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To Separate Advertisements and Children

“Competition” is part of human nature, even in animals, and it can be seen almost everywhere. Several centuries ago, man competed for dominance over land. As of today, in most cases, people compete to be successful in business. The world is developing so fast, and almost all companies are using different strategies that they think are most effective to attract people to trust and buy their products, competing among themselves to become popular. Therefore, they promote and advertise their products as much as they can. We can see advertisements everywhere, such as in newspapers, magazines, on boards, on television, on radio. Many advertisements target children, who are immature; this situation becomes a problem, which ranges from a small to a huge one. Therefore, the government should deal with advertising business and parents should deal with their children; advertisements which are harmful to kids should be forbidden from reaching them and the children are needed to be convinced by the parents not to watch too much television, which has many advertisements.

People should see the negative conditions that are going on among kids because of advertisements. Roy F. Fox, a professor of education at the University of Missouri, explains that “advertising is harmful to the physical and social health of children.” For example, “The Academy estimates that, each year, youngster are exposed to 2,000 television ads for beer and

wine” (Fox). Furthermore, “Meg Gallogly of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids asserts that there are clear links between cigarette ads and teen smoking”(Gallogly). As a result, over 4,000 kids are found trying smoking for their first time (Gallogly). According to a study in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute, cigarette commercials influence youth to smoke more than “peer pressure” does (Gallogly). Therefore, the problem shouldn’t be allowed to continue growing up among kids.

One of the causes of the problem is that many kids spend most of their time watching television. A large number of advertisements are among television programs, so children have much exposure to commercials, which gradually influence them without being noticed. According to Schlosser, an average American child watches television for twenty one hours from Sunday to Saturday. For little children, around three to nine years old, the advertisements are toys and appeals with popular characters, and teenagers are targeted by cigarette and alcohol commercials. According to the studies, teens who watch television “4 to 5 hours per day are 5.24 times more likely to initiate smoking than youth who watch 0-2 hours” (Gidwani).

Children’s weakness of being obstinate to get what they want is also one of the causes of companies’ advertisements aim at children. One weak point of children is that they can easily be influenced. According to Eric Schlosser, kids cannot “comprehend the real purpose of commercials and” trust that “advertising claims were true.” Companies also know what children are fond of and notice that children ask their parents for dozens of times until they get things they want. Children nag their parents in several ways: pleading nags by begging their parents a number of times, forceful nags by threatening their parents in different ways such as

saying “Well then, I’ll go and ask Dad” to buy what they want for them (Schlosser 44). They keep annoying parents until they are bought food or products such as toys, clothing they want. Therefore, many companies try their best to improve their advertisements, which are very effective, to convince children to be strong minded to want their products and buy the products. For example, the companies use children’s favorite characters to advertise their products to which children’s favorite characters are attached.

As a result, there are problems between parents and children. Because of attractive advertisements, many children from age of around three to nine years find the products or food they want or they like to eat. Therefore, they ask their parents to buy the objects they want. If parents refuse their request, the kids start nagging their parents to give them the products they want. Hence, parents feel annoyed. Sometimes, when the parents have their mind that is already full of problems from their work, they can easily get angry with their children’s annoyance so that they may scold their children with stern face and harsh words, which is upsetting for children. Children might even think their parents don’t love them and that’s why the parents do not want to fulfill their requirements. Furthermore, parents usually feel guilty when they see their children longing for the products that they didn’t buy for the children, so the parents often tend to accomplish the children’s wish; they finally give the things their children are longing for. As a result, especially for parents having low income, they feel uncomfortable after they spent their money on kids’ things which are usually expensive.

In addition to parent-child conflict, advertisements also have a very dangerous effect that teens become addictive to cigarette and alcohol. Nine years ago, according to studies, \$59.6

million was spent in advertising in “youth-oriented magazines” by tobacco industries to get to be very popular (Gallogly). Therefore, teens’ frequent exposure to these advertisements influences them. There is no wonder that teens want to try alcohol, beer and cigarette, which are heavily advertised products. Studies found that there are over 4,000 children try smoking “for the first time” everyday, while another 2,000 kids become addicted to smoking (Gallogly).

One way to address this problem is that instead of letting the children watch TV for most of their time, parents should spend more time with their children to show that there are other interesting activities, like playing sports, reading story books, and drawing pictures because each of these activities has its own advantages. It is important children have interest in useful activities. Researchers say that kids who play sports can “do better in school”, are healthier, have “better interpersonal skills”, and they usually can handle “success and failure”. In addition, teenage-girls who participate in sports are “less likely to become pregnant as teenagers, less likely to begin smoking, more likely to quit smoking” (Shookhoff and MetzI). In my experience, children who like to draw in their free time are more likely to be calm; in other words, these children usually do not have aggressive behavior. They are also likely to have better imagining skills, which is useful for reading and writing. Children who read books in their free time are obviously wealth in vocabulary than other students who don’t read many books. Therefore, parents should try their best to get their children to have hobby on these useful activities other than watching television.

In addition, a law that bans unsuitable commercials, such as alcohol and cigarette, from reaching the children should be passed. That means alcohol or cigarette commercials shouldn’t

be allowed to comprise in youth daily life, such as involving in youth magazine, in television programs that kids usually watch. If teenagers see fewer advertisements, the chance that teenagers have tendency to try these harmful products will decrease; the fewer the cigarette and alcohol advertisements, the less teenagers will think to try smoking or drinking as their first time. As there will be fewer chances for kids to try improper products like cigarette for the first time, there will be fewer kids who become addicted to these products.

Many kids will probably say that there is nothing wrong with commercials. They may usually think that advertisements cannot do anything about them. That is not totally true. In fact, kids even don't know that they are being influenced by advertisements. Kids always see advertisements almost everywhere, and they think these commercials are just usual things around them. According to Eric Schlosser, kids cannot differentiate TV programs and TV commercials (pg. 46). They don't even notice that their brain is working under the influence of commercials when they buy certain products. Most of the time, kids want to try cigarettes because they have seen cigarette-advertisements, for instance.

“Opponents say that businesses have a right to advertise their products and that viewers aren't forced to buy or eat any product” (Ban fast food on TV?). There isn't also any one arguing that advertisements are forcing children to buy their products. If the companies really forced children to buy their products, the children would not be also interested in advertisements since no one likes being forced. However, the advertisements persuade and gradually influence the children even though the children do not notice about it; advertisements can be seen and the advertised products are sold almost everywhere the kids

go. For example, one advertising executive even explained, ““You've got to reach kids throughout the day—in school, as they're shopping in the mall ... or at the movies. You've got to become part of the fabric of their lives”” (Fox). Furthermore, “the cigarette and spit-tobacco companies continue to advertise heavily at retail outlets near schools and playgrounds...” (Meg Gallogly). Therefore, we can see that advertisements are obviously trying their best to influence kids. It is natural that many people want to try an advertised product and usually think that an advertised item is better.

Since advertisements are not useful and can even cause problems for kids in many cases, the government should start to deal with the problem. The government has to pass the law that ban advertising harmful products to the children. In addition, parents also should try to influence their children to become interested in sports or other useful activities as described above. Parental influence should be bigger than commercials influence over kids. If both of these solutions can be done successfully, there will be fewer problems for the kids and advertisements.

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