

THE INFLUENCE OF THE MEDIA IN OUR LIVES

Text by TATYANA BARUKA | Yahoo!

How much of an influence does the media have in our daily lives? Are we truly the leaders of our own decisions or are they made by someone else with an Ivy-League education?



ANDERSON COOPER | CNN Anchorman

We live in a fascinating world and an even more fascinating society. We are part of a culture where every morning we wake up to the energized voices of the morning news crew, whose job it is to make the rest of us as upbeat and awake as possible, fill us in on the beautiful sunny weather outside, and inform the average American on the hopelessly **packed** freeways. When at the end of the day, exhausted and hungry you crawl home, your television, the radio and your bellowed computer are waiting patiently to be of service. In this day and age life without technology feels **utterly** impossible, and life without the media is simply unimaginable. Media provides us with entertainment, information, and comfort. As the standard of living

in this country is rising, people find themselves investing in digital cables and high speed internet connections, thus increasing their exposure to such media as the World Wide Web and the hundreds new channels that come with digital cable. While we are all intelligent people, with the freedom and ability to make our own choices, how much influence does media have over our decisions? I believe a lot.

While everything you experience shapes you as an individual, it is probably the commercials you see on television, that have the most influence over your choices and decisions. Advertisements target various audiences, depending on the product, but a lot of it is directed towards young adults. Teenagers

often feel self conscious about appearance, their size, or their clothes. They also have the disposable income needed to purchase impulse goods like the new soda or the latest CD. Thus it is to the advantage of advertisers that they target these insecurities and need for acceptance, promising love and happiness the instant they purchase a given product. While individuality is still important to young adults, it is just as important to have the latest mp3 player or the new camera phone to keep up with their **peers**. Commercials also inform the viewer on the latest product or the emergence of a more advanced one.

Advertisements are the most **blatant** way of influencing our choices, but a more discreet

approach is through the daily news, for they are also an important part of the media, and influence us in a more discreet way. While objectivity is generally the goal, judgments and biased information often finds its way into broadcast. Because the news is run by people, and because the program is owned by the network, it is often biased in how it **portrays** information or certain people. This becomes more evident during elections, when some networks spend more time on one candidate over the other, or fail to report all sides of the story. We believe what we hear and the daily news that often starts and ends our day is how most Americans get their information. Because for most, it is the only source, they blindly accept what they hear as the absolute truth.

A major industry that holds a lot of influence in the media is the porn industry. These days it seems that one cannot surf the web without stumbling across inappropriate content. The World Wide Web is saturated with pornography and it appears everywhere from annoying pop up banners to entire websites devoted to the subject. Pornography is presented through various medias, mostly as pictures and movie clips and because media plays such vital role in how we perceive things and how we form our opinion, I believe that most find it offensive and inappropriate. Despite the fact that statistically pornography is the number one searched topic on the web, the advertisements and banners usually **sway** the viewers

into either of two directions. While most respond with disgust, resentment and annoyance, there are some who will be captivated by the **luring** exposed divas in these ads and actually go to the advertised websites. In my opinion, when people desire to look at porn, they will search for it, and pop up banners are simply distracting and irritating if searching for a business related information or a school project. How does the media influence our decisions? With the emergence of internet and a whole culture of porn, parents have some choices to make as to how to protect and educate their kids about safety on the web. Parents now have to monitor their kids activity online and teach them to use caution when talking to strangers in chat rooms. Others may need to worry about viruses and spyware that often comes from visiting such sites, and from this other decisions must be made.

We live in a fascinating world. It is a world of constant technological innovation, a world where the culture is created by creative advertisements and information is accessible with the click of a button. Media **drives** our economy, provides entertainment and supplies access to information. It plays an important role in our daily lives and influences the choices the make in whatever we do or buy.

C O M P R E H E N S I O N

1. According to the author, in what ways is the media a part of our lives in today's world?
2. What does peer pressure have to do with the media?
3. How do advertisements influence our decisions?

4. The author writes about several types of industries, but gives special attention to one of them. Which? Why is it relevant?

5. Match the vocabulary column with the correct definitions. Conjugate the verb if necessary.

The media _____ our behavioral patterns as a society and as individuals.

Newspapers and magazines are _____ with advertisements.

Several people feel that it is _____ wrong to believe what the media says.

Advertisements tend to _____ us into buying superfluous things.

Nowadays, it seems that having the approval of our _____ is more important than having our own approval.

Politicians always try to _____ us into voting for them.

Most high standing clothing lines use _____ sexual ads in order to lure us into buying their brand.

The media should be unbiased, however, most ads are _____ in way to benefit sponsors.

to be packed
utterly
peers
blatant
to portray
to sway
to lure
to drive

D I S C U S S I O N

Have you ever been influenced by the media? What is the last product you bought because of it?

How does our self image change in order to accommodate that which is trendy?

G O I N G F U R T H E R

Online, on youtube, there are several videos concerning the topic of Media Influence.