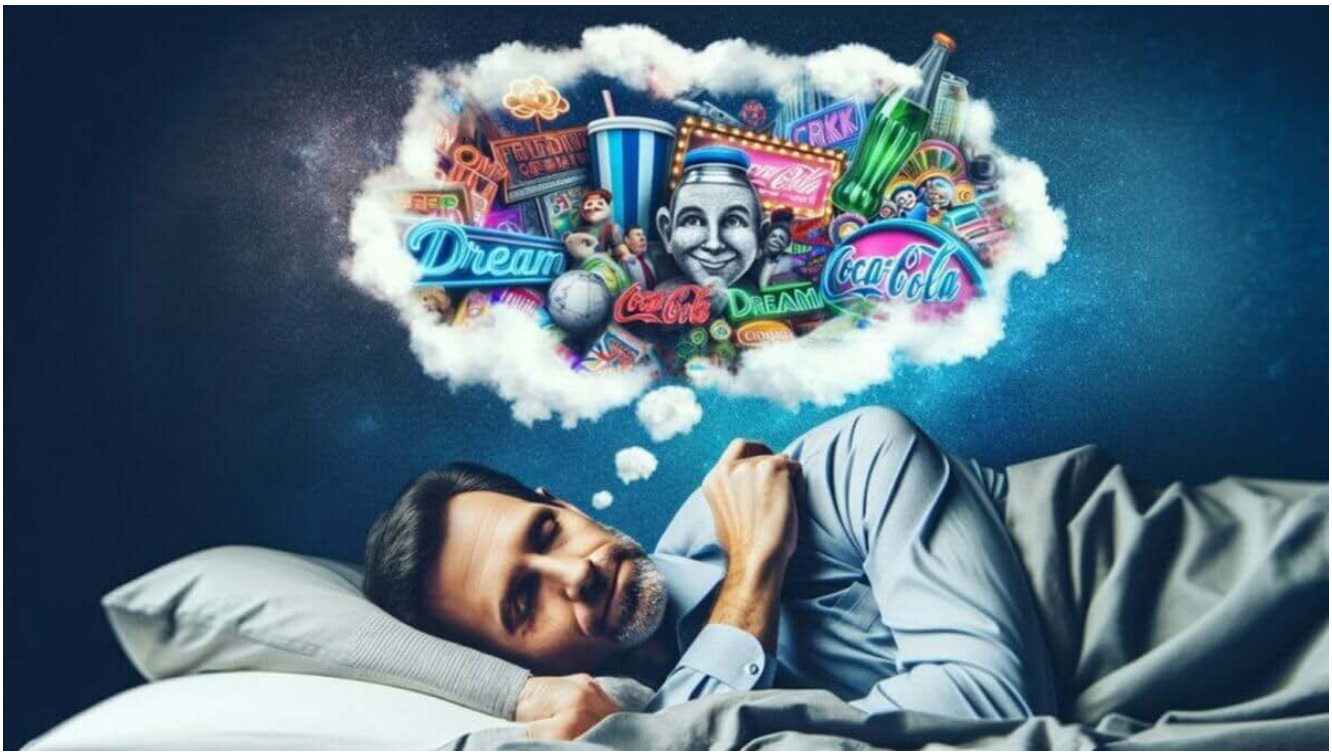
Nightmare: Your dreams are for sale — and companies are already buying

By StudyFinds Staff • Reviewed by Steve Fink
Research led by The Media Image
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Shocking new survey reveals 54% of young Americans report ads infiltrating their dreams

LONDON — Remember when sleep offered an escape from endless advertising? That era may be ending. While U.S. citizens already face up to 4,000 advertisements daily in their waking hours, research suggests that even our dreams are no longer safe from commercial messaging. A new study

reveals that 54% of young Americans report experiencing dreams influenced by ads—and some companies might be doing it intentionally.

The findings come at a critical time, as the American Marketing Association previously reported that 77% of companies surveyed in 2021 expressed intentions to experiment with "dream ads" by this year. What was once considered science fiction may now be becoming reality, with major implications for consumer protection and marketing ethics.

According to The Media Image's newly released consumer survey focusing on Gen Z and Millennials, 54% of Americans aged 18-35 report having experienced dreams that appeared to be influenced by advertisements or contained ad-like content. Even more striking, 61% of respondents report having such dreams within the past year, with 38% experiencing them regularly—ranging from daily occurrences to monthly episodes.

Conducted by Survey Monkey on behalf of The Media Image between January 2nd and 3rd, 2025, the research included a representative sample of 1,101 American respondents aged 18-35. While the sample skewed slightly female (62%), the findings are considered reflective of broader perspectives within this age group.



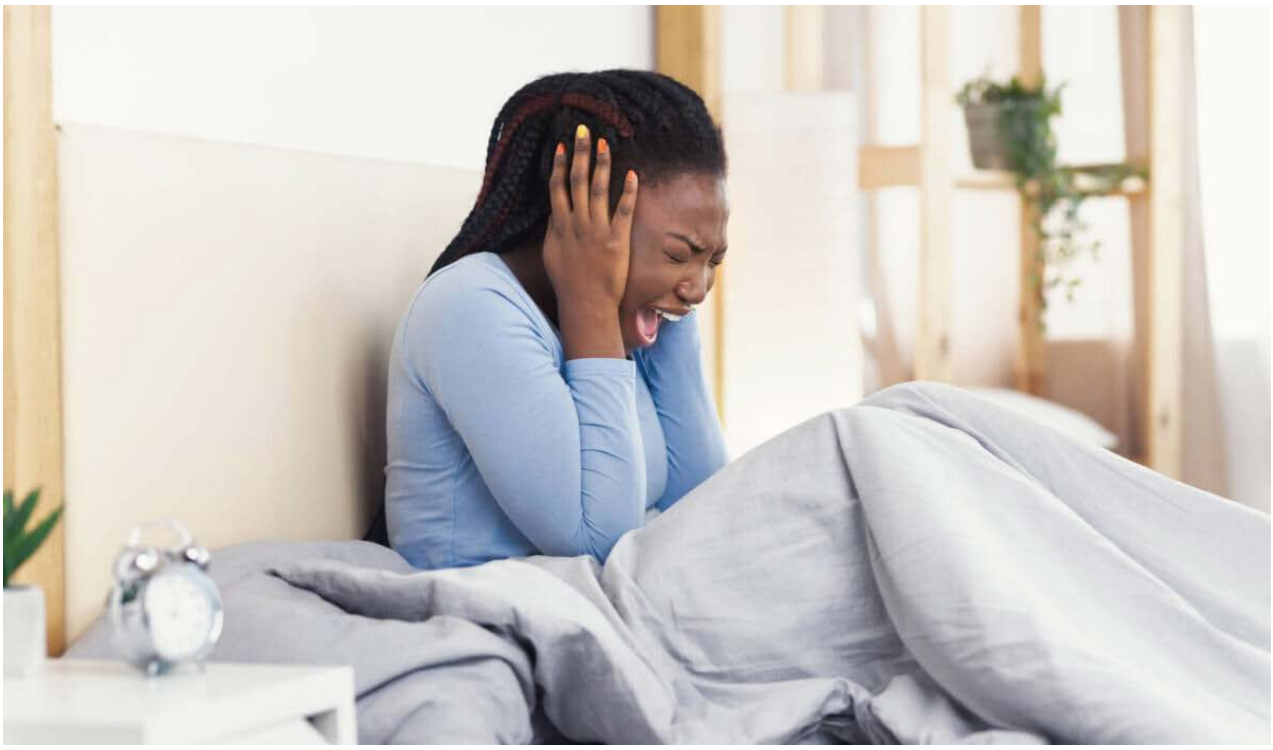
The fun of having wildly imaginative dreams may become corroded by dream-based maketing, a new survey suggests. (© Sergey Nivens – stock.adobe.com)

The data shows a striking pattern: 22% of respondents experience ad-like content in their dreams between once a week to daily, while another 17% report such occurrences between once a month to every couple of months.

The phenomenon isn't merely passive. The survey reveals that these dream-based advertisements may be influencing consumer behavior in tangible ways. While two-thirds of consumers (66%) report resistance to making purchases based on their dreams, the other third admit that their dreams have encouraged them to buy products or services over the past year—a conversion rate that rivals or exceeds many traditional advertising campaigns.

The presence of major brands in dreams appears to be particularly prevalent, with 48% of young Americans reporting encounters with well-known companies such as Coca-Cola, Apple, or McDonald's during their sleep. Harvard experts suggest this may be due to memory "reactivation" during sleep, where frequent exposure to brands in daily life increases their likelihood of appearing in dreams.

Perhaps most troubling is the apparent willingness of many consumers to accept this new frontier of advertising. The survey found that 41% of respondents would be open to seeing ads in their dreams if it meant receiving discounts on products or services. This raises serious ethical questions about the commercialization of human consciousness and the potential exploitation of vulnerable mental states for marketing purposes.



Seeing and hearing annoying ad jingles in our heads could be a nightmare for many. (© Prostock-studio – stock.adobe.com)

Despite these concerns, there appears to be limited interest in protecting dreams from commercial influence. Over two-thirds of respondents (68%) indicated they would not be willing to pay to keep their dreams ad-free, even if such technology existed. However, a significant minority (32%) expressed interest in a hypothetical "dream-ad blocker," suggesting growing awareness and concern about this issue among some consumers.

The research comes in the wake of dream researchers issuing an open letter warning the public about corporate attempts to infiltrate dreams with advertisements, sparked by Coors Light's experimental campaign that achieved notable success. This confluence of corporate interest and technological capability raises serious questions about the future of personal privacy and mental autonomy.

The potential manipulation of dreams for advertising purposes raises serious concerns about psychological well-being and the need for protective regulations. As companies explore ways to influence our subconscious minds, the lack of existing safeguards becomes increasingly problematic.



Nearly a third of respondents would consider paying for an ad blocker that kept their dreams marketer-free. (Photo by Unsplash+ In collaboration with Sir Manuel)

These results emerge against a backdrop of increasing advertising saturation in daily life. Current estimates suggest that U.S. citizens are exposed to up to 4,000 advertisements daily, making sleep one of the last remaining refuges from commercial messaging. The potential erosion of this final sanctuary raises important questions about consumer rights and mental well-being in an increasingly commercialized world.

The research presents a clear warning: without immediate attention to the ethical and regulatory challenges of dream-based advertising, we risk losing the last advertisement-free space in modern life. As companies develop new technologies to influence our dreams, the choice between consumer protection and commercial interests becomes increasingly pressing.

Methodology

The research was conducted through a comprehensive survey commissioned by The Media Image, a specialist digital marketing agency, and carried out by Survey Monkey. The study took place between January 2nd and 3rd, 2025, gathering responses from 1,101 American participants aged 18-35. This age range was specifically chosen to focus on Gen Z and Millennials, demographics that represent core target audiences for many brands and marketers. While the survey sample had a higher representation of female respondents (62%), the findings are considered representative of broader perspectives within the 18-35 age group. All statistical percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number for clarity of reporting.

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