



THE ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE OF TELEVISION ADVERTISEMENTS ON THE KIDS: ‘KOTON KIDS’ ADVERTISEMENT SAMPLE

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An advertisement, a promotional activity to inform the target audience of the product / service, to persuade them to purchase it, to keep it alive in their memories, and to add value to it, is mostly transmitted to its target audience via television in order to make this product / service first choice of its audience in the market where the competition is harsh. Television as the primary choice of the advertisers to spread their messages thanks to its easy and fast access to the audience, and appealing to the visual and auditory stimuli is most probably the most substantial bridge between the advertisers and their audiences. Though appearing to be reliable, this bridge harbours many dangers for kids as well as the adults with its appealing sounds and various colours. The advertisements, sending their messages easily to the audiences including the kids, have positive and negative influences on the kids when the current conditions are considered. Both the kids acting for the advertisements and those exposed to them fall into the spheres of influence of the advertisements. With this regard, this study focuses on the negative influences of the advertisements on kids. Within this context, it analyses the “Koton Kids” advertisement screened on TV in 2014 which promotes the kids wear through child actors. The theme of the advertisement is that the kids behaving like the adults can make their images on their own, and the selected advertisement will be examined through a survey. The purpose of the analysis is to reveal the influence of the advertisement which has been widely criticised in Turkey after its screening. These influences will be analysed through some theories.

Keywords: Advertisements, Influence, Kids, Survey, Clothing.

Introduction

In today’s consumer society where the large or small companies try to sell their products to people at any age, the advertisements are created to persuade the consumers to buy rather than to inform them about their products or services with some advances since their beginning. Just like Siriya (2014: 36) put forth in the article in which the influence of the advertisements on the behaviours of the kids was examined, “advertising is a form of communication that typically attempts to persuade potential customers to purchase or to consume more of a particular brand of product or service,” and the potential customers, either an adult or a kid, do or don’t buy this specific product depending on their knowledge. In this sense, one important thing draws attention; as declared by Strasburger et al (2009: 11) in their book “Children, Adolescents, and the Media”, children don’t possess enough knowledge to rely on while evaluating the message of the advertisements, and so they can’t make as an effective decision on buying behaviour as

the adults with sufficient knowledge. This fact is supported by Calvert (2008: 205) in her article “Children as Consumers: Advertising and Marketing”, who states that all the marketing strategies applied in the advertising influence the kids under age 8 especially by making them vulnerable as these kids don’t possess the cognitive skills to comprehend the persuasive intent of television advertisements.

No matter what the medium of the advertisements is, the advertisers who are in a harsh competition to find a place for themselves on the media strive to reach their audiences through more effective advertising in order to benefit outweigh their costs for the advertising. The number of the advertisements setting the kids as their targets is rising just like that of the advertisements which try to reach the adults, indicates McNeal (1964); and the more hours the kids spend time in front of television, the more effective the advertisements are on the kids. When the number of the children and the time they spend in front of TV in Turkey are taken into consideration, it is clear that the situation is highly critical. According to a 2013 news bulletin published by TÜİK (Turkish Statistical Institute), 9 out of 10 children aged 6 to 10 years in Turkey watched TV every day, and they watched the cartoons most¹. According to Psychologist Ece Bulut, children watch the advertisements most following the cartoons, and she states that they watch nearly 20.000 advertisements a year². Besides, according to the 2011 Report on the Status of Children in Turkey published by UNICEF, it is estimated that the kids spend an average of 3 hours a day watching TV as the most favourite spare-time activity. While the advertisers, who can make an excellent analysis of the situation, place their ads on TV at the prime hours for the kids, they steal the ‘childhood’ of the kids as a compensation, and as it was declared in the 2011 Report on the Status of Children in Turkey published by UNICEF that the children are mostly shown as “an object of getting-attention” in the commercials, and that they also take roles in the advertisements which don’t market even the products regarding the children³. The abuse of the kids as an object in the advertisements is so easily noticeable that even a teenager can realize this. In the book published after the Congress on Children and Media, a teenager named Aleyna Saral aged 16⁴ expresses her opinions with these sentences: “Kids are considered an object in the ads and publicities. They are either used as a means of exploitation or screened as a 3-year-old woman imitating her mother. And they can also be detached from their cultures;” and another one named Melisa Demir aged 11⁵ states that TV programmers in search of higher ratings give important roles to kids whom they use as an object. Furthermore, an interview with the Specialist Psychologist Ayşen Karahan (Center of Psychological Consultancy for Kids and Youngsters, Institute of Behavioural Sciences) shows that the children are exposed to the manners like poverty, exclusion, and deprivation which they don’t deserve and can’t endure, and she states “There are some other manners which cause the kids to experience their childhood in a traumatic way, and these manners are sometimes ignored or sometimes even applauded. Manners like making the kids a material of advertising, encouraging them to have “soon ripe, soon rotten” roles in advertising, not avoiding to make them rapidly consumed materials of the show world, and incentivising them to imitate the sexual plays and images of the adults in a thrilling way leave as permanent and deep marks on their soul as physical violence does⁶”. Again referring to Siriya (2014: 36), advertisements, which we come across every day either on TV or other media and which persuade us to buy the product it markets, bring the good sides of everything and play on our emotions through different techniques which have become more realistic than ever and blur the distinction between the real world and the world reflected by the media (Strasburger et al, 2009; Calvert, 2008), and thus this influences the kids more than adults as they are more emotional.

Television, through which we mostly communicate from cradle to grave, started its first broadcast in Turkey in 1952, and from that year to 2007 when the first national kids channel in Turkey ‘Yumurcak TV’ met its audiences (Şeker, 2009: 186), it reached large masses at any ages through its soap operas,

¹ <http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=15866>, accessed on November 12, 2015.

² “Reklamların Çocuklar Üzerindeki Etkisi,” <http://populerpsikoloji.com/news-detail/id/17>, retrieved: 14.05.2015

³ Türkiye’de Çocukların Durumu Raporu 2011, UNICEF, abdigm.meb.gov.tr/projeler/ois/egitim/032.pdf p. 68

⁴ Şirin, Mustafa Ruhi, “Çocuk ve Medya Çocuk Görüşü Kitabı,” Çocuk Vakfı Yayınları, Nov. 2013, İstanbul, p. 61.

⁵ Şirin, Mustafa Ruhi, “Çocuk ve Medya Çocuk Görüşü Kitabı,” Çocuk Vakfı Yayınları, Nov. 2013, İstanbul, p. 64

⁶ “Bırakın çocuklarınız çocukluklarını yaşasın,” <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/birakin-cocuklariniz-cocukluklarini-yasasin--pembekar-detay-cocuk-1527366/>, retrieved: 02. 10. 2015

contests and advertisements. With its unique function – selling -, TV could get through to its younger audiences via an increasing number of kids channels in Turkey, and this can be proved when the statement of Colleen Rinzo from Carlso & Partners Ad. Agency⁷ - “In the past, our target was the mothers; however, today, it is the kids that we try to reach” – is considered. According to Calvert (2008: 205) who asserts two reasons of the appeal of the kids to the advertisers in her article ‘Children as Consumers: Advertising and Marketing’, one of the reasons is that the kids can make a great influence on their parents because of their increasing incomes, while another one is that there is an increasing number of the channels which try to reach the younger audience and can broadcast ads only for the kids.

In Turkey where the 29/4 % of the population is the children⁸ and the 9/10 of the children watch TV, the kids brought up under more protection than those in the Western countries are taken into the centre of the families since their birth, and are considered ‘sacrosanct’ while their mothers become ‘holy’, according to a study conducted by Virtua Research and BBDO on behalf of MediaCat⁹. When the parents don’t do what these ‘precious’ creatures in the society want, other members of the society intervene in the situation and don’t stop doing this until the kids get what they want, and they even look at the parents with ‘condemning’ glances. Being aware of this fact, the advertisers in the Turkish market give advertisements which contain appeals for the kids especially.

Literature Review

Kids Under the Influence of the Advertisements as Consumers

Advertisements, prepared to inform the consumers about a product or service, to promote this product / service, and to persuade them to buy it, continue to enlarge its area of influence through the improvement of the technology and expansion of the media. Postman’s (1994: 85) statement - “Someone has something to sell; you are told what it is, where it can be obtained, and what it costs” – provides us a brief explanation about what the advertisement is. ‘You’ in this statement can be a 5- or 6-year-old consumer, and the advertisements can leave a different impact on various consumers from different backgrounds. This impact is conveyed through one specific message of the advertisements. In this regard, the kids as the target of the advertisements receive a message along with some behavioural patterns, roles and values like:

- Cultural Values
- Consumption Patterns
- Gender Roles
- Alternative Living Types
- Intra-Family Relations and Role Distribution (Elden ve Ulukök, 2006: s. 5).

In contrary to the adults who can protect themselves from the impacts of the advertisements with help of their experiences, the kids with lower level of experience and knowledge are more exposed to the impacts of the kids. According to Moriarty (2012: 70) one of the reasons of advertising to youth is the perception of the marketers that the children are vulnerable, and they can’t realise what is good and what is bad for them. Moreover, according to Peltekoğlu (2010: 128) the starting point of the advertisers who target their advertisements at children is the fact that these kids carry into their adulthood their purchasing habits which they gain during their childhood years. Peltekoğlu (2010) also lists other reasons of the attractiveness of youth to the advertisers:

⁷ As quoted by Filiz Balta Peltekoğlu, in her book “Kavram ve Kuramlarıyla Reklam”, p. 126

⁸ TÜİK, “İstatistiklerle Çocuk 2014 Haber Bülteni”, <http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=18622>, retrieved: 05.12.2015

⁹ “MediaCat’ten Çocuklarla İletişimin Püf Noktaları”, http://www.halklailiskiler.com.tr/MediaCatten_Cocuklarla_Iletisimin_Puf_Noktaları.php, (April, 6, 2012), retrieved: 01.02.2016

- the influence of the kids on the purchases of their family (p. 61),
- the fact that the younger kids are becoming more loyal to the brands as days are passing by (p. 61),
- that especially kids aged under seven fail to comprehend the difference between the real world and the world created by the advertisements (p. 126), and
- that the kids with their fully-open perception are unlikely to fail to notice the magical images on TV (p. 128).

In their article “The Influencing Role of the Child in Family Decision Making”, Berey et al (1968: 70) also point out that there are many reasons of the attention to the role of the children in the market which support the reasons which are listed. They give one another reason, which is that “the size of the child market is rapidly growing (p. 70)”. According to Elden and Ulukök (2006: 6), the kids have 3 different meanings for the advertisers:

1. They are the bridges used to reach the adults.
2. They play an important role in the expenses of the adults.
3. They are economical creatures who can decide on their consumption styles and brands in terms of purchasing things on their own.

Being the target of such a harsh market, the children, who are vulnerable, innocent, ignorant of the world facts, and brand-blind, are under the tremendous influence of the advertisements, which bring to the TV screen, as Peltekoğlu (2010: 127) states, “the bright food, unproblematic lives, products offering solutions to the problems, the lives of the celebrities narrated in the advertisements, the glitter magic of the world”. And as Calvert (2008: 214) sets forth, “the effects of advertising and marketing depend on the attention children pay to the advertisement, how well they remember the content, and how well they comprehend the advertiser’s intent, as well as on their subsequent purchasing behavior.” Under these circumstances, the kids are open to psychological and spiritual damages when they are not capable of distinguishing the real intent behind the advertisements.

The effects of the advertisements on the kids affect not only today’s kids, but the kids of future as today’s kids will grow up into the future’s consumers and they will nurture the next generations. When we go back to the Postman’s depiction of the advertising process above, the thing which he refers to “what” is, as he (1994: 85) points out, “not facts that are offered to the consumer but idols, to which both adults and children can attach themselves with equal devotion and without the burden of logic or verification.” In TV advertisements, the viewers come across the ‘idols’, and when they can’t reach these idols, they feel the high levels of depression and unhappiness.

Relations between Kids, Childhood and Television from the Eyes of Neil Postman

Considering the television as not a ‘lecture hall’ but as an ‘image show’, Postman (1994: 67) indicates that watching television doesn’t demand any skills from the viewers as well as not contributing to the well development of the children. He compares the books which only address the literate people with television, declaring that it is open to everyone whether they are toddlers or elderly people, whether they are literate or illiterate (p. 67). Putting most of the blame on TV for the disappearance of childhood, he states that in a literate world in which every ‘secret’ of the adult world is available to children, they become adults (p. 25).

Putting forth one of the differences between a kid and an adult which is that the adult knows all the realities of the world, including “its mysteries, its contradictions, its violence, its tragedies that are not considered suitable for children to know” (Postman, 1994: 26), he states that being a ‘window to the world’ (p. 78), “television cannot keep secrets of any kind. This results in the impossibility of protecting children from the fullest and harshest disclosure of unrelenting violence (p. 77)”. And as he puts forward that the existence of the childhood depends on that of secrets (p. 68), the adults can reveal the secrets of the world to the children only when they are about to reach their adulthood (p. 26).

Stating that the television gives information off in the way that anyone at any age can reach and so it breaks the line between the “kid” and “adult” (p. 67-68), he asserts on three reasons which wipe off the distinguishing line between childhood and adulthood:

- Television not demanding on any instruction from its viewers to comprehend its content,
- Television not demanding on ‘either mind or behaviour’,
- Television not making a distinction on who will be its audience (Postman, 1994: 68).

Postman (1994: 21) argues that adults and children are indistinguishable in terms of their physical appearance, language and the way of thinking; and referring back to old times when the clothing of the adults and children were different from each other, he alleges that, along with the changes and developments in the clothing industry, the “children’s clothing” doesn’t exist anymore. One of the other reasons in the disappearance of the “children’s clothing” is the influence of the advertisements on the children. As Postman puts forth, children meeting the pleasures of and the satisfaction gained through the consumerism at the earliest age possible (p. 78), are affected by the little girl-models who are shown as ‘miniature adults’ (p. 94).

In the modern world with all the secrets open to public, everybody knows everything, and everybody behaves just like each other. Children act like adults, adults act like children. This is what Postman tries to depict in his book “The Disappearance of Childhood”. According to him, there were phases in the history when the childhood was created, demolished, and created, and demolished again. To quote him, “in the Middle Ages there were no children because there existed no means for adults to know exclusive information. In the Age of Gutenberg, such a means developed. In the Age of Television, it is dissolved (Postman, 1994: 73).” Today, everywhere we look, we see the same people with same style of dressing, of desires, attitudes, and behaviours. We may use here Postman’s metaphor “that in having access to the previously hidden fruit of adult information, they are expelled from the garden of childhood (Postman, 1994: 78)”.

Methodology

Just like many studies on the effect of the advertisements which meet the kids mostly through television in Turkey for various products from clothing to toys, from technological devices to foods, this study has concentrated on the effects of the Koton Kids’ advertisements on the kids, which have been the target of many reactions since it was first screened in Turkey. In this study, two Koton Kids’ advertisements were used as the stimuli material. One of the advertisements lasts 50 seconds while another one lasts 61 seconds.

Before conducting the in-depth interviews, pre- and post-questionnaires were designed by adapting the model of Rossiter (1980) under the supervision of an expert in the field. The questionnaires included 3-point Likert items and two open-ended questions which were designed to test the children’s descriptive message beliefs, attitudes, behavioural intentions, and recalling. Then, necessary permission was attained for the execution of the questionnaires in the state kindergartens in Antalya. After getting permission, seven kindergartens were visited and 300 children aged mostly 5 or 6 were asked questions before and after screening of the two advertisements. But only 263 interviews were suitable for the analysis of the questionnaires because of some missing or misunderstood parts of the questionnaires. The children were from middle or upper-middle income families. The data generated after the implementation of the questionnaires were tested through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0, and the results were illustrated in the table frequencies and cross-tables.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The data generated from the pre- and post-questionnaires are presented and analysed as follows:

Table 1. Gender and Age Groups

Sex	Number	Age	Number
Girl	113 / 43%	3	1 / 0,4%
		4	9 / 3,4%
		5	155 / 58,9%
Boy	150 / 57%	6	86 / 32,7%
		7	12 / 4,6 %

According to Table 1, most of the interviewees of the survey were boys (57%), and they were mostly aged 5 (58,9%) and 6 (32,7%). And these findings show that the interviewees are in the target group of the advertisements which try to reach the kids who are about to start or have just started school in Turkey.

Table 2. Attitude towards ads

S		Yes	I Don't Know	No	Missing
S1	Ads always tell the truth.	117 / 44,5%	32 / 12,2%	114 / 43,3%	
S2	Ads are silly and annoy me.	91 / 34,6%	12 / 4,6 %	160 / 60,8%	
S3	The products in the ads are always the best in the world.	157 / 48,7%	21 / 8%	113 / 43,3 %	2 / 0,8%
S4	I love watching ads.	196 / 74,5%	12 / 4,6%	55 / 20,9%	
S5	Even though I don't need something, I will buy it when I see it in the ads.	109 / 41,6 %	18 / 6,9 %	135 / 51,5%	1 / 0,4%
S6	I always believe in the ads.	117 / 44,5 %	24 / 9,1 %	122 / 46,4 %	
S7	Ads always tell the good things.	143 / 54,6%	37 / 14,1 %	82 / 31,3 %	1 / 0,4%
S8	Whatever told in the ads, I will buy it.	128 / 48,7%	26 / 9,9 %	109 / 41,4 %	

We can conclude from Table 2 that most of the kids interviewed (S1 & S6 examined) don't believe in the ads and find them untrue, however they claim that they don't get annoyed by the ads which they think always tell them only the good things. They state that they love watching ads which can persuade them to buy the products shown as they think that the best products in the world are shown in the advertisements. (S3 & S4 & S8).

Table 3. Attitudes towards the clothes in the ads

How would you feel when you buy the clothes shown in the advertisements?	Number / Percent
Good	88 / 37,4 %
Very good	10 / 4,3%
Beautiful	60 / 25,5%
Very beautiful	17 / 7,2%
Bad	18 / 7,7%
Very bad	2 / 0,9%
Happy	26 / 11,1%
Very happy	5 / 2,1%
Other	9 / 3,4%
Missing	28 / 10,6%

When they were asked what their feelings would be when they bought the clothes shown in the advertisements, most of them expressed positive feelings towards the clothes, and this may be a sign that they would love to buy the clothes shown in the advertisements.

Table 4. Attitudes towards the shown ads

How did you find the adverts?	Yes	No	Missing
Entertaining	226 / 85,9%	37 / 14,1%	
Boring	54 / 20,5%	209 / 79,5%	
Realistic	157 / 59,9%	105 / 40,1%	1 / 0,4%
Annoying	41 / 15,6%	222 / 84,4%	
Informative	164 / 62,6%	98 / 37,4%	1 / 0,4%
Attention-taking	114 / 43,5%	148 / 56,5%	1 / 0,4%

According to Table 4 which shows the feelings and thoughts of the kids towards the ads, it can be inferred that the advertisements originated good impressions on the kids who stated that they found the ads entertaining (85,9%) and not annoying (15,6%). However, most of the kids (56,5%) expressed that the advertisements couldn't draw their attention. This may be a result of the atmosphere in the kindergartens in which they watched the ads with so many classmates.

Table 5. Decision-maker of the clothing

Who decides what you wear?	Yes	No	Missing
Myself	135 / 51,5%	127 / 48,5%	1 / 0,4%
Mother	136 / 51,9%	126 / 48,1%	1 / 0,4%
Father	36 / 13,7%	226 / 86,3%	1 / 0,4%
Siblings	7 / 2,7%	255 / 97,3%	1 / 0,4%
Family	11 / 4,2%	251 / 95,8%	1 / 0,4%
Friends	8 / 3,1%	254 / 96,9%	1 / 0,4%
Adverts	40 / 15,3%	222 / 84,7%	1 / 0,4%
Other	4 / 1,5%	258 / 98,1%	1 / 0,4%

Table 5 shows that the person who mostly affect the kids on what to wear is mostly their mothers. 135 out of 263 kids stated that they decide on what they wear, and this shows that these advertisements can be successful to reach kids who think so. Because in the advertisements, it is declared that the kids decide on what to wear, not their mothers or fathers who are just there to buy the clothes as the economic power.

Table 6. Ad Evaluation

S		Yes	I Don't Know	No
S5	Was it easy for you to understand the ads?	217/82,5%	9/3,4%	37/14,1%
S6	Would you like to play a role in the ads shown?	188/71,5%	4/1,5%	71/27,0%
S7	Did you feel the same as the characters did in the ads?	181/68,8%	3/1,1%	79/30%
S8	Is your style the same as that of the kids in the ads?	126 / 47,9%	16 / 6,1%	121 / 46 %
S9	Were the kids in the ads like speaking to you?	150 / 57,3%	8/3,1%	104 / 39,7%
S10	Would you like your friends to wear like you?	177/67,3%	5/1,9%	81 / 20,8 %
S11	Would you like the clothes in the ads to be yours?	168 / 63,9%	8 / 3 %	87 / 33,1%
S12	Will you demand your parents to buy these clothes in the ads?	156 / 59,3%	8 / 3%	99 / 37,6%

Table 6 shows that most of the kids (63,9%) wanted to possess the clothes shown in the ads, and so they would insist on their parents' buying the clothes for them.

Table 7. Recalling

What do you remember?	Number	Percentage
Whole scenario	56	% 21,2
Kids	50	%19
Clothes	64	%24, 3
Baby born	37	%14
Style / skirts / doctor / dress	8	%3
Hat / song	6	%2,2
Nothing	11	%4, 1

When the data in Table 7 is examined, it can be deduced that kids remembered mostly the clothes (24,3%). When they were asked whether they remembered the whole scenario, 56 out of 263 kids said yes and told the interviewers whole story of the two ads. This number may seem to be less, but the conditions and ages should be taken into consideration.

Conclusion

Companies target at kids who can be affected easily from the ads as they are at the beginning of realizing themselves. One of the reasons why the companies try to reach the kids is that they spend most of their time by watching TV, and are vulnerable to the messages of ads. It should be noted that age is one of the most significant factor on getting affected by the ads, and studies show that kids gaining a consumer ID in their socialization period demand a product to be bought.

When the data regenerated from the questionnaires are analysed, it can be inferred that according to cross-tabulation results, 117 out of 263 kids believe in the ads, and while most of the girls don't believe, the boys are liable to believe. This shows that gender plays an important role on the belief levels of the consumers. Moreover, this study shows that the percentage of the kids (48%), who said they would buy whatever the ads propose, increased by nearly 20 % after watching the ads. This may prove that ads affect the purchase intent of the consumers.

It is a widely known fact that the audience try to identify themselves with the characters on TV, and this is one more time proved by this study in which the kids stated that they mostly recalled the kids in the advertisements and wanted to have a role in these advertisements. The other things recalled mostly were the doctor, clothes, and the lyrics of the advertisements.

One of the interesting findings of this survey is that the kids interviewed didn't state that they remember the prices shown in the advertisements. This may indicate that they don't focus on the prices, which are given for the attention of the parents. When their purchase intent is examined, it shows that no matter they love the advertisements or need the clothes, they will buy whatever is shown in the ads.

This study aims to find out whether or not the advertisements shown and highly debated in Turkey influence the kids in terms of their purchase behaviours. It can be suggested that the further studies make a research on the reason behind the purchase intent of the kids who don't believe in the ads.

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