

INTERMEDIATE

Food companies are targeting kids online



Ever-greedy corporate marketers have found a new means of ensnaring children into the net of consumerism. Not content with bombarding kids on TV, in the streets and at schools, marketing executives are utilizing Internet games to tout their wares to unsuspecting children. The latest insidious and pernicious ploy of more than eighty percent of the world's chocolate and snack food companies has been brought to light in a new report, entitled "It's Child's Play: Advergaming and the Online Marketing of Food to Children". It is "the first comprehensive analysis of the nature and scope of online food advertising to children". The research was commissioned by America's Kaiser Family Foundation and exposes the questionable tactics of companies such as Mars, Hersheys and McDonalds in targeting children to promote their products. The latter company, in particular, focuses its ads more on enticing kids with cheap, giveaway toys than food.

The report sadly increases the likelihood of a new word entering the English vocabulary – the "advergame" – an immoral and callous technique to get kids hooked while having online fun. In addition, a variety of other advertising and marketing tactics designed to lure kids into spending an unlimited amount of online time being blitzed with corporate logos are employed on these sites. These include viral marketing (encouraging children to contact their peers about a specific product or brand, found on 64% of sites); sweepstakes and promotions (65%); memberships (25%); on-demand access to TV ads (53%); and incentives for product purchase (38%). Kaiser's William Dietz said the scale of this advertising was an "eye opener". It raises ethical concerns about the role food advertising plays in childhood obesity. Kaiser vice president Vicky Rideout warned the reach of online advertising is much deeper than that of television.

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READING / LISTENING

TRUE / FALSE:

Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- Marketers have found a way of protecting kids from consumerism.
- Some kids are bombarded with advertising at school.
- Over 80% of food companies use the Internet to target kids.
- McDonald's ads for kids focus heavily on its burgers and healthy food.
- "Advergame" may become a new English word.
- "Viral marketing" is all about making children aware of bugs.
- A report spokesperson said the findings were not so interesting.
- Advertising to kids on TV reaches deeper than advertising online.

SYNONYM MATCH

Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|---------------|----------------|
| a. greedy | impact |
| b. bombarding | peddle |
| c. tout | induce |
| d. insidious | uncaring |
| e. enticing | money-grabbing |
| f. callous | contemporaries |
| g. lure | sly |
| h. peers | encouragement |
| i. incentives | inundating |
| j. reach | tempting |

PHRASE MATCH

Match the following phrases from the article

(sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| a. ensnaring children | pernicious ploy |
| b. tout | much deeper than that of television |
| c. The latest insidious and | and scope of online food advertising |
| d. analysis of the nature | ethical concerns |
| e. exposes the questionable | into the net of consumerism |
| f. increases | tactics of companies |
| g. being blitzed | to contact their peers |
| h. encouraging children | their wares |
| i. It raises | the likelihood of |
| j. the reach of online advertising is | with corporate logos |