Children’s advertising literacy in the digital environment

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Advertising Literacy in a New Media Environment
Investigating Minors’ Persuasion Knowledge in Relation to New Advertising Formats

2014-2018
WP 1: AdLit general

WP 2: Ad Cues

WP 3: Educational programs

WP 4: Awareness for the topic

WP 5: Policy and (self-) regulation
Hypothesis

Integration – interaction – personalisation – entertainment

Children often do not recognise or understand the persuasive intent

difficulties in applying advertising literacy skills

Manipulative effect

Increased parent-child conflicts
Figure 1. Advertising literacy: concept and dimensions (Hudders et al., 2016b)
Children’s recognition and understanding of non-traditional advertising formats

\[ N = 510 \ (7-12 \text{ years}, \ 51.6\% \text{ boys}, \ M_{\text{age}} = 9.29) \]
Advertising recognition was significantly higher after exposure to the TV commercial compared to the other three advertising formats ($F(3) = 23.05, p < .001$).
Advertising understanding was significantly higher after exposure to the TV commercial and online banner compared to the advergame and native ad ($F(3) = 27.88, p < .001$).
From persuasive messages to tactics: Exploring children’s knowledge & judgement of new advertising formats (De Pauw et al., 2017)

- 12 focus groups ($n_{tot} = 60$), 9-11yo’s
- About ad integration (e.g. brand placement), interactivity (e.g. advergames) & personalization (e.g. pre-roll video ads)
- Highlights:
  - Children = limited understanding of new ad formats/tactics
    - Yet able to understand (we just need to make them aware)
    - & to morally reflect on it (but they need ‘nudges’ to do so)
  - Challenge: learning to
    - Look beyond the fun experience of new ad formats
    - Acknowledge implicit influence of embedded advertising (!)
    - Become aware of the existence of personalized advertising
    - Imagine ad tactic consequences for others
Testing the effectiveness of a “child-proof” advertising disclosure

\[ N = 228 \text{ (9-12 years, 58\% girls, } M_{\text{age}} = 10.32) \]

- Brand placement:
  - versus

- Online banner:
  - versus
Advertising recognition was significantly higher after exposure to the “child-proof” advertising disclosure compared to the existing advertising disclosures ($t(155) = -2.18, p = .030$).
Disclosing brand placement to young children
(De Pauw et al., 2017)

- 2 experiments, 8-10yo’s
- About effect of ad cues on advertising literacy
  - Study 1, cue modality (n = 98): no vs. auditory vs. visual
  - Study 2, cue timing (n = 142): prior vs. during media content
- Highlights:
  - **Cue** is more effective in activating **cognitive advertising literacy** when:
    - Visual > auditory
    - Presented **prior** > during media content
Adolescents & (targeted) advertising (on social networking sites)
(Zarouali, B. et al 2017)

- adolescents’ (especially younger ones) advertising literacy is not yet fully developed in the context of advertising on SNSs (compared to adults as a benchmark)

- generally lack the knowledge about the ‘bigger picture’ of advertising on SNSs (e.g. which data SNSs collect and use for advertising purposes, the business model of social networking sites (i.e. they rely on advertising to offer their service for free), etc.)

- disclosure is important on SNS: it helps them to activate their persuasion knowledge, and thus makes an ad ‘recognizable as such’
  
  ➔ important that adolescents understand the disclosure (e.g. ‘sponsored’: not always easy to understand for adolescents, certainly for younger ones

  ➔ urgent need for a clear, transparent and understandable disclosure on SNSs that informs adolescents about the persuasive nature of sponsored posts

- adolescents generally do not engage in behavior strategies to protect their institutional privacy

  ➔ more transparency is warranted to trigger them and learn them how to engage in institutional privacy protecting behavior, and why it is important
Regulatory framework for advertising aimed at children

A patchwork of various rules exists which could be applicable to ‘new’ advertising formats

International

Media law (AVMS Dir.)
- Principle of identification
- Principle of separation
- Commercial content-specific rules

Consumer protection
- Principle of identification (e-Commerce Directive)
- Unfair / misleading / aggressive trading practices UCP Directive

Data protection
- Parental consent (16 years GDPR, unless MS opt for a different age)

Self-regulation
- Identification (ICC Code)
- No behavioural advertising to under 12s

Product-specific rules
- Food
- Alcohol
- Tobacco
- Toys

EU

National
Challenges:

- Abstract provisions, unclear scope
  - E.g. ‘child’?
- Hybridity of formats
  - E.g. identification / separation
- Little practical guidance for advertisers
  - E.g. ‘identification’: variety of labels / cues → confusion
Findings regulatory mapping

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• Little practical guidance for advertisers
  • E.g. ‘identification’: variety of labels / cues → confusion
• Different frameworks enforced by different regulators
  • E.g. media law / data protection
• Balance protection – participation
Future challenge for regulators

AVMSD Council General approach (May 2017)

*Without prejudice to Articles 14 and 15 of Directive 2000/31/EC, Member States shall ensure that video-sharing platform providers under their jurisdiction take appropriate measures to:*

(a) **protect minors** from programmes, user-generated videos and audiovisual commercial communications which may impair their physical, mental or moral development;
Recommendations

Enhanced coordination between regulatory bodies

- Self-regulatory bodies
- Media regulators
- Data protection authorities
- Consumer protection bodies / ombudsmen
Recommendations

Raise awareness among consumers (children / parents) on:

- Complaint procedures
- The rules and their rights (when is there an infringement?)
Recommendations

Raise awareness among advertisers on:

- Existing self-regulation (including advisory function of self-regulatory bodies *ex ante*)
- Existing legislation
- Child’s rights impact assessments
Tools

popular Flemish vloggers on advertising literacy

mini-games

legal chatbot for advertisers
More information?

Visit our website: www.adlit.be

(full reports [EN] under ‘Output’)
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