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Fast Food: A Tasty Killer?

“Two all-beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, onions, on a sesame seed bun” (McDonald’s 1976). This phrase has been the motto for McDonald’s since the creation of the company. Morgan Spurlock, the man behind *Supersize Me*, is an American documentary filmmaker. In 2004, Spurlock decided to make a film to bring light onto the situation of obesity in America, and how the fast food companies are a part of this “problem”. In Morgan Spurlock’s *Supersize Me*, the author uses straight facts and personal experience to show viewers how serious the issue of obesity is and how it is effecting the lives of Americans on a regular basis.

The lead from this movie came from a court case in regards to two obese girls who were suing McDonalds saying that the food they ate caused them to become obese. Spurlock decided that for a month, (he only went 28 days), he would only eat McDonald’s’ food. He had made up a set of “rules” for what he was supposed to do during this experiment. He was only allowed to eat what was on the menu at McDonald’s (if it was not listed, he could not eat it). He also only supersized his meal if they asked him. The last rule was that he had to eat everything on the menu at least once.

Throughout the documentary, Spurlock had much help during the experiment to make it more reliable. He was advised by three different doctors; a cardiologist, a gastroenterologist, and a general practitioner. He also took advice from a registered dietician. All three of the doctors did thorough tests in the beginning, and concluded that he was starting off as a very healthy person. Periodically, throughout the experiment, Spurlock went to each of the doctors and the dietician to get tests to see exactly how his body was taking this McDonald’s diet. The film’s audience was focused toward people in general, because he wants everyone to know the effects of fast food, and how serious the obesity situation is. Spurlock claims that the fast food companies can do much more in providing healthier food to its customers.

Throughout the film, Spurlock uses statistics and facts to get his point across to viewers. The certain points that he addresses in the film, are key elements that help achieve his purpose of the film. A majority of the statistics about obese people in America are mentioned in the beginning of the film. The author does this as a way to make viewers want to stay and watch the rest of the film, instead of just blowing it off like there is no problem. When Spurlock gives these facts, he flat out tells them. He does not baby them, or eliminate a part just to make it sound good. For example, in the beginning of the movie, Spurlock says that “America is the fattest country in the world” (*Supersize Me*). He could have just left it at that, so viewers would get the idea, but he goes further by giving the statistic that “One in four people in Mississippi are obese” (*Supersize Me*). By providing this additional information, Spurlock makes the viewer understand that there is a significant problem and that people in America are obese.

This way of providing information is a way to attach to the emotional and rational sides of viewers. People should feel that they would not want to be obese, and have the ability to control what they put into their mouths. The amount of detail that Spurlock uses in not only the statistics, but also when he is going through the process of his experiment, shows that he feels very strongly about this situation. These feelings show that he went through great detail to leave no stone unturned in getting all of the information needed to prove his point. Aside from content, the organization of the film makes it easier for the viewers to understand Spurlock’s points. The organization of the film helps fulfill its purpose in many ways. First, Spurlock throws a majority of the facts that he has gathered in the beginning of the film. After facts, he goes right into his experiment. As to not break away from him trying to show what happens to the human body when so much of this food is consumed, he adds a fact/statistic here or there. This makes the film have fluidity and also to be easily comprehended by viewers of all ages.

During the movie, Spurlock addresses the fact that many kids are growing up with knowledge of only fast food in their brains. For example, at one part of the film, he has a group of first graders look at a picture to see if they knew who the face was. All of the kids were able to recognize Ronald McDonald, but only a few knew who George Washington was. Spurlock’s point for this test want to show that the fast food companies spend so much time focusing on kids so that they will get their parents to take them to that restaurant. McDonald’s, for example, has the Happy Meal which includes a toy with the food. Spurlock explains that the company knows that kids are not able to take themselves to the restaurant, so they bother the parents until they take them. The adults are not left out of this picture though, because there are foods at these fast food restaurants that appeal to these people as well. Toward the end of the film, Spurlock is standing in front of the White House in Washington D.C., and has three adult women and a small child with them. He asks them to say the Pledge of Allegiance. After over three attempts, he asks if any of them know the McDonald’s theme for their burgers. One of the women immediately recited the phrase. Spurlock did this to prove that people of all ages are growing up with the knowledge of fast food, and forgetting the important things in life.

Spurlock’s argument throughout the film is very clear. He wants to end the rise in obesity in not only kids, but in adults because it is hurting people health wise. At one part in the film, Spurlock goes to visit various levels of school (from elementary to secondary). He sees what these kids are being fed in cafeterias, and how much exercise they are getting. The food that a majority of the kids were being given was the same as in a fast food restaurant. It was unacceptable. Spurlock says that “60% of Americans do not get exercise” (*Supersize Me*), and this was very true. Most schools only have gym class once a week for 45 minutes. Spurlock concluded that this was why kids were becoming so obese: there are no guidelines in what they should be eating, and there is no one doing anything to try and improve what they are putting into their bodies.

In my opinion, I feel that Spurlock had a good idea when he began this experiment, but I feel that he is blaming the wrong people. He has the idea that the fast food companies are the reasons why people are obese. The companies provide this food, and people eat it. The reason people are obese has to do with more than what food is available. It has to deal with why they are consuming the food. Most families in America do not eat a home cook meal on a regular basis. Reasons for this is because adults have busy lives, and there is no time to actually cook a meal for their family, or because many people do not have the knowledge of how to cook. Another reason for a rise in obesity could be because many people do not have the knowledge of self-control. People who eat fast food should tell themselves that they will only eat this kind of food once a week, but they don’t. Adults have jobs and by the time they return home, they are too tired to cook, so they go eat fast food. If people ate this food in moderation, there would be less of a problem with obesity. Spurlock also never addressed the fact that many people could be “obese” due to genetics. Even though I do not agree with everything that Spurlock said, the film was based on good evidence, and did a good job showing how problematic the situation of obesity is.

In *Supersize Me*, Morgan Spurlock uses factual evidence and personal experimentation to bring light onto the subject of obesity in America, and the effects it has on our everyday lives. Spurlock went on a McDonald’s diet for 28 days straight eating only food off the menu. At the end of the experiment, he had gained 24.5 pounds. *Supersize Me* opened up the eyes of the American people in regards to the problem of obesity. Obesity is already the second cause of death in America. There needs to be immediate change in the eating and exercise habits of all people, or greater health problems will occur that no one will be able to fix.

**Works Cited**

1. Supersize Me. Dir. Morgan Spurlock. Perf. Morgan Spurlock. Samuel Goldwyn Films, Roadside Attractions, 2004. DVD.