

## CASE FOUR

### Battling the onslaught of junk food marketing

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#### Case Questions and Answers

1. *What have been your experiences of 'pester power'? ("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.) Check out the following website for more information on marketing to children: [http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/parents/marketing/marketers\\_target\\_kids.cfm](http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/parents/marketing/marketers_target_kids.cfm)*

Be ready for a range of student experiences! They may be based on observations of own or other parents-child interaction. Students may take the view of child, parent, marketer or CB researcher (the most objective). Typically, students (generally non-parents) tend to offer parents plenty of advice on how to curb children's nagging behaviour.

The Canadian website, media awareness network <http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/parents/marketing/index.cfm> is an excellent resource for parents (and CB students), covering the issues and possible actions to deal with marketing and consumerism, particularly marketing to young people (see overview below).

Canadians under the age of twenty—the "Echo Generation," as they're often called—make up a quarter (26 per cent) of the country's population.

Not only is this generation strong in numbers, it also exerts enormous economic influence within the family—a fact not lost on the marketing and advertising industries.

Once an ignored demographic for advertisers, today's young people have become the most marketed-to generation in history, thanks to their spending power and their future clout as adult consumers.

"Canadian kids, between the ages of 9-14 have \$1.8 billion in disposable income, and influence ten times that amount in family spending."

(Source: YTV Kid and Tween Report, 2000)

The resources in this section will give you the tools to help counter the constant bombardment of marketing messages that have become a ubiquitous part of our children's lives.

#### THE ISSUES

##### **Advertising: It's Everywhere**

An examination of the pervasiveness of advertising and marketing in today's world.

##### **How Marketers Target Kids**

Strategies marketers use to reach kids and build brand loyalty.

##### **Special Issues for Young Children**

Cross-merchandising, junk food marketing and other techniques aimed at young children.

##### **Special Issues for Tweens and Teens**

Marketing messages for adolescents related to self image, "coolness" and attitude.

## GETTING INVOLVED

### Understanding Advertising Guidelines and Codes

Learn the guidelines and codes advertisers have to follow when marketing to children.

### Dealing with Marketing: What Parents Can Do

Tips for raising kids in a consumer culture. Talking to your children about advertising and encouraging them to be responsible consumers.

### Taking Action

Voicing your opinion to the advertising industry, countering the commercialization of education and raising awareness in your school or community.

2. *Where do you stand on the opinion spectrum of marketing control measures, i.e. consumer responsibility versus government regulation? Why? How far should we go, e.g. restrict advertising, limit what can and can't be sold in schools?*

This makes for a fertile debate topic – encourage students to take a stand toward one end of the spectrum. Prior to the onset of the world financial crisis in late 2007-mid 2008, the socio-economic mood was one of free-market capitalism and globalisation and deregulation combined with industry self-regulation. Since then there has been a shift toward more government intervention and regulation at both national and global levels. Will greater financial regulation have repercussions for regulation of other aspects of the economy? The jury is still out on this one.

The ethics chapters of most marketing texts discuss the importance of business self-regulation and social responsibility of marketers. They also mention the rise of consumer groups, which serve to keep corporations in check. The responsibility of individual consumers to make proper consumption choices is often not covered and is hard to tackle. Students could reflect on the appropriateness of their own consumption choices and how they might contribute to the welfare of society.

Under the heading ‘Dealing with marketing: What parents can do’, the media awareness network site provides a useful set of strategies for greater consumer responsibility, such as educating kids about advertising and marketing, challenging children’s definition of cool and encouraging savvy consumer habits.

3. *What marketing control measures for food promotion to children does your country’s government have in place, e.g. to what degree is TV advertising of junk food to children regulated?*

Students should be able to glean this information quickly from an internet search.

E.g. in Australia, Australian Government’s Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) has developed the Children’s Television Standards (CTS) 2005. [http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD/pc=PC\\_310262](http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD/pc=PC_310262). The CTS regulate the content of children's programs and advertising during designated children’s viewing times on commercial free-to-air television. As mentioned in the case study, the ACMA is undertaking a review of the Children’s Television Standards (CTS).

The media awareness network site provides an overview of the advertising rules in Canada.

Except in Quebec, where all advertising to children under the age of 13 is prohibited under the *Quebec Consumer Protection Act*.

Advertisements in broadcast media, directed at children under 12 years of age, must follow a set of voluntary guidelines called the *Broadcast Code for Advertising to Children*. The code does not pertain to ads broadcast on U.S channels. Compliance with the Code is a condition of licence for Canadian broadcasters.

All other types of advertisements aimed at children are covered by the general *Canadian Code of Advertising Standards* and *Gender Portrayal Guidelines*. Advertising Standards Canada (ASC) is the industry organization that administers all of these codes and deals with complaints from the public.

4. *Who has a vested interest in retaining TV advertising of junk food to children? How can they pre-empt a ban on their TV advertising? To what extent do they need to adjust their marketing management philosophy? What alternative marketing strategies would you recommend in the case where they are faced with a ban? In your answer, reflect on how other industries (e.g. tobacco, alcohol) have coped with bans on TV advertising.*

Naturally, the marketers and their organizations, as well as media organizations are keen to maintain self-regulation and minimum government intervention in relation to their promotional activities. Some of the ways to pre-empt a ban or further regulation of their promotional activities are to:

- Demonstrate appropriate and effective self-regulation. In current times this may mean developing standards and codes of practice together with regulators, i.e. to co-regulate.
- Undertake credible research to demonstrate the lack of evidence between their promotional activities and social concerns, e.g. childhood obesity.
- Engage with affected consumer groups (consumer groups, concerned parents, children) to exchange views and develop shared views. This also demonstrates good corporate citizenship, which will help the cause.

While junk food is not (yet) in the same category as tobacco and alcohol, it may be useful to anticipate the alternative strategies developed by these industries in the face of advertising bans. Cigarette ads were banned from television in the United States in 1971 and in many other countries including Canada and Australia. A key benefit of sports sponsorship is that it provides a legal loophole for circumventing the ad ban. Alcohol sponsorship is looked at in a better light than tobacco sponsorship, which is the more controversial topic. This enables them to present product images that they hope will counteract other negatives in the culture. Significant brand exposure may be gained through event publicity, prepromotion, on-site signage, and telecast of the event, but unlike conventional advertising, there is no requirement for including health warnings or moderation messages. This is an incredible statistic, in that, beer companies sponsor more than half of all professional sports teams in America (1) during the prepromotion advertising and publicity for the event, (2) at the event site during the event itself, (3) during the live or delayed broadcast of the event, and (4) during post event news reporting of the event's results. Yet by having these advertisements in the arenas or stadiums, the alcohol or tobacco company does not have to put up warnings with their advertisement like they have to do on their products and advertisements in publications.

Source: <http://www.megaessays.com/viewpaper/51124.html>.

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