Is Junk Food Really Cheaper?

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Junk Food

Statement: As fallacies and rhetorical tools add strength to Bittman's argument, he manages to convince his audience about the adversities of fast-food consumption.
Mark Bittman, in his article, "Is Junk Food Really Cheaper?" highlights the negative impacts of junk food on human health. His main argument criticizes the role that fast food companies play in society. Their strategy of selling food at reasonable prices helps them grab customers. The central claims state that fast food costs less than healthy food, thus transforming the preferences of people. Low prices encourage low-income communities to transform from vegetarian to fast food consumers. The main reason for the increased consumption of fast food is the pricing strategy providing a cheaper substitute for vegetables. People are more convinced to buy fast food because it saves costs and is favourable for people struggling to fulfil the necessities of their families. The article incorporates rhetorical appeal and influential techniques such as ethos, pathos, and logos to support the central argument.

Rhetorical Appeals in Bittman's Argument

The logos are apparent as the author provides facts to justify his claims. The incorporation of logos provides supporting evidence for the main argument. Bittman uses logos in the comment, "It's more affordable to feed a family of four at McDonald's than to cook a healthy meal for them at home" (Bittman, para). The logic is visible as he explains how cooking healthy food will require more money than buying fast food. Logos add rhetorical appeal for the readers as it highlights reasons motivating people to opt for fast food. Logos represent the truth, thus eliminating the possibilities of debate as it provides answers to the scepticism of the audience. The logic is also visible in the statement, "Judicious ordering of "Happy Meals" can reduce that to about $23, and you get a few apple slices in addition to the fries!" (Bittman, para 2). The text allows readers to draw a comparison between choosing a healthy diet or fast food. According to the logic, people with low incomes will buy fast food. The events created by the author in the article permit audiences to relate facts to their lives, taking them to deductive reasoning. Deductive reasoning is discernible in the 'calorie meter', providing a pricing comparison of fast food and traditional food. When food is measured by calories, junk food is cheaper compared to home-cooked food. As fast food is a source of cheaper calories, it attracts the poor and people from low-income groups. The logic is visible in the statement, "But given that half of the people in this country (and a higher percentage of poor people) consume too many calories rather

than too few" (Bittman, para 4). The logic becomes more convincing due to the inclusion of facts related to the calorie requirements. The author's strategy of associating fast food consumption with obesity takes audiences to deductive reasoning by identifying health adversities.

Ethos and Credibility

Bittman incorporates ethos to add credibility and validity to the article. Ethos, through extensive research, enhances clarity as the author uses personal experiences to convince the audience. Quoting the research of other credible authors, such as Santa Cruz, provides credible support to the central argument. Bittman quotes Santa Cruz, who is a writer of 'Weighing In Obesity, Food Justice and the Limits of Capitalism.' Cruz discussed the fast food businesses and the industry's role in the promotion of capitalism. The inclusion of Cruz's claim makes the argument more acceptable and valid. Bittman quotes Cruz, "and it's one of the few things that less well-off people have: they don't have to cook" (Bittman 11). The quote justifies the increased dependence of the low-income population on junk food. Ethos emphasizes authenticating the information and enhancing its accuracy.
Ethos is also apparent in the inclusion of the Scripps Research Institute, which adds credibility to Bittman's article. Bittman includes the research presented by Scripps Institutes as "overconsumption of fast food "triggers addiction-like neuro-addictive responses" in the brain, making it harder to trigger the release of dopamine" (Bittman 13). The text confirms the relationship between fast food eating patterns and brain activity. The source provides support and enhances the validity of the argument. Ethos is also visible as the author includes his personal experiences. Bittman mentions his observations related to the fast food industry and its influence on the lives and eating patterns of people. He includes personal experiences, "I used supermarket ingredients" (Bittman 5). The use of I depicts how he engaged himself in the experimentation of fast food and its impacts. Through personal experience of assessing different food choices, he tries to persuade the audience about his view on fast food's disadvantages and impacts on human health.

Pathos and Emotional Appeal

Pathos is another visible rhetorical device incorporated by Bittman to defend the central argument. The technique helps Bittman to build emotional appeal for the readers. The persuasive power of the argument increases under the influence of pathos. Pathos is visible in the comment, "Let me enjoy what I want to eat, and stop telling me what to do" (Bittman 11). The pathos convinces the audience about the harms associated with fast food. The incorporation of pathos also builds continuous interaction of the author with the readers. Invoking emotions increases the strength of the argument. Readers manage to think about the situation more personally by considering how the situation can influence them in real life. Pathos is also visible in the claim, "People are stressed out with all that they have to do, and they don't want to cook" (Bittman 11). The text incites the emotional appeal as it provides a reason for relying on fast food. It captures the real-life situation as people have less time to cook due to their involvement in other activities. Stress is a significant factor that influences the

purchasing decisions of people.

Fallacies in Bittman's Argument

Bittman's argument also includes fallacies to persuade the audience. The most visible fallacy in the argument is an appeal to ignorance. The author uses the fallacy of ignorance as a central premise to appeal to the audience. The fallacy is useful in manipulating human conditions and uplifts the argument. The fallacy is helpful in supporting contradictory findings that result in the audience's ignorance. Bittman uses the fallacy when he mentions, "Even if we all needed to gain weight, it is not always true" (Bittman 5). The fallacy tries to justify the contradictory finding of the relevance of obesity with food choices. Ignorance persuades the audience as the text does not provide complete truth. Bittman uses the fallacy again as he states, "THE fact is that most people can afford real food" (Bittman 8). The fallacy contradicts the earlier claim that people lack access to supermarkets due to low incomes. The text ignores the prior argument that uses money as the central element for controlling purchase decisions regarding fast food. However, in the present text, the fallacy becomes visible as Bittman tries to conceal contradictory findings. In the current text, he states that money is not the only parameter deciding about buying decisions.

Bandwagon Fallacy and Overall Assessment

Another fallacy apparent in the article is the Bandwagon fallacy. The fallacy assumes that things are real because other people agree with them. Bittman considers buying fast food as cheaper because Santa Cruz assumes the same. The bandwagon fallacy also appears when Bittman uses Scripps's research to prove his point of mental connection with fast food consumption. Through the fallacy, he tries to convince the audience about the adverse effects of fast food. The wide acceptance of the claim does not make the argument effective or valid. However, it is powerful in manipulating the minds of the audience and useful in navigating the future. The overall assessment of Bittman's article indicates that the use of fallacies makes the argument more convincing and acceptable among readers.

Work Cited

Bittman, Mark. Is Junk Food Really Cheaper? 2011. 02 Jan 2018 <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/25/opinion/sunday/is-junk-food-really-cheaper.html>.