

Happiness Guaranteed or Your Money Back!

Photocopy, then cut out each rectangle.



Backed by Star Power

We see stars everywhere: in magazines, on TV, and in advertising. In the race to attract consumers at any price, some companies partner with stars in order to boost their image and their products. By doing so, the company hopes to capitalize on the star's popularity by getting fans to associate that star's qualities to the products he or she is pushing.

For example, Nike, which uses Michael Jordan to promote its products, is raking in profits far higher than the millions of dollars they pay the star to wear the Nike logo. "If Michael Jordan, the world's best basketball player, wears Nike, it's probably because their shoes are also the best." That's the kind of message companies convey in their advertising.

Question: What effect do stars have on your buying decisions?



Brands

The brands and logos we see in schoolyards stoke students' desire to own these. Everything can be branded: shoes, boots, watches, knapsacks, sweaters, coats, collector cards, and so on. By focusing on brands and logos instead of the product itself, advertisers seek to create a sense of belonging and pride in consumers. "Did you see that? Ben is wearing Tommy Hilfiger!" some will say. "Hey! That's not fair, I want a Nike cap, too. All my friends are wearing one!" others will think.

In short, brands have become symbols that allow young people to dress in a style they identify with. How about you? What brand are you advertising?

Question: How do popular brands and logos affect your buying decisions?



Contrived Scarcity

Contrived scarcity is one way that marketing companies have found to boost sales. By artificially creating a scarcity of certain products, companies can get consumers to rush out and buy them. This strategy pushes people to buy more in order to increase their chances of obtaining the desired item.

The message is clear: "Don't miss out! If you don't hurry to buy the product, you'll lose out!" As a result, every time a new collection of cards is launched, young people fall prey to this strategy. Most of the time, they are ready to do whatever it takes to increase the chance of finally getting their hands on that rarest of cards.

Questions: Have you ever collected cards or promotional items? What do you think of the scarcity strategy that companies use to get people to buy more and more in the hope of completing their collection?



The Weight of Words

Every day, consumers are exposed to hundreds of ads. Advertisers have more than one trick in their bag to ensnare customers. Retailers often run promotions to capture consumer attention: best quality–price ratio, limited quantity, first-come first-served, second item half-price, buy now pay later, etc. Although very short, these expressions are loaded with meaning. Companies also use slogans. Slogans take root in our minds through repetition, allowing us to quickly associate the brand with the products sold.

Questions: What slogans or other advertising formulas do you know? How do they affect your consumer choices or those of your family members?