

Advertising: influencing our youth assignment

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Our Youth Anti-smoking commercials and anti-testing and driving campaigns are all over teen television stations. However, behind the scenes, are big name cigarette and alcohol companies targeting youth? Many people see the effect of this targeting, teens drinking and smoking, underage, because it looks glamorous. As a matter of fact advertising may be responsible for nearly 30% of alcohol and tobacco use in young teenagers (Strasbourg). What you don't think about is the cause; what is the reason that these big companies target young teens?

Companies target youth for many reasons, but the main two reasons are accessibility and vulnerability; these targets have a lasting a devastating effect. The connection ties in to the cause because teens are always on their phones or computer. It is no lie that teens spend hours on their mobile devices a day, always scrolling through twitter, facebook, or playing a game. However, many teenagers have no idea that big name tobacco and alcohol companies are strategically placing ads so that they will see them.

The average annual number of alcohol ads seen by youth watching television increased from 217 in 2001 to 366 in 2009, approximately one alcohol ad per day ("Youth Exposure to Alcohol Ads on TV Growing Faster than Adults"). Students will spend about 18,000 hours in front of the television before they graduate (Strasbourg). The Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth at Georgetown university has found that between 2001 and 2005, youth exposure to alcohol advertising on television in the U. S. increased by 41% ("Alcohol Advertising and Youth").

Alcohol companies spend nearly \$2 billion every year on advertising between 2001 and 2007, there were more than 2 million television ads and 20, 000 magazine ads for alcoholic products (“ Alcohol Advertising and Youth (Position Paper) APP Policies APP”). Although TV may be an obvious pin-point for marketers, another strategic place for marketing is in convenience stores. A 2001 study found that nearly 23 percent of the stores monitored had cigarettes placed within six inches of candy (“ How the Tobacco Industry Targets Youth”).

Teenagers see more ads than we think. They see them walking down the street on a billboard. On TV when their show is on a break, and in magazines. Teenagers not only see lots of ads, but the same ones over and over. Companies don't just place one ad per television show. They place an ad every commercial break. They may not realize it, but their subconscious mind remembers all the advertising when an opportunity to drink or smoke presents itself. Especially when you add in the repetition factor.

Companies are spending loads of money annually to get their product in the eye of the public. However, the placement of their ads is all wrong; they are advertising on channels that teenagers watch and magazines that are read by young adults; such as MET and People Magazine. The accessibility of teenagers combined with ad placement and repetition can lead to shaping behavior for when they are adults. Behavior such as alcoholism and vulnerability is another reason big companies target youth; many teenagers see advertisements featuring their role model or favorite celebrity.

Companies use celebrities to promote their product, to seem more relatable to the younger ages, this presents a problem because “ young fans are more likely to try drugs if they see their idol do it” (Brays). However there is a more scientific explanation for teenagers falling for these companies advertisements. A young teen brain’s impulse control has not fully developed, however “ its reward circuitry is not only ready to go, it is on overdrive” (Barbarians. Org).

This could explain why “ the percentage of teenagers who try an illicit substance more than doubles between 8th and 12th grades, from 21. 4 percent to 48. 2 percent, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse” (Barbarians. Org). One study found that for each dollar the alcohol industry spends on youth advertising, young people drink 3% more each month. Teens who start drinking and smoking in the early years of their adulthood are more likely to untie these habits for years. Alcohol also impairs Judgment.

It can lead teens to put themselves in situations where they are vulnerable; situations like walking home from a party late at night, driving home drunk, or passing out in a crowded area when there are other inebriated teens (“ Understand the Risks of Alcohol to Young People”). Drinking frequently at a young age is also linked to an increased risk of developing alcohol dependence in young adulthood. Regularly drinking in later life can lead to cancer, stroke, heart disease and infertility (“ Understand the Risks of Alcohol to Young People”).

The lasting effects on these teens is that binge drinking before the brain is developed changes the brain (Barbarians. Org). A study researched by the APP in 2006 found a direct correlation between the amount of exposure to alcohol advertising on billboards, radio, television, and newspapers with higher levels of drinking and a larger increase in drinking over time with youth 15-26 years old (Alcohol Advertising and Youth). The APP is "The American Academy of Family Physicians", the national association of family doctors. It is one of the largest national medical organizations with more than 115,900 members in 50 states.

Ultimately the effect is great, annually, about 5,000 people under age 21 die from alcohol-related injuries involving underage drinking ("Consequences of Underage Drinking"). Underage drinking can cause a range of physical consequences, from hangovers to death from alcohol poisoning, it also can be linked to smoking. Every day, another 1,500 kids become daily smokers, and one-third of them will die prematurely as a result of getting hooked. Youth who don't smoke very often can suffer the adverse effects of addiction ("Health Effects of Tobacco"). 0% of teenagers who smoke daily have tried to quit and failed, about 2/3 of teen smokers say they want to quit smoking ("Health Effects of Tobacco"). 70% say they would not have started if they could choose again ("Health Effects of Tobacco"). Many teens subconsciously fall victim to the advertising that companies use to draw them in. Smoking is highly addictive, and for most teens once they start they can't stop. All it takes is one try, and they can get hooked for the rest of their lives; yet another factor that shows teens vulnerability.

As for alcohol, it may not be as independent charity that “ provides people with evidence-based information about alcohol and work alongside the medical community’ shows some effects of underage drinking (“ About Us”). They show that underage drinking can cause liver failure, stunting brain development, and leading to binge drinking (“ Understand the Risks of Even though teenagers are considered young adults and even some as full adults, their brain is not yet developed fully. Alcohol and tobacco companies target these young, underdeveloped teens to make more sales, when in fact, it is ruining many lives.

Even with prevention and parental controls to prevent them from seeing alcohol ads, it is still everywhere, sports games, magazines, billboards. Companies target young kids mainly because of their underdeveloped minds and impulse control. They will be more likely to want to try that product than other potential advertising age groups. The lasting effect of these companies targeting young teens is great, and it causes many problems. Many people don’t realize the effect that advertising has on young teens; who are not mentally capable of making knowledgeable decisions..