From persuasive messages to tactics: Exploring children’s knowledge and judgement of new advertising formats

# Details

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## Topics

## Sample

60 respondents from the last two grades of primary school (9 to 11 years old) , recruited in four different schools in Flanders, Belgium. The participants were spread over 12 single-gendered focus groups, equally divided by gender (6 boys and 6 girls).

## Implications For Educators About

Other

## Implications For Policy Makers About

Stepping up awareness and empowerment

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Researchers

# Abstract

Despite that contemporary advertising is decreasingly about persuading children through persuasive messages and increasingly about influencing them through implicit tactics, little attention has been given to how children may cope with advertising by understanding and evaluating the new advertising tactics. Drawing on 12 focus groups entailing 60 children of ages 9–11 years, this article investigates children’s advertising literacy by exploring their knowledge and judgements (and accordingly reasoning strategies) of the new advertising formats. In particular, insight is provided into children’s critical reflection on the tactics of brand integration, interactivity and personalization in the advertising formats brand placement, advergames and retargeted pre-roll video ads on social media. It is shown that while children not spontaneously do so, they appear to have the ability to understand these tactics and form judgements about their (moral) appropriateness, thereby considering a wide range of societal actors.

# Outcome

"Although children have basic understanding of the selling intent of advertising in general, they did not actively look out for advertising that is embedded in entertaining and/or interactive media content. Children seemed easily
overwhelmed by the fun and immersive character of the new advertising formats, which usually resulted in a positive evaluation of these formats and indifference towards the used tactics. However, once they were made aware of these tactics and how they function, virtually all of the children showed that they were able to recognize and understand these tactics and their complex. They then do have the ability to make judgements about advertising. This is in contrast with the current societal approach which seems to depart from a paradigm of vulnerability, emphasizing chil\_x0002\_dren’s need to be protected from advertising. Academics, educators and policy makers, for instance, may reconsider focusing on the mere avoidance of advertising through restriction and regulation, by working together in developing, implementing and evaluating educational interventions and awareness campaigns that acknowledge children’s abilities for critical reflection on advertising and its tactics." (De Pauw et al., 2018, pp. 2618-2619)