

Advertising aimed at children be banned essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

A great deal of advertising on television is aimed at children, promoting not only toys and sweets but also products such as food, drink, music, films and clothing to young consumers from toddlers to teenagers. Increasingly, this practice is coming under criticism from parents' organisations, politicians and pressure groups in many countries. Many western countries have currently imposed national restrictions, and these have also been proposed in most other European Union countries and in the USA.

Negative

Many people consider that it is unethical to target children with advertisements, as they are not yet able to distinguish advertising from actual programming in the way adults can. This would mean that advertising aimed at children is misleading and unfair. It is also clearly effective, or else, advertisers would not spend such huge amounts of money each year targeting children who are not able to resist their sales pitch.

Advertising specifically to children is unethical because parents are forced to buy products for them as they scarcely have any money of their own. Rather than advertising directly to parents, companies use a "nag and whine" campaign that leads to bad feeling between parents and children. For example, children pester adults to spend money, on unnecessary toys, which their children may play with, only for a few hours.

Moreover, advertising which presents products to children as if they are necessary to them is also creates social divisions. It creates an inferior feeling in children, whose parents cannot afford them, resulting in frustration and inadequacy, as well as leading families into debt. Again, advertising

aimed at children can also lead to negative social consequences, as a substantial portion of it is for food and drinks that are very unhealthy. Encouraging vulnerable children to consume great amounts of fatty, sugary and salty food is unethical because it would create obese, unhealthy youngsters, with bad eating habits that will last for a lifetime. Society also has to pay a high price in terms of the extra medical care such children will eventually require. Therefore, the government has a direct interest in preventing advertisements which contribute to this problem.

Furthermore, companies increasingly indulge in exploitative marketing campaigns that ruthlessly target children. To exemplify, in many developed countries marketing companies offer schools free televisions in exchange for their students being forced to watch a certain amount of programming and advertisements each day, and selling marketing data on those children. It is time that childhood was protected from such commercialisation.

Exploitative advertising brainwashes children into becoming eager consumers. Multinational companies deliberately encourage them to be materialistic, and as a result, they associate happiness with purchasing power and the possession of particular goods. A study recently found that children in Sweden, where marketing campaigns to the under-12s are banned, wanted significantly fewer toys than children in Britain, where there are no restrictions.

Finally, restricting advertising a little will not make much difference to revenues of commercial broadcasters, and they can be regulated to ensure that they continue to offer a good standard of children's programming.

Positive

Children are not naive or innocent, but canny consumers who can distinguish between advertisements and programmes, and understand that advertisements can be misleading. This essential learning process is actually developed through exposure to advertisements. It is also assisted by responsible parenting that does not just dump children down in front of the television, but spends some time watching with them and discussing what is seen.

Advertising hardly has any magical power to create unnatural desires for material possessions. Children who nag are result of bad parenting. The problem of poor parenting and undisciplined children cannot be solved by banning advertising, as children have many influences upon them which can stimulate their desires for products like toys, sweets and other entertainments. For example, in many cases friends can be the most influencing forces on them. It is also untrue that children have no spending power of their own, as many children under 12 receive pocket money and teenagers are often able to earn a certain amount of money for themselves. Learning to manage money is part of growing up, and advertisements help them to choose from the vast ocean of children's products.

Children naturally like foods that are rich in fats, proteins and sugar. They give them the energy they need to play actively and grow healthily. It is true that eating an excess amount of such foods is bad for children, but this is again a problem of bad parenting rather than the fault of advertising. And of course, if advertising to children is banned, then governments will not be

able to use this means of promoting healthy eating, road safety, hygiene, and other socially useful messages.

Even if television advertising aimed at children is banned, children are also exposed to radio, cinema, the internet and billboards in the street. Perhaps, companies should also be banned from sponsoring entertainment and sporting events for children, and prevented from providing free branded resources for schools. On the other hand, it is impossible to enforce any restriction, as television is increasingly broadcast by satellites across national borders and cannot easily be controlled. So is the case with the internet. Banning advertisements is a severe restriction upon freedom of speech.

Companies should be able to inform the public about any legal products, or innovation. If it is restricted, new companies will find it hard to market their products successfully in the face of established rivals. Children also have a human right to receive information from a wide range of sources and arrive at their own decisions about them. They are far from being brainwashed by advertisements, which form only a small part of their experiences. Family, friends and school are much more important and all give them alternative views of the world.

Advertisements are the means by which most television stations are funded. If advertising to children is banned, then broadcasters will stop showing children's programmes, or greatly reduce their quality and quantity, which is clearly not in the public interest. State broadcasters funded by the government and subscription channels that are also not dependent upon

advertising revenue would welcome such restrictions on children's programming. As competition is the best means of improving choice, diversity and quality, their views on this issue should be disregarded.

Advertising not only benefits commercial broadcasters, but also consumers.

For example, children's magazines are sold at an affordable price as they rely upon advertising to cut the cost.