

Smoke and Mirrors: How marketing shapes and manipulates your students and what you can do about it.

Seminar by Walt Mueller

Marketing is trying to fill the void in kid's lives by making false promises.

We need to ask two questions as we work through this:

1. What are the implications for the ministry I'm involved in?
2. How can I respond to what I'm hearing with parents, students and other leaders?

Kids are marketed to from the time they come out of the womb.

Advertising Works

Advertising Statistics/Facts

- 458,000 people are employed in the advertising industry in the U.S.
- 179,200 ad agencies in the US
- \$285 billion spent on marketing in the US during 2006
- \$952 per capita in the US
- \$2.6 million for a 30-second super bowl ad
- The US has 5% of the world's population, yet is responsible for 48% of global advertising spending.
- 66% increase of shopping centers between 1986 and 1999.
- Kids recognize logos at 18 months old.

→ The basic premise of advertising in today's world is this: create a continuous need for products by understanding and exploiting one's anxieties and aspirations. ←

There is no age group, developmentally, where there's more of a sense of anxiety and aspiration than the teenage years.

“We've taken a page from Satan's book – find a point of weakness and lust in every man, woman and child and target that weakness to make them what to buy a product.” – Christian ad executive

We need to dissect every ad we see. There's nothing random or haphazard about anything in it.

The product isn't what's prominent in ads – it's what the product will do for you.

Teen girl advertising about their body shape helps define how girls see themselves and trains boy how to look at women.

Girls in our youth groups are 2 to 3 generations removed from parents who have good body image.

Advertising is Pervasive

You can't go anywhere without seeing an ad. We're all wearing logos on our clothes.

- The average American sees between 3500-5000 marketing messages a day.

- Teens spend 29 hours a week using traditional media (TV, radio, web, magazines, newspapers, etc)
- Teens spend 32 hours a week in activities that expose them to other marketing messages (driving, sporting events, school, concerts, restaurants, etc.)

→ Ads don't only sell product – their greatest power is their ability to sell a worldview. ←

→ We've been swimming (ourselves) in the advertising soup for so long that we don't even know it! ←

“This is the secret of propaganda: Those who are to be persuaded by it should be complete immersed in the ideas of propaganda, without ever noticing that they are being immersed in it.” – Joseph Goebbels

→ We must deliberately, regularly, and critically monitor advertising to children and teens. ←

We Want You: Why teens are targeted

- In 1965 there were 18 million teens in the US
- Today there are 19.6 million 8-12 years olds.
- Today – 33.5 million 13-17 year olds
- \$209 billion/year in direct discretionary spending by teens
- Latest market research indicates that the average teen (12-19) spends \$118 a week.

They have spending influence.

- \$278 billion/year in spending influence on parents in 2004.
- 65% of the cars purchased by parents are influenced by children.

Marketers want to develop brand loyalty (If you get someone while they're young and they're devoted to your brand, they're worth over \$100,000. That doesn't mean that they'll spend that much on it, but that includes their spending influence on friends and family.)

Kids are “tagetable.” (lacking in critical skills, very emotional, etc...)

We'll Get You: marketing strategies and terms

Age aspiration

Marketers know that kids want to be seen, perceived and treated like they're older than they are. Products are marketed to 12-13 years old will be advertised by people who are 17 years old.

- 12-13 = 17
- 14-15 = 18
- 16 = 19
- 17-19 = 20

Branding

The process with teens of grabbing their interest, being adopted by them and becoming a crucial part of their lives. The brand becomes their identity, who you are and what you stand for. Kids wear Gap, AE, A&F as a billboard.

Nag Factor

“I’m just going to pester my parents until they get it for me.”

If a marketer can get a kid to pester mom or dad 9 times, the parent will give in.

Go to controltheirminds.com setup by HP. It helps a kid controls their parents mind to help them get the PC from HP that they want.

Employ the “cool factor”

Being the first person to do what everyone else is doing.

Marketers talk about cool, you create cool and show people that it makes you happy.

Peter Zollo’s “Teen/Types Adoption Flow” (PBS.org search for “merchants of cool” 1-hour video and watch it online.) Our kids are broken down into 4 types:

- Edge teens – 11% (Fringe kids who create their own stuff. This is where marketers look for what they’re doing and then steal from it to create and mass market: Hot Topic, Spencers.)
- Influencers – 10% (the popular kids in the school that the marketers market to)
- Conformers – 44% (the kids who want to be like the influencers to fit in)
- Passive – 35% (they’re a little slower, socially nerdy or mal-adjusted, who pick up on it later.)

To the edge kids, everyone else becomes “posers” which causes them to want to create something else, giving the marketers something else to steal and repeat the cycle.

Shaping youth culture: the results and effects of advertising

- Materialism will become more deeply embedded in the lives of our kids and even in our own lives.
- Vocation and calling will be understood primarily in economic terms. (Life becomes more about “where am I going to make the most money?”)
- Compassion replaced by competition
- Spiritual emptiness will continue to rise (because the more they buy into the marketing messages, the less fulfilled they will be)
- A ripe – yet challenging – environment for ministry. (The more emptiness, the more need for the gospel)

Doing ministry in a marketing world: what now?

- Constantly proclaim the Creator-God who is the only One who can fill the hole in their souls.
- Affirm their value in God’s eyes by teaching them how valuable they are to Him, and living with them in a community that does the same.
- Teach them when, where and how they are being marketed to. (Take them out to the mall or a drive along the high way and figure out with them how they’re being marketed to.)

- Provide ongoing opportunities for missions and service (it cements faith)
- Help them process ads by constantly asking the ad filtering questions:
 1. What product is this ad selling?
 2. What, besides the product, does this ad sell? (ideas, lifestyle, worldview, behaviors, etc.)
 3. What's the bait, hook, and the promise?
 4. Complete this sentence: "This ad tell me, use ____ (the name of the product) and ____ (the result the ad promises)."
 5. Does the ad tell the truth? What? How?
 6. Does the ad tell a lie(s)? What? How?
 7. How does this ad and its message agree or disagree with God's truth and what does that mean for me?

"If I find myself a desire which no experience [or product] in this world can satisfy, the most probably explanation is that I was made for another world." C.S. Lewis