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UNETHICAL ADVERTISING. MARKETING TO CHILDREN

Advertising. The attempt to send information to people to convince them to spend their money with a certain company. The ads can attack any of the senses. Sight, hearing, touch even smell or taste.

Advertising is big business. Billions of dollars are spent each MONTH on advertising. Because of these facts, companies try all sorts of tactics to get our attention and money. Sometimes these attempts involve illegal, underhanded or dirty tricks.

The line between ethical and unethical advertising is often unclear.

Ethical Advertising

First, advertisements must be truthful and non-deceptive. Second, advertisers must back their claims with evidence. Third, advertisements may not be unfair.

Unethical Advertising

Unethical advertising can backfire, causing consumers to turn on your company and defeating the purpose of your marketing campaign.

Generally, unethical advertisements make false claims about a product or service; however, gray areas exist. For example, businesses often exaggerate the effectiveness and value of their offerings, which is why most people take any advertiser's claims with a grain of salt. On the other hand, outright lying in an effort to deceive customers results in public outrage. Consumers don't mind being cajoled, but they resent flat-out deception.

Age Considerations

Children under the age of eight cannot understand that advertising is persuasive content, according to the American Psychological Association. They don't have the critical thinking skills to fairly evaluate advertising and might think that a claim that, "This product will change your life!" is literally true. Because of this vulnerability, the APA argues that advertising targeted to children under eight is unethical and potentially damaging.

Marketing and advertising for children has already been more challenging and complex. It is always related to emotional impact both for children and parents and more psychology. The reason is simple: children are seeing things that they wish (toys, chocolate bars/cakes, clothing, etc). The next step is relatively easy: they start putting pressure on their parents to purchase the respective "new asset" that is going to be forgotten one week later when something new, more trendy comes up on the market. Moreover, children (even if they are less than 5), they are aware that for instance, they cannot socialize properly with other children if they have an old-dated toy or if they do not go to a specific movie. Marketers know

very well all these aspects. That is why they are closely working with psychologists to figure out the best way to market different products for the young audience.

Marketing in schools is a widespread phenomenon in which schools sign contracts allowing certain businesses to conduct marketing activities in school facilities — primarily advertising. For example, a school might allow only one brand of soft drink to be sold in vending machines on the campus; in return, the soft drink company would provide compensation to the school (frequently money, but it may provide other compensation as well, such as building new facilities or paying for school supplies).

Everyone knows that McDonalds is not a good place to find much nutritional value, and in turn will only lead to obesity in children. Now in many schools students are being rewarded coupons for Pizza Hut, and McDonalds for doing a good job in school. Why not reward these children with money towards furthering their education? Many educational posters in schools are advertising candy to children, when it will only rot their teeth and make them gain weight. Along with food advertisements many young children are even being shown cigarette advertisements which promote many young people smoking and enjoying themselves. Well when a young child sees something like that they can only think but to go try it themselves and maybe they will have fun and enjoy themselves. Children that are trying smoking are becoming younger and younger.

Ethics in advertising, as in other aspects of social life, is a complex issue. What one person considers ethical, another may consider unethical. Every day advertising professionals must make complex decisions about what can and ought to be said in advertisements. Although there are problems associated with regulating advertising towards children, there are ways to cope with and manage every situation. The world is constantly changing and marketing executives have to be ready to change with the world.