



The Effect of Advertising Positioning Messages on Brand Loyalty Among Youth

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Strategic Value of the Adolescent Demographic

In the contemporary global economy, the youth demographic—specifically individuals between the ages of 13 and 24—represents one of the most lucrative and strategically significant segments for brand managers. Statistical data from the United States indicates that an average young adult is exposed to an estimated 13,000 to 30,000 television advertisements annually. However, this figure is merely the "tip of the iceberg," as it fails to account for the pervasive and often invisible volume of advertising integrated into mobile applications, video games, and social media feeds. The youth market is not only valued for its current purchasing capacity but, more importantly, for its high "Lifetime Value" (LTV). Marketers operate under the psychological premise that if brand values can be successfully instilled during the formative years (ages 13–18), these values will solidify into brand loyalty as the consumer reaches the critical spending age of 18–24.

However, the mechanism through which this loyalty is cultivated has undergone a radical metamorphosis. Historically, brand positioning was a function of product utility and quality assurance. In the traditional era, a brand succeeded by convincing the consumer of its functional superiority. Today, such a strategy is insufficient. Modern youth do not merely consume products; they consume identities. They require brands to function as mirrors of their personalities and conduits for their social relationships. This shift necessitates a move away from "Product Positioning" toward "Identity Positioning." This chapter explores how the transition from mass media to interactive digital engagement has redefined the parameters of brand loyalty, focusing on the outcomes of digital media as an accelerant for psychological brand attachment.



The problem statement of this research addresses the blurring lines between entertainment and commerce. As marketing becomes increasingly "stealthy," the traditional cognitive defenses used by consumers to filter out persuasive messages are being bypassed. This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of these modern strategies while simultaneously addressing the ethical and developmental concerns they raise. By understanding the "why" behind adolescent brand choices, stakeholders can better navigate the tension between commercial success and the well-being of the digital-native generation.

CHAPTER 2: CHANGE IN THE MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

From Monologue to Dialogue: The Digital native Revolution

To understand modern brand positioning, one must first analyze the seismic shift in communication channels. The traditional media landscape—comprised of television, radio, and print—operated on a "one-to-many" communication model. In this paradigm, the brand held the microphone, and the consumer was a passive "target." This was a monologue where positioning focused on high-reach and mass awareness. While effective for building broad brand recognition, traditional media is inherently limited by its lack of personalization and its high cost. Furthermore, in an era of "commodity parity," where most products share similar quality benchmarks, traditional positioning based on quality fails to differentiate a brand in the eyes of a skeptical, modern youth audience.

The emergence of digital and social media has replaced this monologue with a "many-to-many" dialogue. Digital media has democratized the marketing process, allowing for a degree of customization and personalization that was previously impossible. Adolescents born after 1990 are classified as "Digital Natives," meaning their cognitive development has occurred in an environment where the internet and smartphones are ubiquitous. For this demographic, social media is not a tool; it is a primary social habitat. Studies confirm that teenagers interact with these platforms "constantly" throughout the day, providing marketers with unprecedented access to their private social spheres.

The economic shift is equally dramatic. Digital marketing is significantly more affordable, often costing only 5% of traditional media campaigns while offering exponentially higher engagement rates. In this digital environment, the consumer has evolved from a "target" to a "partner." Brands now invite adolescents to co-create content, participate in virtual communities, and share their experiences in real-time. This transition from "Push Marketing" (imposing a message) to "Pull Marketing" (inviting participation) is the cornerstone of modern positioning. The digital environment leverages the adolescent's inherent need for social connectivity, transforming the brand from a distant corporation into a "social peer." This chapter establishes that the media environment is no longer a backdrop for advertising but an interactive ecosystem that actively shapes the adolescent's perception of reality and brand value.

CHAPTER 3: BRAND POSITIONING STRATEGIES FOR YOUTH

Identity Construction and the "Third Place" Concept

Modern brand positioning for youth has evolved beyond the promotion of physical attributes to the creation of immersive social experiences. One of the most effective frameworks identified in this study is the "**Third Place Strategy**." Sociologically, a "third place" is an environment that is neither the home (first place) nor the school/workplace (second place). It is a neutral ground for social interaction. Marketers have successfully co-opted this concept by positioning digital platforms—such as Instagram, TikTok, and Discord—as the digital "Third Place." By creating spaces where teens can interact socially without the direct supervision of parents or teachers, brands become the invisible hosts of the adolescent's social life.

Another pillar of modern positioning is **User-Generated Content (UGC)** and "Peer Production." Unlike passive television viewing, digital positioning requires the consumer to be a content producer. When a teenager retweets a brand's message, shares a branded filter on Snapchat, or creates a "haul" video on YouTube, they are providing a peer-level validation that no corporate advertisement can match. This is often described as "Peer Production," where



the consumer effectively becomes a volunteer for the brand's marketing department. This involvement creates a deep psychological investment; by sharing the brand, the teenager is integrating the brand into their own public identity.

Furthermore, the rise of "**Advergames**" represents a sophisticated fusion of commerce and entertainment. In these digital environments, the brand is not a commercial break; it is a fundamental part of the game mechanics. This creates a state of "Flow," where the adolescent's critical defenses are lowered, and the persuasive intent of the brand is concealed within the joy of play. Lifestyle positioning strategies, utilized by brands like Nike or DKNY, facilitate this further by positioning products as essential tools for "Identity Development." As adolescents move toward adulthood, they utilize these brands as shorthand for who they are—or who they wish to become. This chapter analyzes how these strategies move the brand from the "shelf" to the "self," ensuring it becomes a vital component of the consumer's social and personal narrative.

CHAPTER 4: ESTABLISHING BRAND LOYALTY

From Extrinsic Incentives to Intrinsic Evangelism

Brand loyalty is defined as the steadfast commitment to purchase a specific brand's products despite the availability of competitors and price fluctuations. In the youth market, this loyalty is increasingly driven by **Peer Marketing** rather than direct corporate messaging. Research indicates that 70% of social media users rely on recommendations from their digital peers. For a teenager, a "Like" or a comment on a branded post serves a dual psychological purpose: it validates the individual's choice and reinforces the brand's social capital. Peer approval acts as a powerful psychological reinforcer, creating a "Social Proof" mechanism that traditional advertising lacks.

The study investigates the transition between **Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivators**. Initially, youth engagement is often driven by extrinsic rewards—coupons, discounts, competitions, and free samples. These "tactical" incentives are used to initiate the first contact. However, the goal of strategic positioning is to shift this motivation toward intrinsic loyalty, where the attachment to the brand is emotional and identity-based. Once intrinsic loyalty is established, the brand becomes "recess-proof." Loyal consumers are willing to pay a premium or overlook a minor product flaw because the brand is a part of their emotional infrastructure.

The ultimate objective of this process is the creation of "**Brand Evangelists**." These are consumers who have reached the highest tier of loyalty; they do not just consume the brand, they "preach" its virtues to others. In the digital age, evangelists use technology to act as unpaid brand ambassadors, defending the brand in online forums and influencing uncertain peers. This is particularly effective among teenagers, who naturally harbor a distrust of formal institutions but have a high degree of trust in their friends. Brand evangelism represents the "Holy Grail" of positioning, as it allows a brand to overcome the adolescent's innate skepticism. This chapter concludes that by leveraging peer-to-peer influence, brands can build a self-sustaining ecosystem of loyalty that transcends traditional marketing boundaries.

CHAPTER 5: ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Cognitive Vulnerabilities and the Cost of Success

While digital positioning strategies are undeniably effective from a commercial standpoint, they raise profound ethical concerns regarding the developmental vulnerabilities of adolescents. Historically, it was believed that only children under the age of seven lacked the cognitive maturity to recognize persuasive intent. However, contemporary neuro-marketing research suggests that **Executive Functions** and "Theory of Mind" continue to develop well into late adolescence. This means that even teenagers can struggle to interpret the "Concealed Intent" in sophisticated social media marketing or advergames. When the boundary between entertainment and commerce is blurred, the adolescent's ability to engage in critical consumption is severely compromised.

The consequences of this "Stealth Marketing" are manifest in various societal health crises. There is a documented correlation between the pervasive marketing of low-nutrient foods and the rise in childhood obesity. Similarly, the

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aggressive positioning of e-cigarettes and alcohol in youth-dominated digital spaces has been linked to increased experimentation and consumption levels. Beyond physical health, continuous exposure to idealized lifestyles in advertising fosters **Materialism** and body image dissatisfaction, particularly among young girls exposed to the "Thin Ideal." The aggressive collection of data to refine these positioning strategies also raises privacy concerns, as marketers often bypass legal protections to create "Psychographic Profiles" of minors.

In conclusion, the landscape of brand loyalty has been irrevocably transformed. Marketers have successfully shifted from a "Quality-Centric" model to a "Lifestyle-Centric" model, utilizing peer influence and digital "Third Places" to bypass traditional consumer defenses. However, the study suggests that this success comes at a developmental cost. It is recommended that **Marketers** prioritize transparency and adopt "Developmentally Appropriate" techniques. **Parents** must engage in "Active Mediation," discussing ads with children to foster skepticism. Finally, **Policymakers** must update regulations to address the specific nuances of digital marketing, particularly concerning data privacy and the convergence of entertainment and commercialism.

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