Research questions

Q1. What do children know about the new advertising tactics?
Q2. How do children judge the new advertising tactics?
Q3. What are the reasoning strategies underlying children’s judgments of the new advertising tactics?

Method

Child centric approach
6 focus groups (±12) 5 th and 6 th grade primary school (9-10y)

3 steps focusing
- Brand placement
- Advergame
- Pre-roll video ad

> probing for ad tactic knowledge
e.g. What did you see in the video?

Knowledge of advertising formats & tactics

- **Recognition integrated advertising**
  - Not vigilant
  - Connection editorial content: “M&M’s are in the movie because they are blue, just as the Smurfs”

- **Basic understanding of advertising: seeing = buying**
  - …though mention tactics as ‘positive affect transfer’;
  - yet unaware of personalization/retargeting
  - “Because the M&M’s appear in a fun movie, children think M&M’s should also be nice. And then they will ask their parents if they can also have them”

- **After explaining tactics:**
  - Nearly every child understood & spontaneously mentioned other examples:
    - “I surfed for clothes and then, on YouTube, I wanted to see a video, and all of a sudden I see advertising for clothes! I thought to myself, what is going on here?”

- **However, not convinced of tactic effectiveness:**
  - Question pre-/subconscious persuasion:
    - “I don’t know why they pay for appearing in the movie, as nobody notices it anyway”

- **Judgment of advertising formats & tactics**

  - Initial judgment (positive experience): “I do not care if I play such a game. I just like to play it. Even if you actually know you play for advertising”

  - First reaction after explanation:
    - ’Clever’, good for company
    - …yet little useful/new info about products:
      - “…in a commercial break, they tell you where you can buy it [the advertised product], and how much it costs. But in a series they just hold it, and you know nothing about it” (brand placement)
      - “…if you only get advertising for the things you like, you can’t see new things” (personalized ads)

- **Remain indifferent**
  - “….makes them force parents to buy things they didn’t want before, or that are regretted later:
    - “You should buy things on your own accord”

- **After deeper reflecting: deceptive**

  - Makes them forced parents to buy things:
    - “…you should buy things on your own accord”

  - “…” is from a commercial break, they tell you where you can buy it (the advertised product), and how much it costs. But in a series they just hold it, and you know nothing about it” (brand placement)

- **After discussing dilemmas:**

  - Moral judgments:
    - “They [advertisers] should show that [the presence of advertising] to everyone because children do not realize yet there is advertising in it…” (integrated ads)

  - Also unknown/abstract:
    - “If you play a game and the computer lives too, that he wouldn’t like it either if you are looking at what he’s actually doing” (personalized ads)

- **Remarkable:** institutional < social privacy

  - E.g. PA on YouTube:
    - “They are watching something of your private life, but you don’t want them to know that”

  - “Yes, in your internet diary”

- **The children thought that the company may not be able to put them too much” (personalized ads)

Results

- **Main conclusions:** if we want children to cope consciously and critically with new ad formats & tactics they need to be:
  - made aware of the ad tactics
  - made aware of sub-consciousness persuassion
  - encouraged/knolwdge to morally evaluate them

- **Challenge:** apply this thinking during exposure to ads

  - Develop heuristics via class-based interventions:
    - **Tactic recognition heuristics**
    - **Effectiveness heuristics**
    - **Appropriateness heuristics**

  - **Critique:** What does it mean to ‘critically think about advertising’?
    - Most studies: having negative attitude → resisting persuasion
    - Our studies also positive evaluations
    - e.g. when brand placement is:
      - Creative
      - Positive/entertaining
      - Appropriation (sponsorship discussed)

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