

Common Advertising Strategies

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1. Ideal Kids

The kids in commercials are often a little older and a little more perfect than the target audience of the ad. They are, in other words, role models for what the advertiser wants children in the target audience to think they want to be like. A commercial that is targeting eight year-olds, for instance, will show 11 or 12 year-old models playing with an eight year old's toy.

2. Heart Strings

Commercials often create an emotional ambience that draws you into the advertisement and makes you feel good. The McDonald's commercials featuring father and daughter eating out together, or the AT&T Reach Out and Touch Someone ads are good examples. We are more attracted by products that make us feel good.

3. Amazing Toys

Many toy commercials show their toys in life-like fashion, doing incredible things. Airplanes do loop-the-loops and cars do wheelies, dolls cry and spring-loaded missiles hit gorillas dead in the chest. This would be fine if the toys really did these things.

4. Life-like Settings

Barbie struts her stuff on the beach with waves crashing in the background, space aliens fly through dark outer space and all-terrain vehicles leap over rivers and trenches. The rocks, dirt, sand and water don't come with the toys, however.

5. Sounds Good

Music and other sound effects add to the excitement of commercials. Sound can make toys seem more life-like or less life-like, as in a music video. Either way, they help set the mood advertisers want.

6. Cute Celebrities

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles sell pizza. Spuds McKenzie sells beer. "Joe Cool" camel sells cigarettes. All of these are ways of helping children identify with products either now or for the future.

7. Selective Editing

Selective editing is used in all commercials, but especially in commercials for athletic toys like frisbees or footballs. Commercials show only brilliant catches and perfect throws. Unfortunately, that's not the way most children experience these toys.

8. Family Fun.

"This is something the whole family can do together!" or "This is something Mom will be glad to buy for you." Many commercials show parents enjoying their children's fun as if the toy will bring more family togetherness.



9. Excitement!

Watch the expressions on children's faces. Never a dull moment, never boring. "This toy is the most fun since fried bananas!" they seem to say. How can your child help thinking the toy's great?

10. Star Power.

Sports heroes, movie stars, and teenage heart throbs tell our children what to eat and what to wear. Children listen, not realizing that the star is paid handsomely for the endorsement.



Food Advertising Strategies

Advertisers have many methods to try and get you to buy their products. Lots of times, what they are selling is a life-style, 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 and hair-cuts, 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 - are when you put down your competition's product to make your own product seem better.

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

Repetition - advertisers hope that if you see a product, or hear it's 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 - are 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. Cartoon 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 sayings - how many more can you think of?

Omission - is 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 that look uncool trying a product and then suddenly becoming hip looking and doing cool things.

