



Five Things Your Brand Needs To Know About Marketing To Teens

www.forbes.com | [Steve Olenski](#), CONTRIBUTOR
CMO Network MAY 26, 2015

Although teens can be obsessive (trust me, I know), and marketers even more so, does that mean businesses have to be 'customer obsessed' when marketing to teens? Merriam Webster defines obsession as *"a persistent disturbing preoccupation with an often unreasonable idea or feeling"*. Sounds rather unhealthy. A better way to phrase it is 'customer oriented'.

Is your marketing oriented towards teens? Do you know what teens do with their money? Research shows that [41%](#) of a teen's disposable income goes for food and clothing. Only 2% goes for books and magazines. So where does your brand fit within their spending spectrum?

[Orient](#) your marketing to teens by keeping these concepts in mind:

1. Work With Them, Not Away from Them

[Julia Benben](#) is the marketing director at Freetoes, a toeless sock company that was founded by a teenager. She advises: “Use a teen intern or part-timer as part of your staff. They know what’s trending and what brands are losing popularity. Really listen to their ideas and opinions, then base your decisions on their original input blended with your marketing expertise.”

Source: Wikimedia Commons

2. Choose the Right Brand Ambassadors

Teens are not much influenced by Hollywood stars, musicians or sports celebrities. They are, however, enamored with Youtube stars, and follow their work (and endorsements) closely. Are your marketers familiar with Felix Arvid Ulf Kjellberg, otherwise known as [PewDiePie](#)? He’s one of the biggest stars on Youtube right now. Love him or hate him, teens are viewing his brief, surreal videos by the thousands each day.

3. Out with the Old/In with the New

Digital strategist Sammy Lau says, “[Facebook](#)’s popularity among teens continues to slip, while social platforms like Tumblr, Instagram and SnapChat are growing in influence among the teen demographic.” You need to stay on top of how social media platforms are doing among teenagers -- and that means more involvement than an update every six months; social media moves at the speed of light, not the speed of a marathon. Keep your marketing strategy for teens as fluid as possible. When the herd turns, you be the one in front of it -- not trampled and left behind.

4. Follow the Money

Thinking of teens as completely independent consumers is a mistake. They are still under the care and responsibility of their parents and other caregivers. On average, parents will spend around \$17 thousand on a single teenager in one year. So you cannot afford to ignore them in your marketing plans for teens.

Teens may have spending autonomy when it comes to food, clothing and entertainment, but in other areas, such as teen depression and other health issues, it is the parents who make the spending decisions. Dr. Jeff Nalin, of [Paradigm Malibu](#), an adolescent treatment center, says “We keep parents in mind at all levels when dealing with adolescents; not because they are paying the bills, but because they are parents.”

5. Be Aware of Peak Shopping Seasons for Teens

And ramp up your promotions and outreach strategies accordingly. May and June are big spending months for teens, because of graduation, and especially because of [Prom](#); on average, a teenage boy will spend at least \$250 and a teenage girl will spend around \$500 for Prom night alone.

Don't get discouraged when you find the teen customer continues to elude your best marketing efforts. They are a fast-moving bunch of consumers, and all you really have to do is figure out how to dip your net into that flowing river of disposable income.