. Cathy Kapica, who joined in 2003?
- Is active with Go Active! American Challenge with Oprah's personal trainer Bob Greene?

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If you are interested in more information about McDonalds, please visit their web site at <http://www.mcdonalds.com>. This information from McDonald's can be provided by going to the following URL:

[http://www.mcdonalds.com/usa/eat/nutrition\\_info/nutrition\\_faqs/obesity.html](http://www.mcdonalds.com/usa/eat/nutrition_info/nutrition_faqs/obesity.html)

Table 1

## ANOVA Results

Question	Means	F	P
9. Compared to other fast food restaurants, how nutritious is the food available at McDonald's?	S: 4.898 NS: 5.000	0.22	0.637 (n.s.)
24. Compared to other fast food restaurants, how nutritious is the food available at McDonald's?	S: 4.356 NS: 4.429	0.13	0.722 (n.s.)
10. I think you can maintain a healthy diet and eat at McDonald's.	S: 5.683 NS: 5.551	0.21	0.649 (n.s.)
21. I think you can maintain a healthy diet and eat at McDonald's.	S: 4.864 NS: 4.367	2.97	0.08 (n.s.)
11. I plan to eat at McDonald's at least once within the next week.	S: 6.633 NS: 6.428	1.24	0.269 (n.s.)
20. I plan to eat at McDonald's at least once within the next week.	S: 6.237 NS: 6.265	0.01	0.905 (n.s.)
12. I believe that the fast food industry has contributed to America's obesity epidemic.	S: 1.933 NS: 1.959	0.01	0.913 (n.s.)
22. I believe that the fast food industry has contributed to America's obesity epidemic.	S: 2.288 NS: 2.286	0.00	0.992 (n.s.)
13. I believe that people, not restaurants, are responsible for maintaining healthy weight.	S: 2.067 NS: 1.776	2.00	0.160 (n.s.)
23. I believe that	S: 2.305	2.75	0.100 (n.s.)

people, not restaurants, are responsible for maintaining healthy weight.	NS: 1.898		
17. How much has your knowledge of the documentary “Super Size Me” influenced your eating habits?	S: 3.576 NS: 2.450	13.82	0.001 (significant)
18. How much do you think the documentary “Super Size Me” influenced other people’s eating habits?	S: 3.966 NS: 4.256	1.29	0.259 (n.s.)
19. In your opinion, how typical were the results shown in “Super Size Me?”	S: 3.263 NS: 3.231	0.01	0.924 (n.s.)

S: Has seen “Super Size Me”  
 NS: Has not seen “Super Size Me”

Table 2

## Analysis of Responses Before and After Viewing Fact Sheet

Questions	t-Value	P
9/ 24: Compared to other fast food restaurants, how nutritious is the food available at McDonald's?	7.54	p<.001
10/21: I think you can maintain a healthy diet and eat at McDonald's.	7.99	p<.001
11/20: I plan to eat at McDonald's at least once within the next week.	2.71	p<.008
12/22: I believe that the fast food industry has contributed to America's obesity epidemic.	-5.32	p<.001
13/23: I believe that people, not restaurants, are responsible for maintaining healthy weight.	-1.98	p<.051 (n.s.)

Table 3

## Reasons For Eating Fast Food

<i>Reason</i>	<i>Number of Participants Selecting</i>
Like Taste	54
Don't Cook	19
Inexpensive	61
Consistent	8
Saves Time	78
Friendly Staff	1
Clean	1
Friends Eat There	27
Nutritious	1
Don't Eat Fast Food	6
Other	17

Table 4

## Ranking of Local Fast Food Restaurants

Restaurant	Patronized During Past Year (# participants)	#1 Choice (# participants)
Taco Bell	85	36
Subway	76	18
<b>McDonald's</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>6</b>
Carl's	52	4
Wendy's	42	4
Domino's	42	2
Burger King	34	8
In 'n Out	30	19
Jack in the Box	10	5
Del Taco	4	2
KFC	3	1
Panda Express	1	1
Campus Food	1	1
Foster's Freeze	1	0
Quiznos	1	0
Togos	1	0
Sombreros	1	0
Sonic	1	0
Roundtable Pizza	1	0

Table 5

Responses to Open-Ended Questions

McDonalds is gross

I never in a million years thought that the best fast food place to find a good kids meal would be McDonalds

I think after Super Size me, McDonalds really made an effort to make their food more nutritious because they were afraid people would not want to eat there anymore-- not necessarily b/c they were doing it for the greater good of the people

Regardless of whether McDonalds offers healthy choices, those choices are either not appetizing or are very easy to get sick of (and quickly!)

The "healthy options" ,menu have just as much and more sugar than some of the cheeseburgers

Fast food hasn't made America fat, it just makes it easier for society to get fat

Its bad for you in large part, however sometimes I just am sick and tired of cooking a meal and cleaning up afterwards

This participant has not had fast food for at least 6 years. Also, the main reason I believe fast food restaurants are bad is the way in which they endorse mass farming of livestock.

I believe the presence of fast food does contribute a little bit to obesity b/c of how available they are but ultimately it is the person's decision to eat there or not

Even though McDonalds claims to have healthy options such as chicken sandwiches and salads, there is just as much fat and calories. It's gross!

McDonalds may give their nutritional values but that doesn't mean there is any less calories in their food. Plus a ton of companies give this info, ex. Subway

It seems to me that even the "healthy" choices at McDonalds have more calories than they are worth!

The fast food industry is definatly party responsible for the obesity epidemic in this country, We grow up in a society where we're told not to wast food and then we serve massive portions

While McDonalds may provide nutritious alternatives, I don't feel that a person would be able to get the right propositions of carbohydrates, proteins, fat and the right amount of vitamins

Because McDonalds has only recently tried to increase their health foods and the movie "Super Size Me" has just come out, it will take a lot of years for the public to believe McDonalds is truly trying to be a more healthy fast food restaurant.

I watched "Super Size Me" about 5 times last year. I wrote a research paper on it. I think that the movie changed my eating habits, but only for a short while.

I have recently stopped eating fast food all together because I realized just how unhealthy it is.

Given the option of unhealthy but tasty food is what contributes to the obesity problem

Fast food is not bad in moderation, but steps need to be taken in leading an active lifestyle

Part of the reason America is obese is because we eat at fast food places, sometimes having salads, but we don't exercise, so we gain weight.

I believe people are responsible for their obesity, but the fast food industry isn't helping the situation.

With regards to the McDonalds FAQ sheet, I personally have never seen them try to advertise their food is nutritious and very rarely have I seen the nutritional information displayed.

I think with exercise and an otherwise balanced diet, someone can eat at McDonalds occassionally and still remain healthy.

I miss the old fatty McDonalds french fries

I guess a healthy diet could be maintained if you eat at McDonalds if you don't go regularly and you exercise.

Even though McDonalds food is not as healthy as we would like, people should know how to control yourself

I might have a bias because I have always thought if McDonalds as being the least healthy fast food restaurant

In Super Size Me, the results were typical only if you were only to eat McDonalds every day, the question was vague.

McDonalds's burgers are some of the very unhealthiest and their ad campaign doesn't strike me as very believable.

I don't eat a lot of fast food b/c I am aware of the nutrition facts and everyone knows. It's not healthy.

I stopped eating McDonalds after my sophomore year in high school. I eat Subway now whenever. I invest in fast food,,, I think "Jared" did subway wonders!

It's good that McDonalds is providing healthier selections but I heard the dressing for those salads is really high in fat and calories

I will give the fast food industry props for starting to clean up their act as far as healthy nutrition goes. I will on the other hand say that while they are offering healthier items, they are more wisely than say the Big Mac Meal. They have a lot of work yet to do.

They are the only ones open past 11 pm

I already knew the facts on the preview page, so my answers didn't change. When asked again, I did think it is important you know that I am a nutrition major-- that has an effect on my answers.

It's okay to eat fast food once in a while, but impossible to maintain a healthy diet if it's eaten several times a week.

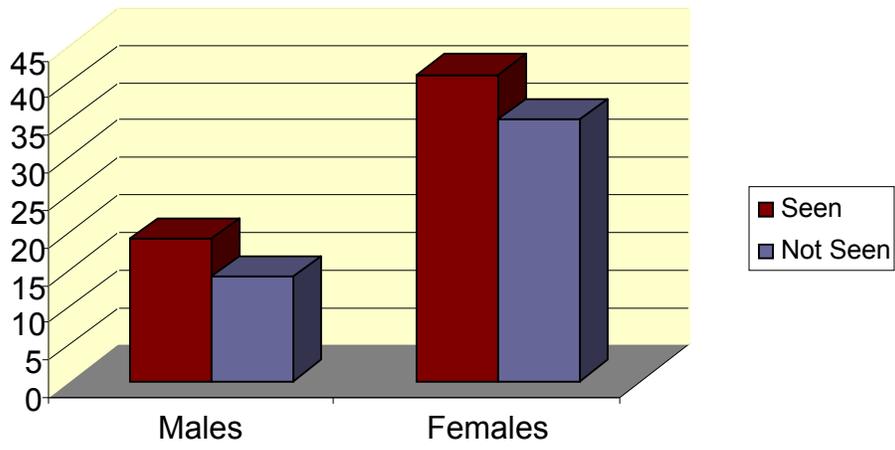
*Figure 1.* Number of males and females who had seen the documentary “Super Size Me.”

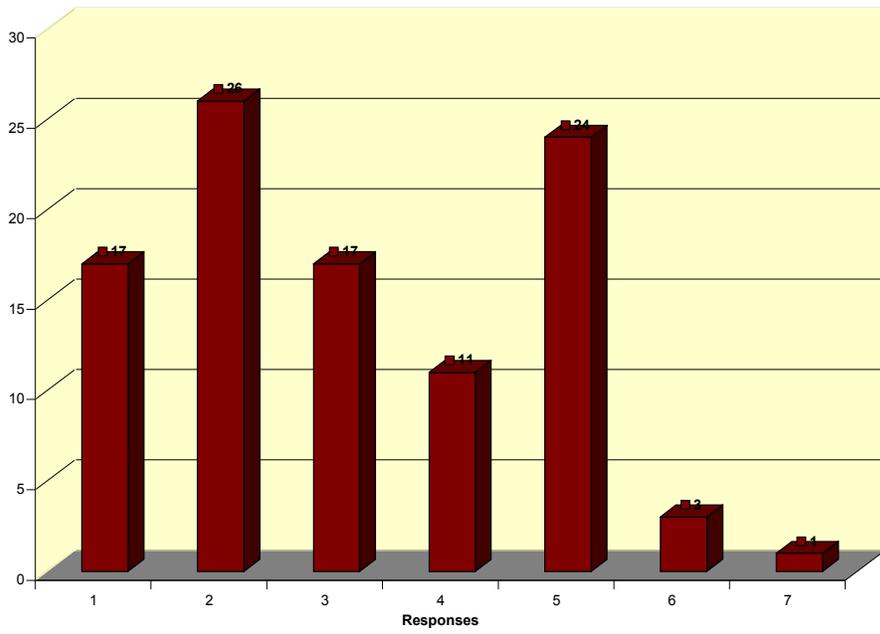
*Figure 2.* Responses to Question 17: “How much has your knowledge of the documentary “Super Size Me” influenced your eating habits?” 1=very little and 7=significantly.

*Figure 3.* Responses to Question 14: “I have seen advertisements and other communications about the efforts of fast food restaurants to provide nutritious food.” 1=never, 4=occasionally, and 7=frequently.

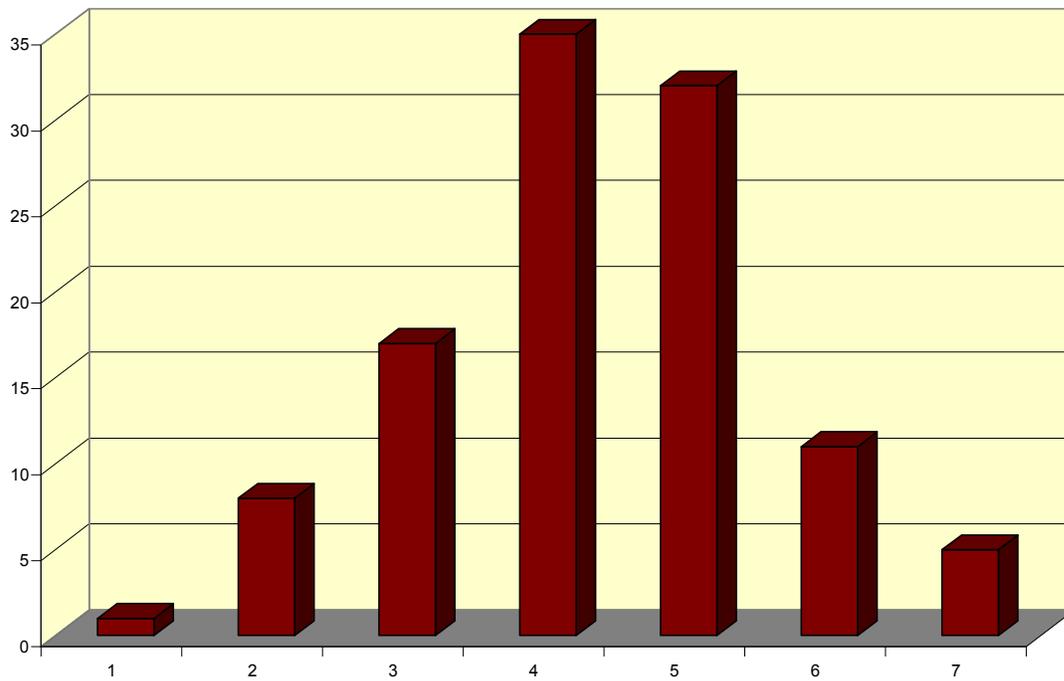
*Figure 4.* A comparison between responses to Questions 17 (How much has your knowledge of the documentary “Super Size Me” influenced your eating habits) and 18 (How much do you think the documentary “Super Size Me” influenced other people’s eating habits). 1=very little and 7=significantly

### Gender and Documentary





Seen Nutrition Ads for Fast Food



Documentary Influence On Eating Habits

