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## IT ADS UP

**Grades:** 8 and up

**Time:** 30-45 minutes

**Materials:** Sample ads from different magazines, targeting different groups; sample pairs of ads (see below); black/white board and chalk/markers; excerpts/quotes about the influence of marketing from resources such as *Marketing Madness*

**Relevant Subjects:** Psychology, Social Studies, Language Arts, Consumer Science, Business, and Art/Design

1. Show participants a few sample magazine ads and have them guess:
  - What magazine is this ad from?
  - What group or type of people is this ad targeted to?
2. Write on the board: “What kind of effect does advertising have on you?” and have participants freewrite on that question for two minutes.
3. Invite volunteers to share their responses.
4. Read a few excerpts and statistics about ads, from resources such as *Marketing Madness* by Michael Jacobson. Ask participants to think about those who design ads, and to share their responses to questions such as:
  - How do ad designers intend to make us feel with their ads?
  - What do designers consider when creating an ad?
  - What do they need to know about us (different target groups) in order to create an effective ad?
5. Have participants pair up. Ask pairs to pick a target group, such as: men, women, children, teens, people of color, rich, poor, athletes, businesspeople, families, activists, liberals, conservatives, etc., or some combination thereof. Have them focus on: “If you were going to design an ad for this group, what would you need to know?” and create a list of factors and details they’d need to know to create an effective ad for their target group (triggers, desires, insecurities, etc.).
6. Invite pairs to share their target group and list. You may want to compile the list on the board, so that the whole group can see what factors/details were generated, and how frequently a particular factor/detail is mentioned.

7. Show a couple sets of two ads for the same type of product that target different groups. Ask participants to discuss who the ads are targeting and what strategies the designers are using to influence their target group.
8. Have participants brainstorm a list of ways that they can become more aware of how ads are trying to influence them and what they can do to resist that influence and make decisions for themselves about what they buy (or don't).

**Extensions:**

1. Have participants bring in two ads for the same type of product, targeted to different audiences, so that the full group can discuss how and why they are similar/different.
2. Have participants look through ads and note which ones inspire them to want to buy a product or service. Have them write down their own triggers and influences – what about those ads makes them want to buy that item? How is the ad influencing them?

**Activity by Kate Moore (M.Ed. Student)**