

## **COMPANIES CANNOT AFFORD TO IGNORE THE CHILDREN IN THEIR MARKETING.**

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**Abstract:** Kids represent an important demographic to marketers because in addition to their own purchasing power (which is considerable) they influence their parents' buying decisions and are the adult consumers of the future. Parents today are willing to buy more for their kids because trends such as smaller family size, dual incomes and postponing having children until later in life mean that families have more disposable income. As well, guilt can play a role in spending decisions as time-stressed parents substitute material goods for time spent with their kids.

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### **Introduction**

Children represent three different markets. In addition to the direct money that children spend and the money they influence, children also represent a third major market and perhaps the most significant and that is the future market. Advertisers recognise that brand loyalties and consumer habits formed when children are young and vulnerable will be carried through to adulthood.

Retailers and manufacturers have two sources of new customers, those who they can persuade to change from their competitors and those who have not yet entered the market. Those who switch are less likely to be loyal than those who are nurtured from childhood

### **Outlines the stages in the evolution of a child consumer.**

From age 1: Accompanying Parents and Observing. Children are taken with their parents to supermarkets and other stores where all sorts of goodies are displayed.

*By the time a child can sit erect, he or she is placed in his or her culturally defined observation post high atop a shopping cart. From this vantage point the child stays safety in proximity to parents but can see for the first time the wonderland of marketing.*

From age 2: Accompanying Parents and Requesting. Children begin to ask for things that they see and make connections between television advertising and store contents. They pay more attention to those ads and the list of things they want increases.

*At the same time, the youngster is learning how to get parents to respond to his or her wishes and wants. This may take the form of a grunt, whine, scream, or gesture--indeed some tears may be necessary--but eventually almost all children are able on a regular basis to persuade Mom or Dad to buy something for them.*

From age 3: Accompanying Parents and Selecting with Permission. Children are able to come down from the shopping trolley and make their own choices. They are able to recognise brands and locate goods in the store.

*At this point the child has completed many connections, from advertisements to wants, to stores, to displays, to packages, to retrieval of want-satisfying products. For many parents this is a pleasing experience. Ditto for the marketers, for it signals the beginning of the child understands of the want-satisfaction process in a market-driven society.*

From age 4: Accompanying Parents and Making Independent Purchases. The final step in their development as a consumer is learning to pay for their purchases at the check-out counter.

From age 5: Going to the Store Alone and Making Independent Purchases.

**According to *Direct Marketing* magazine, by the age of eight children make most of their own buying decisions. Modern children can often recognise brands and status items by the age of 3 or 4, before they can even read. One study found that 52 percent of 3 year olds and 73% of 4 year olds "often or almost always" asked their parents for specific brands. Advertisers recognise that brand loyalties and consumer habits formed when children are young and vulnerable will be carried through to adulthood.**

### **Combination of psychology and marketing**

To effectively market to children, advertisers need to know what makes kids tick. With the help of well-paid researchers and psychologists, advertisers now have access to in-depth knowledge about children's developmental, emotional and social needs at different ages. Using research that analyzes children's behaviour, fantasy lives, artwork, even their dreams, companies are able to craft sophisticated marketing strategies to reach young people. For example, in the late 1990s the advertising firm Saatchi and Saatchi hired cultural anthropologists to study children engaging with digital technology at home in order to figure out how best to engage them with brands and products.

The issue of using child psychologists to help marketers target kids gained widespread public attention in 1999, when a group of U.S. mental health professionals issued a public letter to the American Psychological Association (APA) urging them to declare the practice unethical. Although the APA did not outright ban psychologists from engaging in this practice, as a result, the recommendations of their final report in 2004 included that the APA "undertake efforts to help psychologists weigh the potential ethical challenges involved in professional efforts to more effectively advertise to children, particularly those children who are too young to comprehend the persuasive intent of television commercials

### **Reach of Commercialization**

School used to be a place where children were protected from the advertising and consumer messages that permeated their world—but not any more. Budget shortfalls are forcing school boards to allow corporations access to students in exchange for badly needed cash, computers and educational materials.

Corporations realize the power of the school environment for promoting their name and products. A school setting delivers a captive youth audience and implies the endorsement of teachers and the educational system. Marketers are eagerly exploiting this medium in a number of ways, including:

- Sponsored educational materials: for example, a Kraft “healthy eating” kit to teach about Canada’s Food Guide (using Kraft products); or forestry company Canfor’s primary lesson plans that make its business focus seem like environmental management rather than logging.
- Exclusive deals with fast food or soft drink companies to offer their products in a school or district.
- Contests and incentive programs: for example, the Pizza Hut reading incentives program *Book It!* in which children receive certificates for free pizza if they achieve a monthly reading goal; or Campbell’s *Labels for Education* project, in which Campbell provides educational resources for schools in exchange for soup labels collected by students.

In addition, companies are also recognizing the advantages of developing positive brand associations through facilitating school field trips. In the U.S., the highly successful company Field Trip Factory delivers children to companies for “real-world lessons on everything from nutrition to health care.” For example, students may visit a car dealership to learn about car safety. This is seen as a win-win situation by many educators and retailers because it lets children have hands-on experiences outside their classrooms, while building positive associations between companies, students and their parents and teachers.

### **Disadvantage**

Using integrated marketing communications strategies, leading food, beverage and restaurant companies have created a sophisticated, ubiquitous environment promoting unhealthy foods, beverages and meals to children and adolescents that do not support a healthful diet consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Children and adolescents are increasingly exposed to promotions for energy-dense and nutrient-poor foods and beverages across print, broadcast and digital media—new and old—despite some declines in the number of non- fast-food TV advertisements.

Evidence shows that children's and adolescents' exposure to high-calorie, high-fat, sugary and low-nutrient foods and beverages is more extensive, more pervasive and very challenging for young audiences to recognize as target marketing.

### **Conclusion**

Marketing to children is a way of life in the World. Influence to marketing through TV is very high upon children. Today's kids have more autonomy and decision-making power within the family than in previous generations, so it follows that kids are vocal about what they want their parents to buy. "Pester power" refers to children's ability to nag their parents into purchasing items they may not otherwise buy. Marketing to children is all about creating pester power, because advertisers know what a powerful force it can be. It will be not false; it we say that these type of marketing creates need.

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