

\* News writings and mediations in health

## **The Clown's Diet, by Morgan Spurlock**

**Director: Morgan Spurlock**

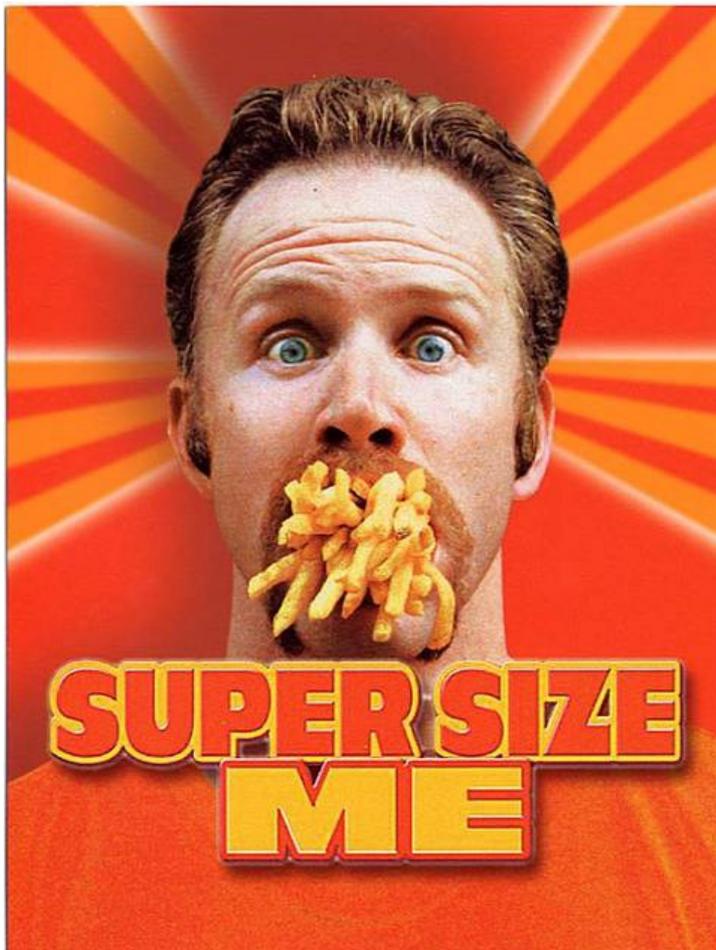
Year: 2004

Country: USA

Genre: Documentary

Duration: 100 min/color

Original Title: Super Size Me



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## **Is it worth its weight?**

Children and youths comprise a highly interesting public for an ever more ideologized service and product market, which expresses itself and dialogs with this public in specific languages, aiming at a full identification which leads not only to the affirmation of certain values, but also to its naturalization. However, if this remains as the main proposal for interaction between these actors, it may, suddenly, decrease the role of social groups - and of the State as their more or less happy representative - to them fit in the consumers' shoes only.

The most obvious and exhaustively consequence mentioned under this reasoning is that each person is worth what her acquisitive power is worth. Extending the idea that communication and information oriented toward each one of the identifiable groups as per this measure are influenced by it - an idea which always sheds its focus on the consumer, that is, on a decision based on bringing together the possessions and the common sense of those who purchase - we reach the other, less attended side, by the wrong way: what is said about what is sold is determined not by well-being - a public good - which effectively produces, but rather by the liquidity which it represents to those who sell. This idea may lead us a little farther: if market organization is by the profit, it is not necessarily bound to production criteria and, thus, may nourish itself less from measurable benefits, and more from ideas, rendering the client's cost-benefit assessment into a very different account than that made by the one who produces. This is ever more a rhetorical issue.

Omission or imprecision, in packages or promotional material, regarding relevant information for those who buy and consume industrially-processed foods meant basically for the children-youth public has been the subject matter of a very recent resolution by Anvisa. The text, published this month on the Federal Union Gazette, bears a mandatory nature and shall certainly arouse polemic with the producers, just as has been occurring for decades regarding rules to be complied with in medication advertising. The publication bears to mind, exactly for this reason, reflections on the role of the major corporations in drawing up a consumption agenda of what is healthful, dedicated, obviously to the entire society or to parts of it. And, when this agenda is only supposedly healthful - said in a different manner, when this 'healthful' is merely rhetoric - the actual evils it may bring to the citizens and to the public health systems are, conversely, real.

In 2003, the North American government brought out, to the public, its concern with the population's overweight, referring to obesity as an epidemic. Two overweight children sued the company for having become obese on account of being addicted to the food served them. This discussion is the entry door for the much-awarded documentary *Super Size Me* (USA, 2004), in which director Morgan Spurlock, warned by his girlfriend, a vegetarian chef, on the bad quality of what one eats out, decides to be test pilot of an experiment proposed by himself: eating only fast food, at all meals, for one month. And he opts for the planet's largest fast food chain: McDonald's.

The Supersize - one of the company's promotional actions which consists in offering the client a double portion for a slight increase over the original price - could not be refused by the journalist-turned-moviemaker when offered to him.

What one sees then is the odyssey of up to 5,000 calories daily which shall turn Spurlock - at the beginning of the experiment, in February 2003, from a healthy person, full of disposition for his age - into a Supersize man: in March, he was 11 kilos fatter, his cholesterol jumped from 165 to 225, he was already afflicted by hepatic disorders and presented coronary risks. As dessert, he faced humor changes, and his disposition had vanished.

The film is very palatable: Spurlock's misfortunes are served to the spectator together with an elaborate soundtrack, well-tempered humor and a great deal of information on the fast food industry, suggesting a relationship between inducing consumption of greater portions per person and the upkeep of a growing scale in production, of this well-nourished North American agribusiness. And this is social learning: according to the book *Fast Food Nation*, around 96% of the North American children are able to recognize the McDonald's chain advertising boy - only Santa Claus is more popular.

The perennially-happy clown Ronald McDonald lends its name to an institution dedicated to the health and life quality of children suffering from cancer. The Ronald McDonald House, one of the projects by the namesake Institute, is kept with funds in most part raised by the annual campaign known as Happy McDay, when the proceeds of the sale of its most expensive sandwich are funneled to it. In 2010, the campaign "turn your Big Macs into smiles" collected more than 11 million reais, and sold more than one million units, which return to company control.

Best documentary in MTV Awards 2004 and indicated to the Oscar for best documentary in 2005, *The Clown's Diet* secured, in 2005, awards such as the one as revelation director at the Edinburgh festival, best director in Sundance and best screenplay by the Writers' Guild of America.