Findings

The research conducted and the information gleaned has helped to provide a thorough response to our topic question. The topic concerns the origin of advertising ethics and it’s implementation throughout the various mediums of advertisement. Through my research, I have learned that advertising is an integral part of success for any business, making it subject to the social moral code that is more commonly referred to as ethics. Marketing or advertising, has been subject to the brunt of society’s criticism, due to consumers feeling as if advertising through various plots and schemes misled them. Most businesses acknowledge ethics when marketing their products however there are corporations that blatantly ignore their ethical obligations to both consumers and potential consumers. Situations where companies tend to do this the most occur when advertisements are targeting a very specific demographic; for example, children. Children lack the proper life experience to be able to pass sound judgment on advertisements; this makes them highly susceptible to the aggressive advertising of corporations such as McDonalds, Burger King, Toysrus and etc. The issue of corporations targeting is important to families and communities everywhere; nobody takes kindly to a corporation attempts to exploit their children through aggressive advertisements. The topic relates mostly to the Terkel quotation: “status…becomes important…society, they feel, looks upon them as lesser.” The correlation that exists between the topic and this quotation lies in the attitude that corporations take on devise how to effectively advertise. Corporations that violate the code of ethics in advertising usually do so because they need to meet quotas and/or they are in fierce competition with other corporations and need to sell as much as they can to save face in the business world. The welfare of the customer is absent from this mentality that certain corporations have and it is this absence that leads to unethical advertising. One company that is much more notorious for its unethical practices than unethical advertising, is Wal-Mart. Wal-Mart is known to advertise and sell products that are manufactured in sweatshops “The children report being routinely slapped and beaten, sometimes falling down from exhaustion, forced to work 12 to 14 hours a day, even some all-night, 19-to-20-hour shifts, often seven days a week, for wages as low as 6 ½ cents an hour. “ ("Children Found Sewing Clothing For Wal-Mart, Hanes & Other U.S. & European Companies." 1). By ignoring its corporate social responsibility to the workers that suffer to manufacture these products, one can draw the conclusion that the advertisement and sale of such products is in itself, a violation of Wal-Mart’s obligation to business ethics. The issue of unethical advertising is a hot topic in current events and news. Tobacco companies are constantly catching flak over their misleading ads because the general populous is in a state of heightened awareness, and as a result, is calling corporations out on their advertisements. My sources taught me many things about the concept of advertising, as well as the role that ethics plays in advertising. By taking on this project, I learned that most businesses do in fact have an ethical code that they try to adhere to, and that there is an organization called the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business that is recognized amongst businesses for stressing the importance of ethics when it comes to business practices. I also became aware of how difficult it can be to quantify how ethical an ad is due to the fact that advertising is a grey area when it comes to ethics; very rarely is an advertising dilemma an issue of black and white ethically.