Marketing to Children

Group Reflection

When it comes to marketing, strategy is key because you want to engage your target market and audience and get them to remember and want your product, service or idea. Marketing to children works similarly, however when subjecting children your ads may look a little different to attract the innocence and playfulness of children. Children are being advertised through television, websites, and smartphone apps and even in school! Is the innocence and lack of experience of children being taken advantage of? Although these companies are putting out creative and clever ways to market their products, where do you draw the line? This brings up the question of who is actually responsible for these marketing campaigns and is it brainwashing the youth of America?

Although governments have set regulations on what companies can advertise on what channels, for example Trojan or Bud-Light cannot advertise their products on channels like Nickleodeon or Disney Channel, but they can advertise on other channels at certain times to still get through to children. For example, American Idol is a show based around a competition of music and singing, and is aired on Fox at 8 pm, which is prime time. Statistics show that 72% of its viewers are kids, however since Fox is not considered a “children’s channel”, companies like Bud-Light can and will advertise during that time.

Our group also looked at how television advertising affects children. Companies will advertise on child networks such as Nickleodeon and Disney Channel at times when they know mainly children will be watching (ie right after school). Most young kids are not even aware that they are being targeted to this marketing. Companies also pair their (unhealthy) products with children’s favorite TV characters and movies. On one hand this helps the company because kids grow up knowing the brand names and recognizing it. However, our group saw these marketing ploys as irresponsible by advertising companies because we felt as though they were taking advantage of kids. Our group believed that it was the parent’s responsibility to manage what their children are eating. Kids can beg all they want for unhealthy foods but it is ultimately the parents’ responsibility to make the right choice.

Some organizations promote also in schools, especially fast food franchises.

McDonalds and Taco Bell stands can be found in several public schools. Pizza Hut promoted itself by giving out pizzas to those young students who read a lot. Those are all examples of negative promotion because they bring to the problem of childhood obesity. We believe it's the government's responsibility to limit this by putting regulations; however, it's also parents' fault who could make lunch for their children at home instead of giving them money to buy food from those fast food franchises. There are examples of good promotion too; General Mills made a box tops for education event.

Organizations also use online ways of marketing to children. Brands discovered a new way to increase sales: advergaming. Players are often embodied as a brand's product so that the person is completely brainwashed. Advergaming is an effective and non-expensive way to market brands. However, games can become addictive and parents might struggle setting limits.