

Advertising Directed at Children: An Empirical Study from Parents' Perspective on Television Advertising and Advergaming

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Abstract Advertising directed at children has recently received a tremendous boost. Firms in various industries develop advertising activities seeking to appeal to children as a relevant market segment. Because consumption behavior of these vulnerable consumers is largely influenced by their parents, a profound understanding of parents' attitudes and behaviors toward advertising to children is paramount. With new challenges imposed to parents by children's proliferated addressing of advergaming and an increased internet usage, the purpose of this study is to improve understanding of parents' assessments and behaviors regarding two important advertising activities directed at children (i.e., TV commercials and advergaming). This article is the first to examine parents' perceptions, knowledge and mediation of children's consumption behavior regarding both advertising formats. By doing so, this article addresses important desiderata to research referring to evidence-based empirical data on advergaming mediation and potential comparisons to other media.

Results of a quantitative study are based on a sample of 362 parents and reveal a significantly better knowledge level for television advertising than for advergaming. Parents hold a rather skeptical attitude and utter concerns especially about the exploitation of children's gullibility and their limited critical abilities. This negative assessment can be seen as a predictor of their mediation behavior: The more concerns parents have, the greater is the execution of restrictive or active mediation. The results further substantiate that mediation behaviors can diverge considerably for different media and represent a contribution to mediation theory. Findings promote parental education and suggest advertisers and policy makers to handle parents' perceptions carefully.

References: Available upon request

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