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BOOK REVIEW: Brian Wansink. *Marketing Nutrition: Soy, Functional Foods, Biotechnology, and Obesity*. Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2005, xii + 206pp., \$34.95 cloth. ISBN 0-252-02942-9.

Marketing Nutrition: Soy, Functional Foods, Biotechnology, and Obesity attempts to help readers understand why so many efforts to encourage people to eat healthier diets fail. The book may be of interest to health professionals, practitioners, students interested in social marketing, those interested in the chapters using functional foods examples, and those looking to gain greater access to new markets for new products. The author attempts to help the reader identify different marketing situations that can influence the consumer to make more healthful choices. To illustrate the range of use of marketing principles, the author identifies different kinds of professionals who might make “marketing” decisions, including a dietitian attempting to help a patient maintain a high-fiber diet, an international aid worker teaching recipients in a developing country how to use protein rich grains, or a food company attempting to decide what kinds of attributes to promote for a new category of functional food.

The book draws from previously published articles by the author and is organized into five sections: (a) Secrets About Food and People, (b) Tools for Targeting, (c) Health of Nations, (d) Labeling that Actually Works, and (e) Marketing Nutrition. The author has expertise in marketing, psychology, and consumer economics. The objective is to learn from different marketing successes and failures, and apply these lessons to marketing for nutrition and healthful products.

In the first section, the author argues that the kind of nutrition information consumers are given is more important than how much the consumer is exposed to. Consumers can be bombarded by nutrition information from multiple sources, some of which are more credible to consumers than others. The author suggests the consumer has two basic levels of nutrition awareness—the first an “attribute level” (awareness of number of calories, low in fat, rich in calcium, antioxidant rich, etc.), followed by a “consequence level,” such as awareness of a diet and disease association (e.g., eating broccoli may reduce the risk of cancer, prevent constipation, promote anti-aging). The author argues that linking attributes and consequences is essential to increasing the likelihood of purchase and consumption of a given healthful food. Unfortunately, no real data are presented to support this assertion.

Drawing on the 1940s work of Margaret Mead and Kurt Lewin, the author describes behavior change in the context of some of the early literature in dietary behavior change. In contrast to approaches aimed at increasing consumption of healthy foods, Lewin helped explain behavior by examining how to overcome barriers to consumption of selected healthy foods. The concept of the gatekeeper—the person who creates the menu, buys and prepares food—was introduced, although there is disagreement relative to the presence of a “gatekeeper” in 2006 households. In order to motivate the gatekeeper to

adopt a healthy food for the family, those marketing “healthy” products need to identify gatekeeper barriers to selecting such foods. For example, if the gatekeeper perceives that the husband will not eat broccoli, although it is a healthy food, the likelihood of frequent purchase and consumption is low. Jumping forward 50 years in time to today, the author suggests that identification of the barriers to incorporating a product like broccoli or soy could be explored from the perspective of overcoming the barriers of cost, unfamiliar tastes, or textures.

The use of descriptive names or color photographs is suggested to “make the food taste better” as another way to overcome an adverse barrier to eating healthy foods. Many of the 5-A-Day programs have adopted large, bright photographs of fresh fruit and vegetables to illustrate this strategy.

The chapters related to targeting consumers provide little documentation to support the segmentation methodology or the generalizability of the samples used, so this section, while interesting, seemed less helpful. The laddering techniques discussed in Chapter 5 will be a more valuable addition from the perspective of many nutrition professionals because these are not theoretical models with which many nutrition professionals may be familiar.

Chapter 7 discusses core values of convenience, variety, and value in the context of the obesity epidemic and how to reverse the drivers of obesity. Five “Drivers of Food Consumption” outline a series of strategies for obesity abatement. These include:

- Increase the availability of healthy alternatives;
- Increase the cost of consumption, but not the cost of food;
- Modify food formulations while maintaining palatability;
- Provide understandable labels, but be realistic; and
- Alter convenience by altering package size and portions.

Additional data and examples to support the relative success and cost-effectiveness of the above approaches would have been desirable.

The later sections of the book address the consumer and technology, managing consumer concerns, and risk assessment. More in-depth discussion illustrating how to best address risk assessment with consumers would have strengthened the short chapters. Large segments of the population are increasingly risk adverse, and while there is a growing literature in this area, a more thorough discussion of consumer risk analysis would have strengthened the book’s promise of using marketing to promote improved nutrition.

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