MARKETING TACTICS UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

COLLEGE STATION, TEXAS – Marketing toward children promoting snack foods has been under the microscope lately. With more and more children becoming obese, any unhealthy food is the target of criticism.

Childhood obesity is a serious health issue our nation is facing. It has more than doubled in the past three decades among children ages 6 to 11 and more than tripled among 12 to 19 year olds.

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) conducted a study, analyzing 123 published, peer-reviewed articles finding a link between food marketing and children’s responses. The IOM found there to be a strong correlation between food marketing and children’s preferences, requests, and consumption.

Marketers have discovered that pasting movie characters, toys, educational materials, and celebrities on their boxes increases sales, because children want to have that box of cereal with “Hannah Montana” on it.
Nestle said that “over 600 new children’s food products have been introduced by U.S. companies since 1994, most of these new products being candies, chewing gums, and sweet or salty snacks.”

Several of these companies have been sued due to their marketing tactics. Companies like Kellogg’s and Viacom were sued for promoting junk food to children.

In response to the recent lawsuits, companies are now promoting “healthier” versions of popular foods like PopTarts, fruit snacks, and cereals by adding whole grains and real fruit into the foods.

Efforts to get America slim are in place with portion control-sized bags and healthier nutrients in the foods. The continuous monitoring and strict guidelines put in place to keep companies accountable is also helping.