

The Power of Advertising

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What is advertising?

1 Advertising is a way of communicating with people about a product or service. Usually, it gives people information about the product or service and to explain why they should buy it. Sometimes it communicates with people about why they should continue buying. In the case of advertising, communicating doesn't simply mean talking to them. Advertisements are communicated to people using every possible method, including television, radio, magazines, and websites. An advertisement can be anything from the commercial before a YouTube video to the small banner on the side of a webpage. These days, there are so many ways of communicating that people are nearly always being exposed to advertisements, from products endorsed by Kendall Jenner on Instagram to the lawyer's face on the bus bench.

Who is behind advertising?

2 Worldwide, advertising is a billion-dollar industry, with nearly \$500 billion spent in 2016. That industry includes the companies that place advertisements, the agencies that create them, and the media that runs them.

3 A really good advertisement isn't easy to make. Companies sometimes hire agencies to solve this problem for them. Advertising agencies write, design, and create the advertisement. Today, advertising agencies create all sorts of ads that go on TV, in magazines, across the bottom of mobile apps, or on the sides of buses. But not all companies use advertising agencies. Some hire creative people to work at the company and write, design, and create ads just for that company, year-round.

4 Once an advertisement is produced, it will be passed on to a media company who will then run the advertisement. When a media company runs an ad, it ensures that viewers have to see the advertisement. That is why magazines have full-color photos of new bags to purchase and the Super Bowl plays commercials in the middle of the game. In fact, the Super Bowl is so widely watched that companies often pay more than a million dollars for the ad slot and the commercials are anticipated all year long. For most media companies, advertisements are the main way the company makes money. If a television show can prove that 1 million people will be watching, companies will pay a lot of money for those people to have to watch their ad as well. Without advertising, we likely would not have television shows, magazines, newspapers, or internet content that we could watch or read without paying a subscription fee.

When did advertising emerge?

5 Before the early 1900s, advertisements were more informative than persuasive, relegated to tiny print at the backs of magazines. It was generally thought that if a picture was trying *too* hard to sell you a product, the product was probably hogwash — absurd, foolish, and unlikely to work. The ads were also incredibly localized. Philadelphia newspapers ran ads in the back of the paper, informing consumers about Philadelphia stores and products.

6 However, as the industrial revolution¹ took hold of the country, suddenly there were more standardized products on the market. National advertising became much more popular. It started to become almost necessary for companies to advertise, in order to sell enough products to survive. Advertising agencies moved from selling small space in the backs of local papers to designing increasingly creative ads. As consumer spending ramped up throughout the 1920s, advertising followed suit. In the 1960s, advertisements became much more creative and started to look more like what we would see today. The advertising industry became more important and started to attract writers, artists, and musicians.

7 As advertising became more popular and artistic, it also became more pervasive.² By the 1970s and 80s, advertising was everywhere.

¹ the transition to new manufacturing processes that involved machines, rather than hand production methods

² **pervasive** (*adjective*): spreading widely throughout an area or a group of people

How and why does advertising work?

8 Advertising works by connecting products to positive feelings or experiences. Through the power of advertising, a scented candle becomes synonymous³ with the feeling of warmth, coziness, and being at home. Candy canes are associated with Christmas. Steak and lobster dinners are instantly linked to luxury and to feeling powerful. Vegas brings up thoughts of fun. And a diamond ring, rare and valuable, becomes an integral part of getting engaged.

9 But a really good advertisement wants to do even more. It wants consumers to remember it and to connect the brand to that advertisement. That is why most people can name more breakfast cereal mascots than US presidents. And it's why advertisers create slogans, jingles, and characters for their campaigns.

10 As Nigel Hollis, writing in *The Atlantic*, explains it, "the best advertisements are ingenious at leaving *impressions*." He goes on to describe a friend, who, after claiming that advertisements did not have such an effect, could quote the jingles and premises of ads for an entire range of products.

11 These days, advertising is constant. But, because of how and why advertising works, it can have negative effects on society. Take the beauty industry for example. A makeup company, like Maybelline, wants people to associate its product with feeling happy, healthy, skinny, and naturally beautiful. The company comes up with a slogan — *Maybe she's born with it. Maybe it's Maybelline*. And they hire a slim model to wear the product in the advertisement. Tricks of light and makeup are used to make the model appear to naturally have the attributes the makeup enhances. People start to associate looking like that model with both the product and the brand, through the catchy slogan. And so people buy the product to look like the model... even though the model looks that way because of Photoshop, not mascara. Advertisements work to sell things through association and brand recognition, not by conveying truth. As ads become ubiquitous, these appeals to our desires can become harmful.

12 People rarely go to buy a product directly after seeing an advertisement. Instead, the ad works to associate positive memories with the product and recognition of the brand. The power of advertising is in the long game.

1. According to the article, what are some of the forms in which we often see advertisements?
2. Describe how an advertisement is produced.
3. How does Nigel Hollis most likely feel about people who claim that advertisements don't affect them? Explain well.
4. How do advertisements influence viewers to buy a product?

5. PART A

Which of the following identifies the central idea of the text?

- A. While many people consider advertisements to be annoying, they provide the public with necessary information and services.
- B. Advertisements are capable of manipulating people more than they realize, as ads convince consumers that certain products lead to specific emotions and experiences.
- C. With the development of technology, advertisements have become more informative and able to cater to specific viewers.
- D. Advertisements tend to focus their message on youth, as they are most likely to spend money on trendy products.

³ **synonymous** (*adjective*) : closely associated with or suggestive of something

PART B

Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?

- A. "That industry includes the companies that place advertisements, the agencies that create them, and the media that runs them." (Paragraph 2)
- B. "Without advertising, we likely would not have television shows, magazines, newspapers, or internet content that we could watch or read without paying a subscription fee." (Paragraph 4)
- C. "The ads were also incredibly localized. Philadelphia newspapers ran ads in the back of the paper, informing consumers about Philadelphia stores and products." (Paragraph 5)
- D. "Through the power of advertising, a scented candle becomes synonymous with the feeling of warmth, coziness, and being at home." (Paragraph 8)

6. PART A

What is the author's main purpose in paragraph 11?

- A. to show how advertisements can be dangerous by creating unattainable images that consumers wish to embody
- B. to provide readers with suggestions about how to avoid the negative influence of advertisements
- C. to suggest that the advertising industry needs to change the message it directs at consumers
- D. to prove to consumers that advertisements never use real images or information about their products

PART B

Which section from paragraph 11 best supports the answer to Part A?

- A. "A makeup company, like Maybelline, wants people to associate its product with feeling happy, healthy, skinny, and naturally beautiful."
- B. "The company comes up with a slogan — Maybe she's born with it. Maybe it's Maybelline. And they hire a slim model to wear the product in the advertisement."
- C. "And so people buy the product to look like the model... even though the model looks that way because of Photoshop, not mascara."
- D. "Advertisements work to sell things through association and brand recognition, not by conveying truth."

7. How did the industrial revolution influence the advertising industry? You must use evidence and elaborate to receive full credit.

The Daisy Girl Ad

In the 1964 presidential election, Republican candidate Barry Goldwater ran against the incumbent,⁴ President Lyndon B. Johnson. This election occurred at the height of the Cold War, a war between the U.S. and Soviet Russia which began just after World War II. It was called the Cold War because it did not involve direct combat between U.S. and Soviet forces; instead, each side armed itself heavily in preparation for nuclear warfare.

13 In the 1964 election, at the height of the Cold War with the USSR, Republican Barry Goldwater campaigned on a platform of pursuing aggressive military action against America's enemies. Goldwater's campaign suggested a willingness to use nuclear weapons in situations when others would find that unacceptable. His opponent, the incumbent President Lyndon B. Johnson, used Goldwater's speeches to imply that Goldwater would willingly wage a nuclear war, quoting Goldwater: "by one impulse act you could press a button and wipe out 300 million people before sundown." Fearing that he could lose the election, Johnson and his team decided to take more aggressive action.

14 On September 7, 1964, President Johnson's campaign aired the now-infamous "Daisy Girl Ad." The commercial begins with a little girl (two-year-old Monique M. Corzilius) standing in a meadow with chirping birds, picking the petals of a daisy flower while counting each petal slowly.

15 Because little Monique does not know her numbers perfectly, she repeats some and says others in the wrong order, all of which adds to her childlike appeal. When she reaches "nine," an ominous male voice is then heard counting down a missile launch, and as the girl's eyes turn toward something she sees in the sky, the camera zooms in until her pupil fills the screen, blacking it out.



16 When the countdown reaches zero, the blackness is instantly replaced by the bright flash and thunderous sound of a nuclear explosion, followed by a cut to footage of a billowing⁵ mushroom cloud.

17 As the fireball ascends, the final cut is made, this time a cut to a close-up section of incandescence⁶ in the mushroom cloud, over which the viewer hears President Johnson's voice: "These are the stakes. To make a world in which all of God's children can live, or to go into the dark. We must either love each other, or we must die." Another voiceover then says, "Vote for President Johnson on November 3rd. The stakes are too high for you to stay home."

18 The ad was immediately pulled off television, but the point was made. The ad appeared on nightly news and conversation programs in its entirety.

19 President Johnson won the 1964 election in a landslide victory, winning 486 electoral votes to Goldwater's 52.

8. Why didn't Johnson believe Goldwater would be a good president?

9. What were viewers most likely meant to believe happened to the little girl in the ad?

⁴ the current holder of an office or a position

⁵ **billow** (*verb*): to move or flow outward in a swelling, wave-like motion

⁶ **incandescence** (*noun*): light or glow

10. PART A

Which of the following statements best describes a central idea of the text?

- A. The threat of nuclear war not as strong as the 1960s American public believed.
- B. The Daisy Girl ad addressed the issue of nuclear war through poignant, scare-tactic means, and was a key point in President Johnson's victory.
- C. Johnson should not have won the election because he did so through under-handed means.
- D. It is fortunate that Goldwater did not win the election or else the United States would have definitely engaged in nuclear war.

PART B: Which of the following quotes best supports the answer to Part A?

- A. "Goldwater's campaign suggested a willingness to use nuclear weapons in situations when others would find that unacceptable." (Paragraph 1)
- B. "by one impulse act you could press a button and wipe out 300 million people before sun down." (Paragraph 1)
- C. "...a close-up section of incandescence in the mushroom cloud, over which the viewer hears President Johnson's voice: "These are the stakes. To make a world in which all of God's children can live, or to go into the dark. We must either love each other, or we must die. Another voiceover then says, "Vote for President Johnson on November 3rd." (Paragraph 5)
- D. "The ad was immediately pulled off television, but the point was made. The ad appeared on nightly news and conversation programs in its entirety." (Paragraph 6)

11. PART A

What does the word "ominous" most likely mean as used in paragraph 15?

- A. threatening
- B. gloomy
- C. indifferent
- D. monotone

PART B

What information in the text best helps you understand the meaning of the word?

12. Consider the structure of the last 2 paragraphs in the text. What implicit, or unspoken, conclusion does the article make?

- A. Even though the controversial ad was pulled, it nevertheless contributed greatly to Johnson's landslide victory.
- B. With the controversial ad pulled, people soon forgot about Goldwater and voted for Johnson instead.
- C. People still talked about the Daisy Girl Ad after it was pulled, contributing free publicity to Johnson's campaign.
- D. People were shocked by the ad, demanded it be pulled, and voted for Goldwater instead.

13. How might the Daisy Girl commercial be considered a negative campaign ad against Goldwater without ever mentioning his name? *Thoroughly* explain this interaction of ideas between the ad and the presidential race based on the information given in the text. You must use evidence and elaborate to receive full credit.