

CHILDREN'S ADVERTISING ON TELEVISION AND THEIR CONSUMER SOCIALISATION: PARENTS' ATTITUDES

Abstract

One of the most controversial issues in marketing is marketing towards children. Beginning with the analysis of the process of children's involvement in consumption, child's ability to understand and critically respond to an advertisement, parents' attitudes to children's advertising and possible directions and solutions to the problem of advertising to children the article empirically examines parents' attitudes towards television advertising. Research results include parents of children aged between 10-12 and indicate that parents in general have no positive attitude to advertising to children and show mild interest for the prohibition of television advertisements.

Key words: advertising to children, TV advertising, consumer socialisation, parents' attitudes

1. INTRODUCTION

In spite of the doubtlessly multiple positive contribution to the society deriving from the effects of the aggregate marketing system (Wilkie and Moore, 1999), its functioning is not flawless, and one of the most controversial issues is marketing to children. The growth of marketing activities towards that group of consumers clearly illustrates the character of the market economy, within the framework of which and in the effort to achieve profit the attention is directed towards those market segments which offer good profit opportunities, often not taking into account the ethical dimension.

On the one hand children have considerable financial resources at their disposal today, but on the other hand they are easily influenced by advertising on account of their naivety, lack of criticism and lack of information. In the USA, children under the age of 14 spend 40 billion dollars per year and influence their parents' 500 billion dollars worth purchase (Tolić, 2009). By targeting children advertisers offer various products mainly through the mass media promising happiness and thus distorting basic positive values in the society and by promoting the urge to possess they achieve high profits, which is unethical because of children's vulnerability. In spite of the growing presence of the Internet, television remains the main advertising media easily reaching children of all ages through different contents.

Bearing all this in mind the purpose of this article is to conduct a theoretical research on a sample consisting of Croatian children aged between 10-12 and through their parents' attitudes empirically research multiple dimensions of the issue of advertising to children on

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television. The article begins with a short review on children's consumer socialisation, in which process the parents' role is indispensable. The key aspect of children's consumer socialisation is the achieved level of cognitive development reaching its final stage at teen ages, when children become able to respond critically to ads but continue to be vulnerable to certain product categories as well. This analysis served as the basis for the selection of the age of children's parents involved in this research. The knowledge on the harmful influence of a market activity is of little use if it does not result in a particular protection of a consumer group's interests and therefore the article reviews the methods of regulation of the sensitive issue of advertising towards children on television in the world and in Croatia as well. An important part of the text is dedicated to the analysis of parents' attitudes towards advertising taken from already conducted research worldwide and some of its aspects are included in our research and empirically tested in the Croatian environment. The theoretical research resulted in the formation of research hypotheses about parents' general attitudes to children's advertising on television, its influence on children, parents' intermediation and children's reaction to television advertisements as well as the attitudes towards regulation of the matter under research.

2. CONSUMER SOCIALISATION OF CHILDREN AND THE ROLE OF PARENTS

In order to be able to participate in the market independently and responsibly it is necessary for children to experience during their upbringing "the process through which young people acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes relevant for their functioning as consumers on the market" (Ward, 1974, 2 according to Roedder, 1999, 1983), the so called consumer socialisation. It includes the acquisition of knowledge about products, brands and purchase, the ability to make purchase decisions and the acquisition of particular values such as materialism (Roedder, 1999). During this complex process, children exposed to multiple influences undergo a dramatic development consisting of several phases: perceptive, analytical and reflective (Roedder, 1999). Main factors in children's consumer socialisation are parents, peers, school and companies' sophisticated marketing communications. Although television is still the most dominant media, companies increasingly turn to on-line media (Calvert, 2008).

Parents have a very important role in children's consumer socialisation since marketing messages, primarily via television, reach children at their homes. According to a recent GfK – the Market Research Center (www.gfk.hr) - survey almost 19 % of the total number of inhabitants of the Republic of Croatia are young people and surprisingly 84% of children watch television advertisements and considerably influence their parents' purchase decisions. The way in which parents mediate in the consumer socialisation depends on the style of parenthood (Rose, 1999), within the framework of which the communication with children concerning watching television may differ. When it comes to active mediation, when parents talk with their children about advertisements and the restrictive mediation, meaning the control of the exposure to advertisements, both may influence the reduction of children's demand for advertised products, while parents' participation in watching television without making comments about advertisements has no significant impact (Calvert, 2008). In any of these three cases the

communication between parents and their children is indispensable for the development of an adequate protection against negative influences of advertising (Carlson, Laczniak, Walsh, 2001). The influence of parents as children grow up becomes weaker as well as the influence of media and advertising (Martens, Southerton, Scott, 2004).

3. CHILD'S ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND ADVERTISEMENTS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF CONSUMER SOCIALISATION

The initial stages of the consumer socialisation research already referred to a child's understanding of advertising (Roedder, 1999). Although, there is no consensus, not even within the EU (Gunter, Oates, Blades, 2005), from the formal point of view, children are all persons up to 18 years of age and up to 15 years of age from the sociopsychological point of view. The ability to understand advertising goes hand in hand with the appropriate level of cognitive and social development of children. Piaget's theory of cognitive development strongly influenced the research on children's advertising communicative process during 1970s and 1980s (Wackman, Wartella, 1977). This theory was followed by information processing theories according to which Roedder (1981) classified children into three age categories based on their cognitive abilities to store and recall information between short-term and long-term memories and later he suggested the corresponding phases undergone by children in the process of consumer socialisation. Within the framework of the field of social development and in order to understand advertising beyond one's own perspective, relevant is the approach to the ability to take other person's perspective, the ability impossible to be experienced by children under the age of 8-10 (Selman, 1980). The relationship between the child and advertising boils down to two basic questions: (1) the ability to understand advertising and (2) the ability to react maturely and construct cognitive protection, in which process the point of reference is adults' ability to understand advertising (Wright, Friestad, Boush, 2005).

Results regarding children's ability to distinguish the programme content from advertising differ from one author to the next, some of them detect such an ability already at the age of 3 or just the opposite some of them claim that children aged between 5-7 have difficulties or that they are unable to make difference (Lawlor, Prothero, 2002). The majority of researches claim that almost all children can tell the difference between advertising messages and the rest of the programme at the age of five (Roedder, 1999).

It is very complex and multilateral to understand the purpose of advertising and within the sale's primary (1) function it includes (2) the persuasive intent aiming to alter somebody's mental state, behaviour or both, (3) informative intent, which because of advertisers' self-interest also includes (4) promotion, which in turn may be followed (5) by the intention to cheat or manipulate. It is considered that children become aware of advertising's persuasive intent at the age of 7 or 8, understanding that advertisers "try to persuade people to buy something", while younger children regard advertising as entertainment or an impartial information (Roedder, 1999). Not all researchers agree with this, for example Pine and Veasey (2003) state that children become aware of advertising's persuasive intent already at the age of 6 or 7,

contrary to Oates, Blades and Gunter (2002) who think that they develop partial awareness even at the age of 10. The theory of mind has recently indicated that children over the age of 3 years old start to comprehend the purpose of advertising concerning its intent to sell and the simple persuasive intent. They grow aware of the informative and cheating intentions between the ages of 3-5, they understand persuasion between the ages of 4 and 6 and they develop the knowledge of partiality and promotional intent between the ages of 6-8 (Oates, Blades and Gunter, 2002). In spite of all these differences, it is possible to conclude that children begin to understand complex advertising intents at the age of 8.

Knowledge on partiality and cheating, which are possible in advertisements, give rise to a certain cognitive defence against advertising in children making them less influenced by advertising, because they believe it to a lesser degree and they like it less and consequently it influences the reduction of their purchase demands (Robertson, Rossiter, 1974). In accordance with Roedder's (1981) classification of information processing Brucks, Armstrong and Goldberg (1988) reveal that children at the age of 9 and 10 need to be provided with instructions in order to be effectively protected against advertising and they think that children at the age of 13 are able to create a spontaneous critical cognitive response to advertising. In the context of knowledge on effective performance, it is considered that besides understanding advertising intents it is crucial to understand special advertising tactics and possess the knowledge on advertising's role in the market, which is acquired in early adolescence. The knowledge on advertising may not be a satisfactory defence against the seductive nature of advertising. Nairn and Fine (2008) analysing the models of dual processing and distinguishing between explicit and implicit mental processes, reveal the fact that modern marketing techniques, which relate products to positive stimuli, manage children's behaviour through the implicit change of attitude in which process the attitudes towards products are mediated through unconscious and irrational means impossible to be resisted by children and adolescents. Although adolescents, depending on their personal variables and knowledge on special advertising tactics, show high levels of scepticism in relation to advertising (Boush, Friestad, Rose, 1994) that group remains vulnerable, especially to advertising tactics of high risk products such as cigarettes and alcohol.

Qualitative research (O'Sullivan, 2005) may serve as a supplement to the research on cognitive development of children and provide a valuable insight into children's experience with advertising and results of these research may be applied to create regulations or children's advertisements, but should not be misused in the latter case.

4. PARENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS ADVERTISING TO CHILDREN

Since that parents bear the immediate responsibility towards children as the mediators of media content, their attitudes and their behaviour towards television advertisements are very important. It is believed that parents' attitude towards advertising to children depends on the extent to which such advertising disrupts the relationship between parents and their children regarding parents' emotional need expressed during their interaction with a child in the process of a child's socialisation (Grossbart, Crosby, 1984). Attitudes may vary according to different cultures and communication patterns of mothers. The influence of mothers' communication

patterns regarding the tendency towards children's control, which contributes to the negative attitude, was detected very early by Wiman (1983) in his research in the USA. In his research Mukhery (2005) detected that mothers in India have less negative attitudes towards television advertising (mean value 2,88) and advertising to children (2,19) and supervise their children to a lesser extent (3,08) in comparison to mothers in Japan (mean values 3,55, 3,28 and 3,41) and the USA (mean values 4,05, 3,86 and 4,07), which may be explained by later introduction of television broadcasting and the wish to know about new offers in the market. The USA boasts with the most negative attitudes and this is the country where parents talk with their children about advertisements and supervise their children more than anywhere else.

In general, parents express their anxiety in regard to advertising to children and especially towards food advertising. The research conducted by Young, de Bruin and Eagle (2003) among parents in Great Britain and Sweden on advertising to children on television indicated the following: advertising encourages children to make pressure on their parents to buy advertised products, the desire for products depends on the intensity of watching advertisements, children are more easily influenced than adults by advertisements and they are exposed to too many advertisements which lead people to buy products they don't really need. Research results vary even within same cultures, for example while Dens, De Pelsmacker and Eagle (2007) reveal moderate attitudes, which in tandem with family conflict and annoyance are the most powerful factors in restrictive mediation concerning television advertising, Ipa, Mehte and Coveney (2007) reveal strong negative attitudes towards food advertising to children and the desire for more pronounced regulation.

Baqiocco, D'Alessio and Lagin (2009) indicate that parents' attitudes to television advertising differ from their children's attitudes and that parents underestimate children's cognitive abilities, they believe that children enjoy advertising more than they really do, they consider their children immature and less suspicious towards advertising. In other words, they think that their children are less involved in the market than they really are. With the introduction and more pronounced use of new approaches to children such as placing products in children films parents' anxiety builds up and their negative attitudes are in opposition to actual legislation (Hudson, Hudson, Pelosa, 2008).

According to Burra and Burra's (1977) 30 year old research 65% of parents demand stronger legislative control, while Cosmas and Yannopoulos (1981) indicate that the majority (64%) of mothers think that advertising to children on television should be banned, which has not been duly regulated to this very day.

5. DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO THE ISSUE OF CHILDREN'S ADVERTISING

Advertising to children has two important components; social, related to anxiety, primarily parents' regarding the harmful influence on children and political, as the consequence of the former and regarding the criticism and consumers' actions and public interest groups' actions resulting in television networks' self-regulation and legal regulation of advertising to children (Martin 1997).

The controversy over advertising to children reached its peak in 1970s, then it

experienced a slight fall on account of the introduction of regulatory measures, to rise once again with the appearance of new media and marketing and advertising techniques. Alternatives to tackle the issue of advertising to children may include (1) activities in favour of television including public regulation, self-regulation and effort on the part of media and advertisers, and (2) activities for the benefit of children regarding children's media literacy and encouragement of parents' involvement (Armstrong, Brucks, 1988.)

The approaches to the solution of the issue of advertising to children differ from country to country. In the USA the issue of advertising to children is balanced with advertisers' freedom of speech guaranteed by the First Amendment (Jordan, 2008). Among many laws in force (Jordan, 2008), whose enforcement is under the jurisdiction of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), only two percent refer to children: the Children's Television Act dating from 1990 (CTA) and the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act dating from 1998 (COPPA) (Curran-Kelly, Richards, 2007). The system of the self-regulation of the advertising industry, the so called Children's Advertising Review Unit (CARU) established in 1974 is also in force. The purpose of CARU is to take care of unethical advertising to children through monitoring and evaluating advertisements and issuing warnings to advertisers in accordance with defined guidelines for advertising to children under the age of 12, to which advertisers only partially adhere (Ji, Laczniak, 2007.)

Within the EU, member countries may bring their own laws in accordance with already existing directives, the most important within the field of marketing communications are the following (European directives related to advertising, www.easa-alliance.org/Issues/European-Directives/page.aspx/254) the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMS), arising from the Television Without Frontier Directive (TWFD) (Woods, 2008) and the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive (UCP). Such approach resulted in a variety of solutions (the Regulation on Advertising Aimed at Children in EU Member States and some Neighbouring States, www.obs.coe.int/online_publication/reports/childadv.pdf.en), for example it is forbidden to advertise to children under the age of 12 in Sweden, four member countries: France, Ireland, Netherlands and Great Britain do not consider advertising to children harmful and its prohibition is considered undemocratic in Spain (Children and Advertising: the European Dimension, www.ppu.org.uk/children/advertising_toys_eu.html). National self-regulatory organisations for the whole of the EU are integrated into the European Advertising Standards Alliance (EASA).

In Croatia, the issue of children's advertising has not been adequately regulated. In Article 109 of the Consumer Protection Act (Official Gazette 79/2007, www.nn.hr) children are referred to as consumers defined by their age in the context of unfair business practice and there is no reference to children regarding advertising in the Media Act (Official Gazette 59/2004, www.nn.hr). More attention is given to this problem in the Marketing Association of the Croatian Chamber of Economy's Code of Advertising Practice (<http://hgk.biznet.hr/hgk/fileovi/6196.doc>) referring to children in Articles 7 and 16 in relation to fairness in communication and safety, while Article 17 deals in greater detail with specific tactics of children's advertising.

The ideal solution to the problem of advertising to children consists of joint involvement of all participants. Besides providers' and marketing agencies' individual efforts to use

advertising content that will not abuse children's vulnerability and media's effort to make a clear distinction between advertisements and the rest of broadcasts, it is worth to mention the joint cooperation of the government and organisations in the implementation of self-regulation in certain countries, signifying a new approach within the EU member states. It is necessary to increase parents' involvement as persons most closely associated with children's consumer socialisation and to increase their active role in the process of children's media literacy as this is the case with the Media Smart Programme in Great Britain applied both in school and at home (Jackson, 2003).

6. FORMULATION OF RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Taking into account the theoretical research on the parents' role in their children's consumer socialisation and the importance of their attitudes towards advertising to children for the creation of the relationship with their children, it is possible to deduce the following subject area hypotheses:

a) General parents' attitude towards children's television advertising. Five items of the questionnaire on parents' attitudes towards the exposure and nature of children's advertising messages are based on previous research such as the criticism of children's advertising (Karpatkin, 1998, Armstrong, Brucks, 1988) as well as research on parents' attitudes (Young, de Bruin and Eagle, 2003) and they constitute H1: Children are exposed to too many advertising messages on television and they are deceitful and do not help children in their development and understanding of the world surrounding them.

b) Parents' judgement of their children's capacity to understand advertisements based on the theoretical research in chapter 3. The research includes children aged between 10-12 who are capable of understanding the commercial intent of advertising and assisted by adults they are able to produce a critical response. However, they are still in their vulnerable phase showing a lack of cognitive abilities to respond to ads independently and maturely. This point is included in H2: Children aged between 10-12 are more vulnerable to the persuasive character of advertising than adults and the advertising to children is unethical.

c) Researching the pattern of parents' intermediation on the basis of 3 items (Mukheri, 2005) the scope is to find out to what extent parents actively participate in the media-child-parent context, and on the basis of previous hypothetic attitudes the H3 hypothesis has been set up: Parents actively participate in the intermediation of media contents.

d) During the consumer socialisation, children influence their parents as well through their reaction to advertisements consisting of children's demand of desired products. This aspect has been reviewed through 3 items (young, de Bruin and Eagle, 2003) and included in H4: Children look for advertised products.

e) Finally, parents' attitudes towards advertising and their experience with their children result in the wish to regulate this field, reviewed in chapter 5, in which 2 items (Walsch, Lacznia, Carlson, 1998, Cosmas, Yannopoulos, 1981) are used to bring under

consideration the H5 hypothesis: Parents think that advertising to children should be banned.

7. RESEARCH ON PARENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS ADVERTISING TO CHILDREN

7.1. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research on parents' attitudes towards advertising to children was conducted in two primary schools in Rovinj, namely: the Primary School of Jurja Dobrile and the Primary School of Vladimir Nazor and the Primary School of Vladimir Gortan in Žminj and there was no important difference in results and therefore the results are presented in an integral manner. The research included 5th and 6th graders aged between 10-12 who have reached certain maturity regarding the understanding of advertising but they are still not capable of producing an independent critical response and defend themselves against the seductive nature of advertising. The research included their parents as well amounting to 221 pupils' parents in Rovinj and 41 pupils' parents in Žminj, that is a total of 262 parents who attended PTA meetings. The questionnaire used in the research contained 18 questions, one of them was concerned with the hours spent watching television and 17 questions included a 5 level Likert scale based on the research by Young, De Bruin and Eagle (2003) and partially by Cosmas and Yannopoulos (1981.), Walsh, Laczniak and Carlson (1998.), Mukherji (2005) and Chan and McNeal (2003). Presented research results are based on 183 valid questionnaires or 69,8% of the total number of pupils.

Since the research starting point was the presence of advertising to children on television the subject of research were the following television programmes HRT1, HRT2, RTL, NOVA TV watched from 7 to 8 o'clock in the morning and HRT1 from 8 to 10 in the afternoon, HRT2 from 6 to 8 p.m., RTL from 4 to 6 p.m., NOVA TV from 8 to 10 p.m., and all channels from 8 to 10 in the morning on Sundays and Saturdays as well as in the afternoon and on working days, which amounts to a total of 40 hours of programme in September and October 2010.

7.2. RESEARCH RESULTS ANALYSIS

Presented research results in Table 1 are based on 183 valid questionnaires or 69,8% of the total number of pupils.

Table number 1: Research results on parents' attitudes towards children's advertising

Claims	Mean Values	Standard Deviation
1. My child watches an average of _____ hours of television .	2,65	1,338
Parents' general attitude towards advertising		
Children are exposed to too many advertising messages on television.	4,35	0,934
Television advertising contributes to children's understanding of the world around them.	2,86	1,149
Television advertising messages present products in their real light.	2,04	1,060
Television advertising to children is full of tricks and deceits.	3,92	0,862
Television advertising is deceitful for children.	3,92	1,010
Children's capacity to understand advertisements		
Children are more influenced by advertising than grown up people.	4,20	1,001
Children aged between 10-12 understand advertising's commercial intent.	3,22	1,168
The more children watch television advertisements the better they will understand them.	2,58	1,141
Television advertising to children is unethical.	3,72	1,037
Parents' intermediary role		
Parents are entirely responsible for their children's choice of television advertising.	3,42	1,184

We limit our children's television watching time.	3,72	1,010
We talk with our children about television advertising messages (commercials).	3,93	1,040
Children's behaviour regarding advertisements		
Television advertising to children encourages children to desire products they don't really need.	4,16	1,031
Children usually look for advertised products.	3,97	1,058
Television advertising to children encourages children to make pressure upon their parents to buy goods.	4,05	0,999
Regulation of advertising to children		
Television advertising to children should be banned.	3,52	1,101
Television advertising to children under 12 years of age should be banned.	3,52	1,135

Source: Author calculation

According to research results presented in Table 1 children on average spend 2 hours and 39 minutes watching television every day, which is not irrelevant if we have in mind the additional time devoted to other media. Advertising messages broadcast on television in accordance with the schedule are broadcast within the framework of uninterrupted programme nonselectively to all household members who find themselves in the same room. It was determined that on average 26% of television advertisements are aimed at children (163 of 633). Parents think that children are exposed to too many advertisements (mean value 4,35), while the parents in Great Britain and Sweden believe that children are less exposed to advertising messages (values 3,21, 3, 29) (Young, de Bruin and Eagle, 2003).

Regarding the effects of advertising messages on children parents in general have no positive attitude. Although their attitude is not markedly negative, they think that advertising messages do not contribute to children's knowledge of the world surrounding them (mean value 2,86), while in Great Britain and Sweden parents have expressed a higher level of scepticism regarding the same issue (mean value 1,83, that is 1,19). Parents believe that advertising messages are deceptive, that is, that their representation of products is unreal (mean value 2,05), and there is even a more negative attitude of parents in Great Britain and Sweden (mean value 1,18 and 0,94). They also believe that television advertising messages contain tricks and deceptions to seduce children (mean value 3,92), that is, they are deceptive for children (mean value

3,92), which confirms the hypothesis number 1.

Concerning the effect that these messages have on children the hypothesis number 2 was met as well. Parents think that children are more influenced by advertising than adults (mean value 4,20) and in comparison to Young, De Bruin and Eagle's (2003) research in Great Britain and Sweden (mean values 3,15 and 3,4) this conviction seems to be more pronounced. In tune with this theoretical finding parents believe that children between the ages 10-12 haven't developed a proper knowledge of the advertising's commercial intent (mean value 3,22). In parents' view the frequency of advertising messages for the purpose of achieving the commercial effect does not contribute to children's better understanding of messages (mean value 2,58). Consequently they think that advertising to children is completely unethical (mean value 3,72).

A relatively high percentage of parents think that they are entirely responsible in regard to watching television advertisements (mean value 3,42) and they mainly express the restrictive behaviour regarding watching television corresponding to the mean value of 3,72. Parents as mediators talk with their children about advertising content (mean value 3,93), which is positive. All hereby mentioned speaks in favour of the hypothesis number 3.

Parents believe that television advertising in general encourages children to buy products they do not really need (mean value 4,14) in comparison to Great Britain and Sweden where this ratio is lower (3,03 and 3,17). Children usually look for advertised products on television (3,97 in comparison to 2,72 and 2,24 in Great Britain and Sweden) and they make pressure on their parents to buy advertised products (mean value 4,05). The consequence of reversible socialisation through hereby mentioned three items fervently speaks in favour of hypothesis number 4.

Parents' prevailing attitude is that both advertising to children (mean value 3,52) as well as advertising to a particular sensitive group of children under the age of 12 should be banned (mean value 3,52), which only moderately speaks in favour of hypothesis number 5.

8. THEORETICAL AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of the mentioned research was to gain an insight into the issue of advertising to children on television, which has been insufficiently researched in Croatia. The benefit of such a research is related to the acquisition of knowledge on parents' attitudes on the position of a child within the process of consumer socialisation consisting of an intensive cognitive development of a child's relationship towards the world of consumerism, and in this particular case, it is related to television advertising. Although this research includes knowledge on parents' attitudes towards this omnipresent media, further research may be focused upon the Internet advertising due to the increase in children's interest for this media.

The primary intention of this research was to gain a detailed insight into the field of television children's advertising including parents' attitudes towards advertising, children's ability to understand advertisements, children's response and parents' role and parents' attitudes towards the regulation of this issue. Although the article reviews the matter under discussion, the limitation of this research lies in the lack of a more detailed approach to the issue

of children's advertising but may serve as basis for further research regarding for example the styles of parenthood in the consumer socialisation.

Managerial implications of this research have their value consisting in the possibility of a better adaptation of advertisements to the real needs of children in their development. However, on the other hand, whether the managers are willing to follow certain guidelines concerning children's advertising and to what extent remains unanswered. Because of the urge to earn profit, advertisements, even those aimed at small children, will be creatively shaped in order to attract for the consumption of a particular product. The solution lies in the regulation of this issue by the law, which requires the readiness of the society in which the issue of children's advertising has been placed in the centre of attention.

9. CONCLUSION

The issue of advertising to children including advertisements that are more sophisticated and the increase of children's purchase power has been given more prominence. Children learn about market forces and market behaviour through the process of socialisation, which is a time consuming process during which children have financial resources at their disposal, they take part in purchase decisions or influence their parents' regarding the purchase of desired products, but have no cognitive abilities nor a level of social development to take a responsible stand against advertisements. Numerous research projects, conducted in accordance with different methodologies, on children's ability to react in a critical way to ads have offered different findings. Nevertheless, it may be concluded that children at the age of 5 may tell the difference between advertising messages and the rest of the programme and that at the age of 8 they start to understand complex advertising intents, but it is only at the age of 13 that they can create a spontaneous critical cognitive response to advertising.

There are many factors included in the consumer socialisation of children: parents, peers, school and companies' sophisticated marketing communications but parents play the most important part because of the close relationship with their children. Therefore, their attitudes are very important as well as their conduct towards television advertising messages, which is still the dominant form of advertising. Their role is particularly demanding today because advertising messages are more and more seductive, deceitful and companies find new ways to approach children such as the on-line approach. Parents' attitudes reflect their children's attitudes towards advertising. Parents are an important factor that may exert its influence even on the legislation, if they are organised. The solution to the problem of advertising to children is still out of reach. Although it has been a matter of concern of companies, parents and organised consumer groups for ages, there is no identical solution in different countries and inadequate attention has been given to this issue in the Croatian legislation as well.

From the theoretical point of view it has been determined that parents believe that their children are exposed to too many influential television advertising messages. Aware of their children's vulnerability they consider themselves responsible and mediate in an active and restrictive manner. Generally speaking they have predominantly negative attitudes regarding television advertising and feel their children's pressure to buy advertised products, which

children often don't really need. In comparison to well-elaborated theoretical knowledge in the foreign literature, the detected hypotheses have been confirmed in the Croatian case as well. However, the surveyed parents are not firmly convinced that television advertising to children should be banned, not even to children under 12 years of age. Finally, it may be concluded that parents are fully aware of their children's inability to react in a responsible manner to television advertisements, but in spite of the predominantly negative attitude they do not feel enough coerced by television advertising to feel strictly in favour of its ban.

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DJEČJE REKLAME NA TELEVIZIJI I NJIHOVA POTROŠAČKA SOCIJALIZACIJA: STAVOVI RODITELJA

Sažetak

Jedno od najkontroverznijih pitanja u marketingu je marketing usmjeren prema djeci. Polazeći od analize procesa uključivanja djece u potrošnju, dječje sposobnosti da razumiju i kritički odgovore na reklamu, stavova roditelja prema reklamama za djecu i mogućih smjerova i rješenja problema reklama za djecu, rad empirijski istražuje stavove roditelja prema televizijskim reklamama. Rezultati istraživanja uključuju roditelje djece stare 10-12 godina i ukazuju na to da roditelji uglavnom nemaju pozitivan stav prema reklamama za djecu te iskazuju blagi interes za zabranu televizijskih reklama.

Ključne riječi: reklame za djecu, TV reklame, potrošačka socijalizacija, stavovi roditelja.