

# Facts About Marketing to Children

*from* The Center for a New American Dream

## Children as Targets

- Advertising directed at children is estimated at over \$15 billion annually—about 2.5 times more than what it was in 1992.
- Over the past two decades, the degree to which marketers have scaled up efforts to reach children is staggering. In 1983, they spent \$100 million on television advertising to kids. Today, they pour roughly 150 times that amount into a variety of mediums that seek to infiltrate every corner of children’s worlds.
- According to a leading expert on branding, 80 percent of all global brands now deploy a “tween strategy.”

## Commercial Television

- The average American child today is exposed to an estimated 40,000 television commercials a year—over 100 a day.
- A task force of the American Psychological Association (APA) has recommended restrictions on advertising that targets children under the age of eight, based on research showing that children under this age are unable to critically comprehend televised advertising messages and are prone to accept advertiser messages as truthful, accurate and unbiased.

## Beyond the Tube

- According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, youth are multitasking their way through a wide variety of electronic media daily, juggling iPods and instant messaging with TV and cell phones. In fact, they pack 8.5 hours of media exposure into 6.5 hours each day, seven days a week—which means that they spend more time plugged in than they do in the classroom.
- By the mid-1990s, direct marketing, promotions, and sponsorships actually accounted for 80 percent of marketing dollars.

## New Dream Poll, “Nag Factor”

According to a national survey commissioned by the Center for a New American Dream:

- American children aged 12 to 17 will ask their parents for products they have seen advertised an average of nine times until the parents finally give in.

- More than 10 percent of 12- to 13-year-olds admitted to asking their parents more than 50 times for products they have seen advertised.
- More than half of the children surveyed (53%) said that buying certain products makes them feel better about themselves. The number is even higher among 12- to 13-year-olds: 62% say that buying certain products makes them feel better about themselves.
- Nearly a third of those surveyed (32%) admitted to feeling pressure to buy certain products such as clothes and CDs because their friends have them. Over half of 12- to 13-year-olds (54%) admitted to feeling such pressure.
- The nagging strategy is paying dividends for kids and marketers alike: 55% of kids surveyed said they are usually successful in getting their parents to give in.

### **What Kids Really Want**

- According to a 2003 New American Dream poll, 57 percent of children age 9–14 would rather do something fun with their mom or dad than go to the mall to go shopping.

### **In Schools**

- The American Beverage Association (formerly National Soft Drink Association) at one point estimated that nearly two thirds of schools nationwide had exclusive “pouring rights” contracts with soda companies.

### **Harming Children’s Well-Being**

- Obesity: Rising levels of childhood obesity track an explosion of junk food ads in recent years.
- Emotional well-being: Author and Boston College sociology professor Juliet Schor finds links between immersion in consumer culture and depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and conflicts with parents.
- Financial self-control: National surveys reveal that kids are leaving high school without a basic understanding of issues relating to savings and credit card debt. No surprise, then, that over the past decade, credit card debt among 18–24 year olds more than doubled.