Module 3: Advertising, Marketing and You

On successfully completing this module, you will be able to:

* deconstruct and analyze advertisements and marketing messages for target market, advertising strategies and approaches, and the claims they make.
* create an effective marketing message or advertisement

The purpose of marketing and advertising is to influence you and your spending decisions. Marketers and advertisers put a lot of money and effort into learning how to do this, because selling products and services is the entire purpose of business. **Smart consumers take control of their own spending choices by educating themselves about the techniques advertisers use to influence our buying decisions.**

Mass Media and Advertising

Advertising is all around us, trying to influence us to buy a product or service, or to buy into an idea. Some ads are obvious, such as a billboard or a TV commercial. Others are subtle, such as one cola brand appearing in scenes of a movie, or movie star always carrying a particular brand of purse when in public. Advertisers spend billions of dollars learning what appeals to consumers, using this knowledge to create effective ads, and then delivering those ads to as many people as possible through mass media.

Determining how many advertisements reach us each day is not easy, and experts do not agree on the number (estimates range from 250 to 30,000 per day). If you do not focus on an ad, should you count it? Is the Nike swoosh on your friend's ball cap an ad?

**Advertising and mass media are closely related.**

The role of advertising in mass media cannot be overstated. For example, consider television. Except for public broadcasting channels, TV channels are funded by advertisers who purchase air time for their ads. Air time is most expensive when the greatest number of people are watching and likely to see the ads. Popular television shows attract the most viewers to sit in front of the television when ads are playing. In this way, television is essentially an ad-delivery medium, and TV shows are the bait.

**Teens are favourite targets for advertisers.**

Teens are an important source of revenue for corporations. According to a 2005 YTV Tween report, Canadian kids from ages nine to fourteen spent nearly $3 billion of their own money on products and services that year. They influenced their parents to spend over $20 billion! We know that advertisements played a significant role in many of these buying decisions.

**Advertisers would not spend the vast amounts they do if their messages were not effective at influencing people. How effective are they at influencing you?**

Demographics and VALS

Businesses seek to understand consumer groups so that they can accurately predict consumer behavior.

Researchers and marketers study the demographics of consumer groups. Demographics are the characteristics of a group. A demographic profile is a description of the common characteristics of members of a particular group. For example, one group's demographic profile (marketers shorten this to just "demographic") might be single males between 16 and 18 who own a car. Another demographic might be single females between 18 and 24 currently attending secondary or post-secondary education.

One demographic group that marketers are eager to reach is the **Millenials** (people born after 1980). You are a member of this demographic. Do you recognize yourself in it this article?

MILLENNIALS

“Nearly four out of 10 of them have a tattoo. Almost a quarter sport a piercing someplace other than an earlobe. Most sleep with their cellphone next to their bed. They're more ethnically and racially diverse than their elders. They're optimistic and confident.

One cable network chief called them "the new Greatest Generation," and they are—to TV programmers and advertisers. They're Millennials, America's biggest generation, larger than either the baby boomers or Gen X.”

"We sum it up in one really long word: television-viewing-fan-tweeting-app-using-blog-discussing-text-chatting-mobile-watching-consumers," Mr. Riley says.

Demographic profiles can be as detailed as a researcher or marketer wants. The more that a particular group matches an ideal customer, the more effectively a marketer can target its ads. For example, a company that sells holiday travel packages could effectively target ads for specific packages to a demographic like this: single, age 20-32, middle-class, credit card owner, flew outside the country twice or more in the past three years, CAA member or subscribes to a travel magazine. When a business can use the data in your digital footprint to match you to specific demographic profiles, it can target ads directly to you.

The market research company Strategic Business Insights uses a survey called **VALS** (Values, Attitudes and Lifestyles) to learn more about consumer groups. According to the company, the purpose of the survey is to determine a person’s values, media preferences, product ownership and more. Wikipedia describes VALS as a "research methodology used for psychographic market segmentation." "Psychographic market segmentation" means identifying and describing our "herds." Using VALS, marketers seek to get into a consumer’s head and see what makes him or her tick.