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Marketing And Media Communications Targeted To Children As Consumers

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Abstract

Marketing and media communication targeted to children as consumers is recently a topic of discussion in order to increase children consumer protection. Considering that children and youth spend a lot of time in media environment (Multi-tasking process), it is important to map the environment, including both the traditional marketing communication ways (TV, radio, DVD, video-games) and the new methods that are increasingly being preferred by children and youth (e.g. product placement, viral marketing, guerilla marketing, internet and social network environment, interactive games and quizzes, commercial website entertainment). Children are referred to as primary target group in the given communication, that is, the advertised products are addressed to they, as well as secondary target group, that is, the products are addressed to other members of the family, but the message focuses upon children as they significantly influence the shopping process in the family. This marketing communication mix, which consists of advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, uses both traditional as well as new tools and techniques which target the children's segment. In this paper, we focus on the traditional marketing techniques applied by the media environment (e.g. repetition, celebrity endorsements, and premiums) as well as new techniques emphasizing their application in educational practice.

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1. Introduction

The marketing and media communicators' interest in child consumers has been increasing lately. There are more reasons for this particular interest, however, we can consider the awareness of children's power of persuasion on their parents' buying behavior as a crucial one. Children and the youth, not being a strong and economically

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powerful group, are attractive for the marketers for their ability to convince and persuade their family environment. Their power of persuasion increases with the child's age, which even the marketing and media people realize. Their communication is more directed at the child consumer. For this aim, i.e. to convince the consumer about the importance of owning a particular product or service, traditional as well as new marketing communications means are used in which school environments are not excluded from the communication process. Quite the contrary. Therefore this study focuses on introducing individual marketing communication tools, on the application of the individual forms and ways that lead to increasing materialism in child consumers as well as to their loyalty to commercial brands. Educators, psychologists and sociologists highlight the negative consequences outcoming from supporting consumerism (Schor, 2004; Opree et al.; in press, Johnson & Young, 2003; Šramová, 2014) and they ask for restrictive policies regarding advertising aimed at children. The importance of the knowledge lies in acceptance of prevention and intervention strategies that will take child's and the youth's development peculiarities into account.

2. Marketing and media communications and the child consumer

Marketing communications is a set of immediately operating activities that are of a mass, group and interpersonal character. Their aim is to achieve changes in knowledge, attitudes, behavior of a whole group in relation to a particular product or service (Hradiská & Letovancová, 2010). Lately, we have been witnessing an increasing interest of marketers in child consumers, resulting in the lay and professional public, politicians as well as academics' need for enhanced protection of children and the young. On one hand, it is necessary to analyze and exactly name the means used by the marketers in their practice, and on the other hand, it is necessary to be aware of how a child's cognitive apparatus processes stimuli, i.e. what the children ability to distinguish commercial content of marketing communiqué is. The necessity arises from the fact that children are spending more of their free time surrounded by the media, mainly by TV and the Internet (Izrael, 2013; Rideout, Foehr & Roberts, 2010) and an increasing number of advertisements containing a false idea that when a person increases their wealth, they will become more beautiful, favorite, happier and more content (Šramová, 2014). A child has the tendency to believe the presented message as they cannot distinguish a commercial content which results in reducing psychological well-being and enhances self-centeredness and possessiveness (Fournier & Richins, 1991; Kasser, Ryan, Couchman & Sheldon, 2004). Children do not perceive their personalities as important, they rather judge on how much they own (Sirgy et al., 2012). In this article we will deal with the essential components of marketing communications such as advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations and direct marketing (Kitchen, 1999) with the emphasis on their application in communication to the child consumer.

2.1 Advertising

Advertising i.e. presentation of products and services to the general public, aims to inform, convince and remind an advertising message to the consumer (Vysekalová, 2009; Hradiská, 1998). In practice we encounter commercial as well as social advertisements with their task to draw our attention to urgent social problems (e.g. famine, wars, hatred, etc.). Benetton, a fashion brand, has well-known social advertising campaigns in which they present such global issues as the fight against AIDS, race intolerance, war, and so on. Commercial companies realize that through the means of global and social issues they can reinforce the brand value, as well as optimize their profits. Later we will describe which means are the most frequently used to attract, to be fast remembered and to create associations in a child consumer.

2.2 Sales promotion

Sales promotion is a short-term, timeshare activity that utilizes stimuli for an immediate increase in products and services purchase (Tellis, 1998, Jurášková & Horňák et al., 2012). These stimuli are for example price discounts, coupons, contests, etc. that apply strong incentive appeals. They meet with a positive response in a child consumer mainly because they attack their natural naivety, credulity, their hobby in collecting things; in teenagers also the joy of saving some financial means.

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