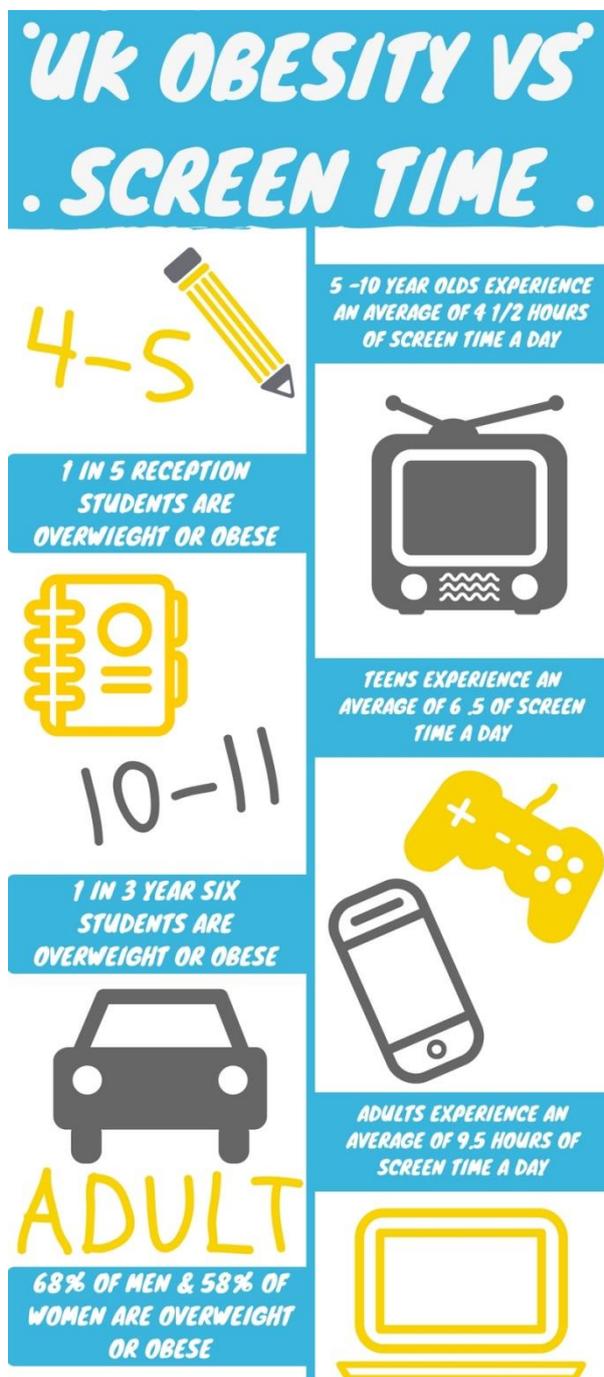


Brainwashing Babies 101

The Digital Era marking a new Ad-age.

Having trouble with creating customer loyalty? Well, worry no more, as advertisers have found an extremely effective way to create an international loyal consumer in this competitive age. The only hitch; they're children, but you know what they say, 'children are the future'. So put your ethics aside and follow these 5 simple steps. Soon you'll be a witness to a whole generation mindlessly fighting tooth and nail to sport your sweat-shop assembled goods, what more could socially irresponsible business owner ask for?



1. Get Directions to the Digital Age.

I don't know about yours, but fidgeting fingers, sweating foreheads and pained teenage eyes filled the table of my Christmas dinner. Meanwhile, snapchats and Instagram dms saturated the screens of imprisoned phones confiscated by frustrated parents.

Research Executive Matthew Nevard highlights this prominent need for a change of medium when desiring to market to children as he states "the main difference from the 1990s is that then TV and magazines were the main ways for connecting kids to the media and now they have different devices from tablets, mobiles, games consoles and...a much higher screen time." (Wakefield, 2015) Nevard hits the mark as modern advances in technology have resulted in children as young as three spending over four hours a day in front of a screen (Willgress, 2016).

It truly is the perfect opportunity to hook the next generation of customers into your brand before anyone else gets their subscriptions on them. The increased invasion of technology in domestic settings leaves an unprecedented access to the minds of young and naïve children. As long as there's money "multiple health and developmental concerns" (Willgress, 2016) aren't your problem right?

Gone are the days of households having regulated access to communal devices, as instead, within the UK, two to five year old demographic; 38% own an Android tablet, 32%

References: Jary, S. (2018). How much screen time is healthy for children? [online] Tech Advisor. Available at: <https://www.techadvisor.co.uk/feature/digital-home/how-much-screen-time-for-kids-3520917/> [Accessed 15 Jan 2018]
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own an iPad and of these children 32% also own a mobile phone (Jary, 2018). For pre-school children, Dr Hayley van Zwanenburg, the clinical director of the Priory's wellbeing clinics says screen time "simulates the 'reward centre'" of their brain "acting as a digital drug, so they will want more and more of it" (Willgress, 2016). So you can plug bright, unimaginative and highly addictive games as aggressively as you want, directly into the minds of vulnerable toddlers. Just dress it up in interactive challenges, goofy sounds, imaginary rewards and you're good to go!

1. Exploit Those Endorsements

But how do you make yourself known amongst hundreds of apps and businesses trying to do just that? Fortunately technology has created a personable, trustworthy goldmine for child marketing. This commercial assassin takes the form of innocent-eyed, fresh faced vloggers and influencers who have captured the attention and loyalty of our young people. In the form of unsuspecting video makeup tutorials or shopping hauls, vloggers and influencers have the opportunity to seamlessly influence the buying patterns of young people. Facebook really was right when it said "the camera is the new keyboard" (Stonson, 2017). Reg Bailey, the Government's childhood tsar acknowledges this power as he emphasised how "video bloggers are increasingly guilty of subjecting the millions of children who follow them online to covert advertising" (Green, 2015). Sounds like a prime business opportunity if you ask me, and a bit of retail therapy never hurt anyone? In the face of student debts and unaffordable housing, spending money on irrational and superficial items will probably make them feel good anyway.

Unknowing to themselves, children can easily be manipulated through domestic celebrities to buy products and services. On a platform of 1.5 billion monthly mobile users alone (Matney, 2017), YouTube creators have been offered a heavily influential platform to flog merchandise and sponsored products to the masses. For many popular creators this means to their extremely young fan base. Many studies have been carried out demonstrating the naïve basis on which children respond to advertising clearly conveyed by the American Psychological Association as it reports that "studies show that children below 4-5 do not have the ability to consistently distinguish between commercial and non-commercial content even when program/commercial separation devices ("Go bots will be back after these messages") were used." This research extends to older children as it also conveys that "most children younger than 7-8 years of age do not recognise the persuasive intent of commercial appeals." (Wilcox et al., 2004) Which means this increasingly unaware demographic will believe without a doubt that their trusting role model vlogger (and gets around the fairly strict advertising laws concerning children in the UK) will only be looking out for their existential need for the perfect shade of pink nail varnish, not really 'rose' or 'flamingo' but the perfect medium.

2. Confidence Through Consumerism

If that doesn't work, this next step is sure to be the hook. It basically boils down to; make the child feel so self-conscious that they will feel the incessant need to follow the newest trend. Consequentially a little army of clones will rise from the shops and you'll have your perfect demographic sculpted purely for your brand. No need to differentiate your advertising or your product if the consumers are all buying the same thing. Low cost, low risk, sounds perfect!

Of course if you don't count risk as the whole 'CSR', 'social purpose' movement. I'm sure the 1.6 million people in the UK estimated to be directly affected by eating disorders (anorexia & bulimia care) or the fact that 1 in 6 people are experiencing mental health problems in the UK (mind, 2017), has nothing to do with low self-esteem or self-consciousness. But hey, just throw in a few good

marketing campaigns like Subway agreeing to partner with Michelle Obama's campaign against child obesity and you'll clear your name. As the 'not so healthy' fast food company agreed to spend \$41 million and three years to promote a healthy eating plan aimed at children (Morrison 2014), but I guess we won't talk about the irony.

3. Unleash the power of the pester

Sticky, stamping, screaming child demands tawdry, toy-topped treat. The unyielding power of the pester proves itself potent time after time, as it strikes fatal attacks against parental defence barriers in supermarkets around the world. With a reported yearly spend of £460 in direct effect of 'pester power', according to the Telegraph (Agencies, 2013), it's arguably one the most effective selling techniques in the kids market. Every day parents are finding themselves surrendering to the despairing sight of the colour plastered, over-animated (and frankly quite creepy looking) box of cholesterol and additives known as, the 'happy meal'. To top it all off, our unethical practices come off pretty scot free as our actions are donned as the parenting fail of the 21st Century, with mothers and fathers internationally coming under cross-fire for growing world-wide obesity rates.

4. Keep them coming back

Clearly there have been some major changes in the last couple of decades. Some businesses have kept up with the need to shift from television advertising to digital and social media advertising and others have become benign through their irrelevancy to current generations through outdated strategies. Interactivity is a necessity now but more highly developed software of augmented reality and virtual reality is predicted to take over in the future. Be prepared for changes in the types of consumer to the changes in types of competition; keep your eye on those actual, potential and emerging competitors before they take your place. For other PESTE orientated concerns by the ever conscious parental figure, simply throw some money out into the world in the name of charity and I'm sure they won't cop onto your brainwashing techniques directed at children through unmonitored internet and technology use, happy days! Well, at least for some of us.

If you follow all of these steps, I'm sure you'll achieve of your dream of a successful, completely ethical and strong business. Not only equipped to deal with advancements in technology today and in the future but also able to create your own consumer and future commercially 'zombified' generation of customer to suit your every commercial need. It's true, "the customer is always right", but only once advertising has had their narrative spinning hands on them!

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