

Issues of advertisements for children



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Each year, enormous sums of money are spent to reach the valuable audience of children and adolescents. Companies soon came to realization of investing in marketing to children and adolescents because it provides excellent immediate and future dividends. According to Statista the United States alone spent 183 billion dollars in media advertising in 2015. (" U. S. advertising spending," n. d.) Every year after that it only seems to grow. Marketing has contributed to many problems' children face today, it bombards children at every waking moment and it exploits children's developmental vulnerabilities. Despite all the faults a reality without children's advertisement is becoming harder to realize because it's a big business.

If advertisers find a space where consumers will look, they will not hesitate to buy it up. This space for advertising can come in any form of media to meet its needs, including print, television, radio, cinema, outdoor, mobile and online. Since advertising is everywhere it has basically become an integral part of growing up for some children. As companies came to realize this investing in marketing to children and adolescents grew because it provides excellent immediate and future dividends.

Television has been the main outlet advertisers use to get to children. Through the 1960's to the early 90's the only original animated television programs were typically scheduled only on Saturday mornings in the United States. It was also only on the major television networks, so for advertisers it was a little window to advertise to children. Then the rise of cable television came and changed the whole advertising game all around. Cable television introduced this new multi-channel era that included numerous national

program services primarily or even exclusively being devoted to children. These channels like Nickelodeon, Disney Channel, Cartoon Network, and Noggin delivers significant amounts of child-oriented marketing messages. With this advertiser would have more connections to the children. Advisors could then show their regular commercials and then also sneak in some product sponsorships. More than likely the product placement would somehow be linked to the show or the characters. One of the examples out there is Kraft Macaroni & Cheese. If you go to the grocery store and pick up some Kraft mac & Cheese, there's almost always a popular character on the front of the box. Characters from such shows as " Rugrats," " Pokemon," " Blue's Clues," and " SpongeBob SquarePants" are only there to advertise to children. The child sees it in the stores and is immediately gravitated to this because their beloved character is on the box.

Not only are children being bombarded by advertisements at home, advertisements have also infiltrated the schools. Schools are supposed to be a safe haven from commercialism for students but in recent years it has changed. If a school is in a financial predicament one of the outlets, they turn to are advertisers. The advisors will then place posters, billboards, and show commercials around the schools. Some even go far incorporating it into the classroom with corporate sponsored educational materials and product placement in textbooks. Students being constantly around these advertisements could derail the actual education that supposed to go in the institute. Schools must pick either to only educate their students without commercialism or not educate and focus on their ads. They can't pick and choose both elements.

For decades, advertisers have come to the realization that children can be a profitable consumer group. The main reason they are so profitable is because they are vulnerable with their emerging developmental abilities. They prey on the naivete of children to sell their products and services. According to Piaget's theory of cognitive development children in the 2-7 range "can [only] think about things symbolically." (McLeod, 2018, para. 30) With that children under 8 are not able to think logically about objects or events. So, they are susceptible to lies that advertisers might say to get them to buy their products. These children will believe everything they hear and say. If an ad advertises that it will provide benefits and pleasures, they will believe that. They do not have the cognitive ability to detect persuasive intent in advertising.

Today's youth has been exposed to dark elements of society because of advertisements. The aggressive marketing of unhealthy habits is linked to negative outcomes for youth. Food marketing has amplified "children's desire for, and ultimately their consumption of, energy-dense snack foods". (Anderson & Butcher, 2006, p. 27) Which will then increase children's immediate and future consumption of that certain food brand. This ever-growing consumption often leads to childhood obesity.

Exposure to alcohol advertisements "is associated with the likelihood that adolescents will start to drink alcohol, and with increased drinking amongst baseline drinkers." (Anderson, de Bruijn, Angus, Gordon, & Hastings, 2009) This is very concerning because early alcohol use increases the risk of future alcohol dependence. Even though tobacco ads have been banned from tv for over 40 years youth are still exposed to e- cigarettes. The exposure in

advertisements“ increased 256% from 2011 to 2013” then use “ increased 321% over the sameperiod”. (Arnold et al., 2014) At this time e-cigarettes, are fairly newso there isn’t definitive evidence to know the affects it causes to people. Butif the trend stays the same awareness and use of the e-cigarettes will onincrease.

One of the last issues is the mediaportrayals of thin women and men. This ideal can be harmful to children in thedevelopmental stage. This depiction will ultimately lead to body imageconcerns. Multiple studies have tested “ links between media exposure to women’s body dissatisfaction” andthe findings support the notion thatit is harmful. (Grabe, Ward, Hyde, 2008, pg. 460) So not only can mediainfluence children into unhealthy habits it can also influence how we viewthemselves.

Today’s marketing is promoting thesesick values and it is not improving anybody except the business. Businesses arespending around “\$1. 4 billion per month [just] marketing to children.”(Horovitz, 2006, para. 5). Advertisers are spending this much money to targetto youth and get them to convince their parents in buying the advertised food, toys, clothes, or many other products. Because of this children & theirparents will spend a lot of their money to just go in the pockets of big corporations. These advertisements influence the family about which product to buy and couldpossibly create a lifetime brand loyalty. The amount of money that goes in tomarketing then begins to become clear. Alone kids “ under 14 spend about \$40billion annually” and “ teens are spending about 159 billion” annually.(Marketing to children overview, n. d.) With that much revenue coming out ofjust children I don’t see any business backing down on advertising anytime soon.

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To protect children from the advertisements there are few people that could speak up and make difference. Medical professionals are one and they could influence the parents. Some national and international public health organizations have already spoken up. These institutions include the World Health Organization, the Institutes for Medicine, and the American Psychological Association. All of them have called for restrictions on marketing to children. The medical professionals could educate the parents on how to handle the subtleness of advertising. How to also handle the negative effects that come with kids' constant exposures to advertisements. With that medical professionals would most likely suggest ways parents could monitor the kid's media exposure. Also, how to talk to the kid about what they just saw and how to respond to the advertisements. In recent years many little organizations and coalitions have come out to stop the advertising to children also.

Another big player of making a huge change is policy makers. The policy makers made a separate entity that deals with advertising and the laws. It is called the Federal Trade Commission and it is a "federal agency that enforces advertising laws and regulations." (Lubben, 2016, para. 2) Any business, manufacturer, or retailer that deals with children's products must follow the rules set by the federal trade commission. If they do not "comply with advertising laws can result in costly enforcement actions and civil penalties." (Lubben, 2016, para. 2) These laws made by the Federal Trade commission are there to mainly protect consumers. It requires advertisers to be honest about their products that they are selling. The FTC will usually look at case a consumer point of view and consider how it conveys to the consumers. The

federal trade commission is the national level of advertising regulations; but state and local government can also form and regulate advertisements also. Several states have even passed legislation to restrict junk food marketing in schools. With this Federal Trade Commission, they are able to make more laws that could ultimately lead to less advertising targeted to kids.

The concern of these young children's targeting is not a new development. Research on the question dates from the late 1960s. In the early 1970s, the Federal Communications Commission considered a proposal to ban advertising to children's audiences, but decided on a more modest approach programming for children and restricting certain advertising practices that make it more difficult for children to attribute persuasive intentions. Later in the 1970s, the Federal Trade Commission also considered banning all TV advertising for young children, citing the type of developmental research exactly as the task force reviewed. In response to pressure from the television and advertising industry, Congress forced the FTC to abandon this proposal by threatening the funding of the agency.

Lastly there are the educators of the youth. They are working with the kids every day and would be the best option of making change to in manipulative advertisements. There could be curriculum focused on media. It how to think critically about the message that product is trying to send out. They could easily explain to the children on how marketing works and how they are involved. This could then start a chain reaction that would decrease sells of products and then stop the aggressive advertisements.

In summary, commercial targeting children have experienced profound changes over recent years, resulting in unprecedented levels of advertising reaching young audiences. These advertisements can be very harmful to the developing youth. Big business is not going to stop their revenue from flowing so the only rational thing to stop advertising is to take it into our own hands.

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