



LESSON PLAN

Level:	Grades 8-12
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Duration:	40 minutes

Marketing to Teens: Marketing Tactics

Overview

This activity helps teenagers develop an awareness of marketing tactics aimed at teens through the creation of their own mock advertising campaigns.

Learning Outcomes:

Students demonstrate:

- an awareness of the influential nature of ads
- the ability to identify specific advertising tactics geared to teenagers
- an understanding about how they, as consumers, are influenced by these commercial messages
- an appreciation of their position as a desirable demographic for advertisers

Preparation and Materials

- 3 boxes (shoe boxes would be perfect) labelled "products", "girl's magazine choices" and "guys magazine choices"
- 3 small pieces of scrap paper for each student
- poster sized paper for students to make their ads on, and markers, magazines, scissors and glue sticks if they want to use collage, or other art supplies
- a photocopy of the *Scenario* activity page, with each scenario cut out separately so that one can be given to each group
- *Advertising Strategies* handout

The Lesson

Ask students to consider the following statement (*you may want to write this on the board or a flip chart prior to class*):

"Often advertising is not about keeping up with the Joneses, but about separating you from them. That's especially true of advertising directed at a particular group, such as adolescents or young-adults--it's called 'dog-whistle' advertising because it goes out at frequencies only dogs can hear."

Dr. James Twitchell
Smithsonian, April 2000



- What does the author mean by this statement? (*Some advertisements specifically target young people. They use language, images and messages that strike a cord with teens, but which might not have the same appeal to their parents.*)
- Can students think of examples of ads that appeal to them, but not to their parents? (*Answers might include ads for video-games, snack food or music—products that are a part of teen culture.*)
- What is it that separates these ads from those that appeal to their parents?
- Are there 'set' strategies or themes in advertisements geared to their age group?
- Within the teen demographic, is there a difference between ads geared to teenage girls, and ads geared to teenage boys?

Activity

Tell students that today they get to be advertising executives.

- Give each student 3 pieces of paper.
- On the first one, ask them to write the name of a product that would be difficult to get teenagers to buy, or something that is unlikely to be trendy among teenagers. They need to indicate whether it will be marketed to boys or to girls, or to both genders.
- Give them a few examples. Three examples from a class we worked with are lawnmowers, shoehorns, and medicated itch powder. These pieces of paper will be put into a box labeled "products".
- On the other two pieces of paper, students will write down the names of two magazines they read regularly (except pornography- we don't want to hear about that in this setting). Guys will put these in the box marked "guy's magazine choices" and girls will put them in the box marked "girl's magazine choices". Divide students into groups of 4 or 5.
- Give each group one advertising scenario from the *Scenario* activity page.
- Each group will then pick 2 pieces of paper out of the "product" box and choose one of the two as the product they will be marketing.
- Depending on whether the products are to be marketed to guys or girls, the group will pick names of magazines from the appropriate magazine boxes.
- They can fill in the blanks on their scenarios with the product and magazine names.
- Tell them what their time limitations are (15 to 20 minutes) and that they need to be prepared to discuss their work when they are done.

After they have created their ad, have each group briefly explain their campaign, then ask the following discussion questions:

1. Which groups used a "traditional" strategy (methods that we see all the time in ads) to market their product?
2. List strategies that were used on the board. For example: "made the product sexy", "made it seem like people using the product are popular", "associated the product with rebellion", etc. (At this point, you can distribute and review the strategies from the *Advertising Strategies* handout with students.)



3. Did anyone use an approach we haven't seen before? Is there much originality in advertising?
4. Which campaign was most respectful of teenagers? Of girls? Of guys?
5. Were there any that reinforced traditional gender roles (*i.e.*, *girls need to be pretty and sweet, guys need to be macho*)?
6. Which of these campaigns do you think would be most effective in the real world? Why?
7. Are any of the ads trying to associate their product with a cool lifestyle? What do they imply your life will be like if you buy the product?
8. Did any groups create ads that didn't actually show the product in their advertisement? How do you feel about those sorts of ads?
9. If you could turn your idea into a TV commercial, what kind of music and effects could you use to hype the product?

Ask students whether they agree or disagree with the following statements:

- Advertising sets us up to feel dissatisfied -- even if we think we have everything we need, ads will still try to convince us that there is something else we need.
- Advertisers try to show us how much more satisfied, popular, happy, hip, attractive, sexy, fun and in control we would be if we had their product.
- Fashion and trends are always changing so that we must continually spend money to be current.
- Advertising stresses competition and status versus feeling good about being who you are and accepting others for who they are.

This lesson has been adapted from *Seeing Beyond the Glam*, a peer education workshop from the *Expecting Respect Peer Education Program*. The original workshop is designed for secondary students who want to conduct workshops with other students about advertising and its impact on teenagers.

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For more information about the *Expecting Respect Peer Education Program* or to obtain a copy of *Seeing Beyond the Glam*, email sthompson@mcd.gov.ab.ca.



Marketing to Teens - Scenario Page

Give one marketing scenario to each student group:

Scenario One:

(product name here) *Marketing Hype* people need to get excited about (product name here)!!!!!!!!!!!!!! The company that makes (product name here) knows that many teenagers have a lot of disposable income (money they can spend on things they want or enjoy, not things like rent or groceries). They are going to spend \$2 million on an ad campaign to promote (product name here) to this market. You work for an advertising agency, and your job is to make (product name here) a trendy product for teenagers. Your print ad will appear in (magazine names here).

Scenario Two:

You are a marketing team whose job is to make (product name here) the hottest thing ever for teenagers. You will be designing a print ad to appear in (magazine names here) to get teenagers to buy (product name here). You have \$5 million to work with, so you can do anything you want.

Scenario Three:

You work on an advertising team. Your client (the company that makes product name here) has \$3 million to spend to promote (product name here) to teenagers. You are being paid the big bucks to make them catch on as the hottest new trend. Your ad will appear in some of the most popular magazines among this age group, like (magazine names here).

Scenario Four:

A huge company that manufactures (product name here) knows it could double its sales if teenagers bought their product, because many teenagers have a lot of disposable income (money they can spend on things they want or enjoy, not things like rent or groceries). They have hired your marketing team because you specialise in marketing to teens. You have several million dollars to work with and your ads will appear in (magazine names here).

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Marketing to Teens - Advertising Strategies

Advertisers have many methods to try and get you to buy their products. Lots of times, what they are selling is a lifestyle, or an image, rather than the product. Here are some tricks of the trade.

Ideal Kids (or families) - always seem perfect. The kids are really hip looking, with the hottest fashions, haircuts and toys. Ideal families are all attractive and pleasant looking—and everyone seems to get along! Ideal kids and families represent the types of people that kids watching the ad would like themselves or their families to be.

Family Fun - a product is shown as something that brings families together, or helps them have fun together; all it takes is for Mum or Dad to bring home the "right" food, and a ho-hum dinner turns into a family party.

Excitement - who could ever have imagined that food could be so much fun? One bite of a snack food and you're surfing in California, or soaring on your skateboard!

Star Power - your favourite sports star or celebrity is telling you that their product is the best! Kids listen, not realizing that the star is being paid to promote the product.

Bandwagon - join the crowd! Don't be left out! Everyone is buying the latest snack food: aren't you?

Scale - is when advertisers make a product look bigger or smaller than it actually is.

Put Downs - when you put down your competition's product to make your own product seem better.

Facts and Figures - when you use facts and statistics to enhance your product's credibility.

Repetition - advertisers hope that if you see a product, or hear its name over and over again, you will be more likely to buy it. Sometimes the same commercial will be repeated over and over again.

Heart Strings - ads that draw you into a story and make you feel good, like the McDonalds commercial where the dad and his son are shoveling their driveway and the son treats his poor old dad to lunch at McDonalds when they are done.

Sounds Good - music and other sound effects add to the excitement of commercials, especially commercials aimed at kids. Those little jingles, that you just can't get out of your head, are another type of music used to make you think of a product. Have you ever noticed that the volume of commercials is higher than the sound for the program that follows?

Cartoon Characters - Tony the Tiger sells cereal and the Nestlé's Quick Bunny sells chocolate milk. Cartoons like these make kids identify with products.

Weasel Words - by law, advertisers have to tell the truth, but sometimes, they use words that can mislead viewers. Look for words in commercials like: "Part of..." "The taste of real...." "Natural...." "New, better tasting...." "Because we care..." There are hundreds of these deceptive phrases -- how many more can you think of?

Omission - where advertisers don't give you the full story about their product. For example, when a Pop Tart claims to be "part" of a healthy breakfast, it doesn't mention that the breakfast might still be healthy whether this product is there or not.

Are You Cool Enough? - this is when advertisers try to convince you that if you don't use their products, you are a nerd. Usually advertisers do this by showing people who look uncool trying a product and then suddenly become hip looking and do cool things.

