

Appropriate advertising



AUDIENCE APPROPRIATE ADVERTISING Lesson 7 October 17, 2006 Audience Appropriate Advertising During any one of the hundreds of PG movies shown on television, there is a risk that nearly naked women with unrealistic bodies will suddenly parade across the TV screen. Advertisers hold their audience fixated with their minimal use of underwear when words begin to flash on the screen. " Invisible Lace". " Secret Embrace". Surprisingly, the family movie has been interrupted by a Victoria's Secret commercial. Younger and more impressionable viewers will keep these visions in their mind and memory as unscrupulous advertisers bombard television viewing with advertising that is offensive to families trying to enjoy some common entertainment. They will expose, shape, and try to mold the minds of children into tomorrow's consumers. Advertising, like television programming, should be screened for adult content, adult products, and relegated to an appropriate time slot.

Children's exposure to a wide variety of products and influences is limited by society. Social norms limit drinking age, access to tobacco, and entry into the military. There should also be strict laws on the media content that enters and influences the minds of children. There is little doubt that when Miller Brewery advertises on Saturday afternoon they are not just selling beer. They are also grooming future customers. Advertisers know that children are watching and paying close attention. According to marketing researchers Maher, Hu, and Kolbe (2006), children as young as 6 years old are able to recall television advertisements with a 90% accuracy rate after seeing a commercial (p 31). At this tender and impressionable age, advertising can substantially influence a child's future willingness to drink or engage in other social deviance.

Not only are children force-fed a propensity for unhealthy products, they are also socialized with an unrealistic view of materialism. Intent is as important as content in an advertisement viewed by children. In a 2005 interview, Juliet Schor argued that exposure to advertising was indoctrinating children into a consumer culture that ultimately leads to riskier behavior, low self-esteem, and fewer social opportunities (Yohalem & Davis, 2005, p. 3). Marketers' willingness to sell a product at any price may be taking place at the cost of the next generation as children are unable to discern a legitimate advertisement from a carnival barker.

Critics will be eager to drag out the tired and half-truth of freedom of speech in a capitalist society. After all, no one is forcing children to watch television or view advertising. Yet, television advertising is so pervasive that limiting children's access is neither realistic nor desirable. Television has many positive aspects that should not be denied to the family seeking better mental health for their children. The solution lies in cleaning up advertising, not eliminating television.

When children are bombarded with advertisements that offend the sensibilities of the average parent, the advertiser has chosen not to self-regulate themselves. Guidelines relating to the content of advertisements on television should reflect family viewing times. Even minimal exposure to indecent or immoral advertising can have a devastating effect on a child's future and children who are constantly exposed run the risk of demonstrating behavior outside acceptable social norms. Advertisers need to clean up their overzealous marketing approach and limit the intent as well as the content of ads shown during family viewing times.

References

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