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## **Marketing for Kids: A New Perspective**

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With the help of new, kid- friendly technologies, are savvy marketers gaining a sort of advantage over parents? Are toy marketers like Ganz , food marketers like McDonald's and kid-apparel retailers such as 77kids by American Eagle too desperate to target kids? Some of the kids like Isabella Sweet spend almost an hour a day on Webkinz website. The site posts ads that reward kids with virtual currency that they can use to create sophisticated rooms for digital version of their Webkinz pets.

The world of kids-marketing has become extremely complex and tech-friendly. Marketers have become innovative and aware of new rules for federal action which also includes the voluntary marketing guidelines that would affect marketers of food products. The kids are becoming targets of this form of tech-marketing. With growing uses of social media and smart phones, marketers are becoming more devious, according to Susan Linn, director of campaign for Commercial-free childhood.

Websites are using new ways to show their ads which cannot be blocked by Ad blockers. According to Elizabeth Sweet, who is the a doctoral student at University of California-Davis doing her specialization on marketing of kid's toys, the idea of ad- videos in online game experience is new to her. The movies are combined with site content in such a way that an ad-blocker app, which Sweet has, cannot work. Apart from Sweet, there are many unhappy parents who do not approve of Webkinz's marketing strategy towards kids. One of the parents even contacted ' Campaign for commercial-free childhood' to complain against Webkinz. Webkinz later removed the ad.

According to some parents, fast food sellers are the biggest culprits of over the top kids-marketing. The Obama administration is even proposing that food makers adopt voluntary limits on kids-marketing.

Wayne Altman, a family physician and father of 3 sons thinks that voluntary guidelines are critical. Many parents are against McDonald's strategy of using Ronald McDonald, the clown, to target kids. They think the clown gets the kids hooked on to a product that isn't right for them. More than 1000 doctors recently signed a petition asking McDonald's to stop using Ronald. But, C. E. O Jim Skinner of McDonald's told shareholders in May at company's annual meeting. "Ronald McDonald is going nowhere". 77 kids my American eagle exemplifies the way technology can be used to target kids. It has a "Be a Rock Star" photo booth outside its Time Square store. Any tween, with parent's permission, can download his or her photo and paste it on the screen for any of the rock stars. The brand's ideology is "Think like a mom, see like a kid". It believes in engaging with kids to make shopping enjoyable.

Alex Bogusky, an ex- adman, thinks that it's time for a change. He questions, "So, what if we stopped it"? He believes that lot of things would happen and it would be good for the society. As per 'Centre for New American dream', even 6 month old babies can form mental images of logos and brand loyalties can be established as early as 2 years. Companies are trying to target the pre-schoolers these days.

## **ANALYSIS**

With the advent of technology, companies these days are trying several desperate -measures to allure kids. Combined with innovative and out of the

box ideas, these companies' offers various avenues in which kids get involved, knowingly or unknowingly. Let analyze the ways in which toys, food and apparel companies target kids. We can use the traditional marketing mix that these companies employ. The 4P's of marketing are: Price, Product, Promotion and Place.

Price: Toy companies such as Ganz have priced their products in such a way that kids can choose from the ones available in few dollars to some expensive ones. McDonald's has a terrific advantage in price category as it offers an affordable ' One Dollar menu' to its customers. Kids are attracted by this value- offering and even parents don't have much issues when spending a dollar or more for a hamburger and fries. Pricing for kids thus depends on the category of the product.

Product: This refers to the tangible good or an intangible service that is used by the consumer. This aspect is extremely important for toy and apparel manufacturers. Today, these marketers are enhancing their products by adding a touch of technology to it. Ganz with its Webkinz website and American Eagle with its innovative " Be a Rockstar" photo booth are wooing kids like anything. Mc Donald's on the other hand tries to deliver an ' exceptional' service, along with Ronald McDonald, the clown.

Promotion: This is one of the elements where technology is used by marketer. They promote their brands on their websites; promote new offers by posting advertisements on these websites. Their idea is to engage kids through their promotions. This is done by creating a virtual world online, something which Ganz does. This includes creating ' virtual trial room' by using I pads, American Eagle does this. Mc Donald's promotes its brands

through various ad campaigns; its slogan “ I am loving it” is famous world over. It also promotes itself through Ronald McDonald, the clown.

Place: This refers to providing the product or a service at place which is convenient to the customer. Today, thanks to technology and social media, marketers have more avenues to push their products. Apart from having a physical presence (which is very important especially for food industry), the toy, food and apparel marketers have strong e-presence. Kids can choose their toys on a Webkinz website. Mc Donald’s has online-outlets almost in every country where kids can order their favourite hamburgers online.

Marketers have realised that “ kids, who are spending less time watching TV and more time on computers or Smartphone, are becoming targets online”. According to me, this trend will continue as long as these marketers succeed in their efforts. In spite of opposition from parents and several groups, marketers would continue to target kids in this manner, as long as their cash registers keep ringing. From this article, the most important lesson to be learnt is that there are no ‘ set standards’ in kids-marketing these days. To push their products, kids-marketers have been using new technologies and social media sites like Face Book and twitter to connect and engage the kids. They are using strategies unheard of before and even the parents are left unaware of it!

### **Sources Cited**

Kotler, Phillip. Keller Kevin L. Marketing Management 4th ed. Washington. Pearson, 2011. Print.