

# Television advertising: how does it affect children?

[Media](#), [Television](#)



## **Introduction**

It is just about nearly impossible to go anywhere in today's world without seeing some kind of ad, whether it be a billboard for McDonalds, or a television commercial for Fisher Price toys. It is estimated that each American is exposed to well over 2, 500 advertising messages per day, and that children see over 50, 000 television commercials a year. This means that marketing agencies have approximately 137 times in a day to target and influence young children. Research has shown that young children - younger than 8 years- are cognitively and psychologically defenseless against advertising. They do not understand the notion of intent to sell and frequently accept advertising claims at face value (Strasburger, MD). Therefore further attention should be paid to the amount of advertising that is projected at young children. In this essay I will discuss the affects advertig has on youth, explore why children are targeted and evaluate what alterations need to take place in the advertising industry with regards to children.

What does the commercial do It creates a subconscious decision about what the brand is and makes it seem so true. Television commercials do this by relating people to other people. Take for instance a toy commercial, the producer does not have the parent playing with and enjoying the toy, they have young kids playing with the toy looking happy and that is where your trouble lies with young children - because they are unfairly influenced to think the way the manufacturer wants you to think rather than to rationalize what really is going on and how good or not good that product actually is or

whether it is truly something you must have and can't live without so you fixate on it and do all you can to get it - but at what cost!

Children are affected by advertising whether it be purposely aimed at and fabricated for them or indirectly. A television commercial and subliminal promoting in children shows promotes brand-name awareness in a number of product categories and also helps to create a possible opinion about them. Children acquire approximately 85 percent of their Games, Toys and Hobby interest due to ad exposure and children's shows. Several children as young as three years old can recognize brand named products and clothing. When children spend a great deal of time watching television they cannot help but be influenced by it and want what they see. Children become obsessed with having what they see on television that they continuously hassle their parents until they get it. These children that are watching more television are going to want more toys seen in advertisements and eat more advertised food than children who do not watch as much television (Strasburger, MD. 2006). Marketers have long since realized that the economical future of marketing rests within the youth and it has taken decades for the advertising companies to hone in their unique marketing techniques to advertise successfully to kids.

Since advertising to children, especially those who are between the ages of 8 and 12, 67% of all products and brands purchased by parents are heavily influenced by their kids (Lindstrom and Seybold, 2003). In the past years it has been recorded that children aged 2 to 17 influenced parental spending to an astounding \$1. 18 trillion across the world. One of the most lucrative

industries in the world today is the advertising industry. Last year alone the advertising industry spent over 150 billion dollars in the United States (TNS Media Intelligence). That amount of money would be enough to give everyone in the world 20 dollars and still have enough left over to buy a 150,000 dollar sports car or a nice little get away home. About \$1.6 billion, of the \$150 billion, was spent on advertising directed at children ages 2 to 17, representing 17 percent of the total annual marketing budgets for the reporting companies' brands. Companies spent 46 percent of marketing budgets on television advertising as it has managed to maintain its dominance as the most popular way to reach consumers (Kendra Marr, 2008). "The public health implications of early television and video viewing are potentially large. There are both theoretical and empirical reasons to believe that the effects of media exposure on children's development are more likely to be adverse before the age of about 30 months than afterward" (JAMA and Archives Journals). Television advertising is not the only form of advertising but it still remains as the most successful and influential media that reaches out to young children. Children in the United States on average watch television commercials for approximately five hours per week, having access to as many as 20,000 - 40,000 commercials in a single year. This means that by the time they graduate from high school, children may have been exposed to upwards of 360,000 television ads (Federal Trade Commission). In 2003 studies revealed that children, who were between the ages of about 10 - 12 years old, or tweens, watched the most television and referenced it as their single most essential source for information (Lindstrom and Seybold, 2003).

Children in today's world are being exposed to more advertising in several different media forms, each with its own strengths as a tool for persuasion. The biggest influential advertising coming from television followed closely by the internet then magazines, radio, billboard, and even in-store advertising. In the United States, there are currently few policies and standards for food advertising and marketing aimed at children. The advertising industry maintains self-regulatory policies put in place by the Children's Advertising Review Unit (CARU) of the National Council of Better Business Bureaus (BBB). CARU's guidelines apply to all forms of children's advertising, but it has no legal authority over advertisers and can only request for voluntary compliance from the marketing companies. If voluntary compliance by the marketing companies is not met, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) share authority for regulating advertising; each agency play's a different role. The FCC has theresponsibilityof establishing public interest obligations for television broadcasters, while FTC's responsibility is to regulate advertising deemed unfair or deceptive.

In recent years, the advertising industry has viewed children and teenagers as the leading market strength, as a result, children and adolescents are targeted aggressively by these companies. The primary goal of advertising and marketing intended for children are to influence brand preference, brand awareness, and brandloyalty. It can be disputed that children, particularly juveniles, are a vulnerable and should be protected from marketable influences that may adversely have an impact on their health, and as a

society that values its children, there should be greater social responsibility for their present and future health.

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