

The dangers of clickbait and advertising

Posted: Wednesday, May 17, 2017 9:57 am

Ever been mindlessly scrolling through social media out of boredom when you see a neat looking ad? Only, when you click it, the title was very misleading and the web page is little more than a few sentences of gossip and much more than a few ads?

This is referred to as clickbait. Clickbait is a “...sensationalized headline or piece of text on the Internet designed to entice people to follow a link to an article on another Web page,” according to dictionary.com.

Clickbait is just one popular method Web page makers use to make money off ad revenue — and make as much of that money as humanly possible. It’s commonly known that you shouldn’t click on pop-ups or ads. But what about websites that use ads for revenue? Popular social media sites such as YouTube, Facebook and Tumblr are run by large corporations and advertisements support them.

Many of the ads on these sites show celebrities endorsing a product, and children and teens can really be taken in by that. Celebrities are often paid to simply take a picture with a largely known brand. An example of this is Selena Gomez taking a picture of herself drinking a Coke, with the camera highly focused on the coke.

Most kids would see this kind of product being endorsed by their idol and instantly want it. This, however, doesn’t mean the celebrities enjoy or even use the product. For a short 30 second spot during a Super Bowl commercial, a celebrity can expect “\$500,000 to \$2 million depending on the commercial and the celebrity,” which is equal to ten Lamborghinis at \$200,000 (nypost.com). It wouldn’t matter to the celebrity whether or not the product does what it is advertised to do. They’ll be too busy with their ten Lamborghinis to care about the parents who’ll have to deal with their kids asking for the products they endorsed.

There’s a serious side to this: Depression, ADHD, body dysmorphic disorder, and anxiety are all increasing among adolescents. Paired with the obesity crisis, the mental health and wellbeing of children doesn’t look so good. And while advertising isn’t completely to blame, it’s definitely a contributing factor.

Ads teach girls to look beautiful and dress inappropriately and to live up to standards their bodies can’t handle. Some make themselves lose weight by using unhealthy means and begin to hate themselves. Boys are taught to be violent and to act out; go through life as a strong, independent lone wolf. They bundle emotions and fears inside and then lash out when they can’t handle the pressure anymore. And the minority



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who doesn't identify as either gender simply doesn't exist in advertising and media. They are pressured to hide who they really are.

Advertisements can also be to blame for unhealthy eating. Ronald himself doesn't knock on your door and offer you a Big Mac; you find out about the meals from advertising. If "Research shows advertising greatly influences the food children choose to eat" (commonsensemedia.org), then why isn't healthy food advertised instead of junk food?

But there's hope for kids exposed to all this — and for their parents. New and healthier recipes, ways to find happiness, instructions on how to avoid clickbait, and more are being created by Gen Ys and Gen Zs and are circulating on the Internet like never before. Gen Alphas will have it better than the kids before them, simply because the people advertising to them will know that consumers are getting smarter about the ads and what is and what isn't good for them. They won't want to repeat previous mistakes.

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