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# Attitudes on TV Advertising for Children: A Survey among Flemish Parents of Children Aged 6 – 12 years.

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## Introduction

The issue of TV advertising and children has always been quite controversial. From the early 1970s until now, hundreds of studies have been conducted on this topic.<sup>1</sup> Some of these studies are based on the observation of children in experimental situations. By their use of a non-verbal research method, these studies have the advantage of avoiding misrepresentation caused by some children's verbal skills when responding to verbal tests.<sup>2</sup> The disadvantage of this type of experimental research, however, is that the real-life validity of the results is sometimes quite low: the skillfully constructed research-experiments in which children's short-term reactions to individual stimulants (such as TV ads) are measured, do not always represent the real life situation in which the child is influenced by a great many factors – TV advertising being only one of them. Similarly, research data based on the actual questioning of children should be treated with caution, since younger children especially misunderstand the questions, lack the verbal techniques to provide an adequate answer, or are simply intimidated by the presence of the researcher.<sup>3</sup>

In this study, we chose a third method: to obtain evidence related to TV advertising and children by questioning children's parents. Parental attitudes towards the issue of TV advertising and children are of utmost importance to this issue, given the role played by the parents in a great many aspects of their children's lives. It is therefore quite surprising to learn that few other studies have hitherto shown interest in what parents think about the impact of TV advertising on their children.

Before reporting on some of these parental attitudes, we will briefly present some results of the research on TV advertising and children.

## The influence of TV commercials on children: State of the art<sup>4</sup>

A common question is what the effects of TV advertisements on children actually are, and how strong and important they are. It should not be surprising that the various research studies that deal with this matter do not always offer similar conclusions or suggestions. A number of studies originated by consumer agencies or anti-advertising pressure groups tend to over-value the importance and the impact of TV advertising on children. According to these studies, advertising directed at children creates materialism, generates parent-child conflicts, hinders development of moral and ethical values, and misleads them about products. Moreover, they claim that advertising 'often manipulates these gullible innocents since they lack sufficient cognitive abilities to resist persuasive claims or because they do not understand the selling intent of commercials'.<sup>5</sup> Studies which are commissioned by the advertising industry, on the other hand, sometimes underestimate the impact of TV advertising on children. A few studies even indicate that there is no influence at all, which brings other commentators to question why companies keep spending millions of dollars on children's commercials if these commercials turn out to have no effect whatsoever.

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1. For an introductory history of the issue of TV advertising directed at children, see Adler, 1980.

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2. For examples, see Wartella, 1980 and Ward, Wackman, and Wartella, 1977.

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3. See Verhaeren, 1991.

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4. This review is based on the study *TV Advertising and Children*, Vol. 4, Gent, 1992. The study was carried out for the Toy Manufacturers of Europe, London by the 'Centre for Media, Opinion and Advertising Research' of the Department of Communication, University of Gent, Belgium, Department of Communication. Coordinator: E. De Bens.

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5. See Brucks, 1988.

These conflicting views cause much harm, since they lead to various biased, pseudo-scientific publications on the matter, thus obscuring a number of established facts which have been accepted by a majority of independent research studies. In what follows, we will comment on some of these findings.

TV advertising aimed at children is usually believed to have an influence on the child's knowledge, attitudes, and values. It reportedly plays a role in establishing consumer socialization, for instance, by providing the child with the necessary information to make a responsible choice when functioning in the reality of the consumer society.<sup>6</sup> Research also suggests that TV advertising can be an important source of product information, since TV commercials can portray an item in a much more direct and visual way than can ever be achieved by advertising brochures, posters, or billboards.<sup>7</sup> Some studies, however, also state that extended viewing of TV advertisements may lead to an increase in aggression among children. It is hereby mentioned that, in particular, commercials with high levels of action, pace and visual changes lead to aggression, regardless of their contents.<sup>8</sup>

We should not forget, however, that most of the research on aggression consists of short-term experimental research in which the child's play behaviour or his/her preference for certain toys are observed after exposure to a number of commercials. Many methodological problems arise from this research, one of them being the question of the representativeness and the validity for real-life situations. From the results of our survey, it will be clear that parents themselves generally do not believe that TV ads stimulate misconduct or violent behaviour among their children. A much more important issue is whether or not TV ads lead children to make purchases or purchasing requests for the advertised brand. The answers to this question vary greatly according to a number of intervening factors. These factors include:

### **1. The research method used :**

Experimental studies usually support the view that TV ads aimed at children have an important impact on the child's choice – some researchers even conclude that 'toy commercials can be more persuasive than the child's mother'.<sup>9</sup> Survey studies, on the contrary, indicate that TV advertising is but one out of a large number of factors influencing children's purchases or purchasing requests, and that consequently it has only a minimal effect on them.<sup>10</sup>

### **2. The child's age:**

Some studies report that younger children are more influenced by TV advertising claims than older children<sup>11</sup>, especially when they have to make a product choice out of a large quantity of very similar products.

This observation seems quite important, since real life consumer situations usually do confront children with a large variety of similar products (e.g. the various types and brands of computer games or breakfast cereals are largely similar as to their intrinsic qualities or outward appearances).

### **3. Parents:**

Parents play a very important mediating role as far as the effects of TV advertising on their children are concerned. They can, for instance, provide verbal comment on the advertising messages or the products presented in these messages, and by doing so, they can greatly influence their children's interpretation of the advertised commercials.<sup>12</sup> (It should be mentioned, however, that the results of our survey indicate that parents seldom discuss TV commercials with their children).

Apart from this verbal comment, parents usually exercise direct control over the child's purchase and purchasing request behaviour. As far as children's purchases are

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6. For example, see Smith, 1984: 30ff and Schneider, 1987:9.

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7. See Donahue, 1984.

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8. See Greer et al, 1982. Schuetz and Sprafkin (quoted by Condry, 1989: 62ff) examined a week-long sample of Saturday a.m. commercials in order to measure violence via content analysis.

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9. See Prasad, 1978.

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10. Some studies refer to this kind of research by using the term 'correlational paradigm', e.g. Goldberg, 1990.

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11. See Kunkel, 1991.

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12. See Donohue, 1984 :143-146 and Dorr, 1989 :35-51.

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concerned, we should not forget that the amount of money that children have at their disposal (and that they can use freely for own purchases) is relatively small. Most purchases – especially when a larger amount of money is involved – are made by or under the supervision of the child's parents. Even though certain commercials may bring children to request certain purchases when shopping with their parents in the local supermarket, this does not automatically imply that these products will be purchased. After all, parents can still say 'no' when pestered by their child to buy a certain product.<sup>13</sup>

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13. See Young, 1990.

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Some researchers suggest that frequent denial of children's purchasing requests can lead to increasing parent-child tensions, conflicts and feelings of inferiority among children, or that TV advertisements eventually undermine children's confidence in parents.<sup>14</sup>

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14. See Kapferer, 1985 and Kinsey, 1987.

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#### 4. Other influencing factors:

Whether or not a TV commercial for a product will have an influence on a child's purchasing request behaviour will also depend on the effects of other influencing agents, including the child's own experience with the product, comments made by the child's peers, the overall TV exposure of the child, other advertising sources (eg. catalogues), the cultural background, the socio-economic position and education of the parents, etc.<sup>15</sup>

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15. See Young, 1990 and Galst et al., 1976.

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All this shows that, in some situations, TV commercials can have an effect on children, but this will vary greatly from child to child and from situation to situation, depending on a number of external characteristics as well. Moreover, we should not forget that, apart from what we saw above, the precise nature of the effect of TV commercials on a child will vary greatly according to the way in which the child processes information from the commercial.

Various studies have been conducted in order to assess the various aspects of children's processing of TV advertising. Here too, data obtained by questioning parents can reveal interesting information. In order to be able to interpret parent's answers against the background of general research data on the matter, we will briefly point out some of these research findings.

The first step that influences the child's information processing of TV advertising and that, consequently, also determines its effects, is the child's exposure to TV commercials and the child's degree of attention to these.<sup>16</sup> Attention is a necessary but not sufficient requirement for advertising to have an effect: if children's attention to an ad is low, the effects of the ad will be low, but if attention to an ad is high, the effects can vary from strong to weak.

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16. See Greenberg, 1986 and Calvert et al., 1989.

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The second important step is the child's ability to distinguish between commercials and programmes. Most researchers see this ability as an important step towards the child's defence against commercial messages. Children who have not made this difference between these two categories are reportedly much more vulnerable to advertising because they have not yet developed a so-called 'cognitive defence mechanism' against the persuasive claims.<sup>17</sup> It is largely for this reason that a number of commentators object to the use of cartoon characters, heroes or famous persons in TV commercials aimed at children.<sup>18</sup>

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17. See Wartella, 1980 :539; Condry, 1989: 174 ff, Blosser et al., 1985.

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18. See Kunkel, 1988.

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When popular figures from TV programmes are used, it becomes much more difficult to distinguish between commercial messages and programme entertainment, especially when younger children are involved and when the characters appear in commercials that immediately precede or antecede programmes featuring the same figures. Evidence on the child's ability to distinguish commercials from programmes is usually collected by observational tests or verbal questioning of children. In our survey, we asked the parents if they thought their child was able to do so.

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19. See Kunkel, 1991: 64.

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20. See Liebert et al., 1988: 169.

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21. See Kunkel, 1991: 64; Young, 1976: 88-96; Wittebroodt, 1990.

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22. The survey is part of the research project Children and TV advertising, Vol. 3, Gent, 1992 (see Note 4).

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23. However, in Flanders the law prescribes that there must be a programme interruption of at least five minutes before and after children's programmes. Broadcasters circumvent this law by inserting short video clips (before or after a children's programme). Another way of avoiding the law is VTM's policy of defining children's programmes as 'family programmes'.

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The ability to make this distinction, however, is but one step towards a greater understanding of the commercial purpose behind a message, and, consequently, a greater skill in developing cognitive defenses.<sup>19</sup> If a child is able to distinguish between commercials and programmes, this does not mean that the child is also aware of the intent of commercials. As the child grows older, his/her awareness of the purpose of TV commercials increases.<sup>20</sup> A great many researchers thus suggest that it is a great help for children to be taught about commercial intent, both by parents and school teachers.<sup>21</sup>

The above research findings indicate that TV advertising aimed at children may have an influence on children, either by affecting children's attitudes or knowledge about products or by leading them to purchase or to purchasing request behaviour. However, since the interaction between TV advertising and children does not take place in a vacuum, many other factors intervene. This large number of intervening factors not only includes the various steps of the child's information processing activity, but also other influencing agencies, such as the child's peers, school or parents.

Since the influence of the child's parents in particular plays an important role in the interaction between TV ads and children, it is highly appropriate to devote some attention to what parents themselves think about this complex issue.

### **Parental attitudes on the effects of TV advertising on children.<sup>22</sup>**

In early December 1992 a survey was conducted among Flemish parents of 6-12 year old children. In Flanders children celebrate 6 December 'St. Nicholas', a traditional festivity during which they receive presents of mainly sweets and toys. In the week preceding our survey (27 November - 3 December 1992), a total number of 138 toy commercials were broadcast on the national Flemish commercial channel VTM, with a total broadcast time of 62 minutes. This means that during the week preceding our survey the children were frequently exposed to TV advertising.<sup>23</sup>

The aim of the survey was to determine how parents experience and evaluate the impact of advertising on their children. The survey scanned the attitudes of the children toward TV advertising as seen by the parents: do they like to watch advertising or not, do they recognize advertising for what it is, are the commercial spots a topic of discussion with the parents? The parents were asked whether they accepted advertising directed at children, the degree of control that is needed, etc. A number of questions attempted to find out the extent to which children influence parents when they buy certain products and the role played in this by TV advertising.

In the last part of the survey, attention was focused on TV advertising for toys. Is television a more important opinion maker than the other advertising media? A set of questions on the desirability of less or more regulation for certain kinds of toys was also included.

In addition to the effect of advertising proper, the viewing behaviour of the children was surveyed, i.e. their channel and programme preferences, the time and length of viewing. These data contain interesting information on the questions of when and for how long children are exposed to TV advertising.

### ***The sample and the socio-demographic variables***

On Monday 2 December 1990 questionnaires were handed out in eight schools located in the medium-sized cities of Ninove (Province of East Flanders) and Ieper (Province of West Flanders). Each child, from the first to the sixth year of primary education, aged between 6 to 12 years old, was instructed to ask their parents to complete them.

The children returned 1600 fully completed questionnaires, which obviously means that there was a very high rate of response. Since processing 1600 questionnaires would have been too time-consuming, 1000 questionnaires were chosen at random: they represent a more than sufficiently large sample.

The representativeness of our sample is shown by the socio-demographic data. The number of boys and girls in our sample, i.e. 554 (55.58%) vs. 437 (44.5), is close to the real distribution in Flanders of the sexes in the same age category, i.e. 51.5% boys vs. 48.5% girls. (State Register 1.1.1991). As far as age is concerned too, the survey closely approaches the real distribution.

The distribution over the different school years of primary school is spread evenly.

**TABLE 1**

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF CHILDREN SURVEYED:

AGE	N	%	Actual Distribution in Flanders
6 years	134	14	15.7
7 years	150	15	16.2
8 years	158	16	16.6
9 years	172	17	17.1
10 years	179	18	17.1
11 years	201	20	17.1
12 years	6	1	17.2

Total N=994

The socio-demographic data of the parents that completed the questionnaire are completely within what was expected: 90 per cent married, 98 per cent of Belgian nationality, 68per cent one to two children and 25 per cent three children. The social classes represented most strongly are the workers (32 per cent), junior and senior employees (34 per cent) and the self-employed (19 per cent). Most parents are between 30 and 40 years of age and therefore belong to a generation that has grown up completely with television. Seventy one per cent of the questionnaires were completed by the mother. It was stressed that the answers had to reflect the situation of the child that brought home the questionnaire.

**Media use and TV consumption**

**TABLE 2.1**

TIME SPENT BY THE CHILDREN ON THE FOLLOWING MEDIA DURING AN ORDINARY SCHOOL DAY

Media	0mins	1-15mins	15-30mins	30-60mins	1-2hrs	2-3hrs	3-4hrs	4hrs
Newsp	80%	18%	1%	-	-	-	-	-
Magaz	52%	38%	10%	-	-	-	-	-
Books	10%	31%	35%	17%	6%	-	-	-
Radio	40%	21%	19%	19%	7%	2%	-	-
TV	2%	4%	14%	35%	30%	10%	3%	2%
Video	67%	4%	9%	10%	7%	2%	-	-

TABLE 2.2

TIME SPENT BY THE CHILDREN ON THE FOLLOWING  
MEDIA DURING THE WEEKEND

Media	mins	1-15mins	15-30mins	30-60mins	1-2hrs	2-3hrs	3-4hrs	4hrs
Newsp	76%	19%	4%	1%	-	-	-	-
Magaz	45%	32%	16%	6%	-	-	-	-
Books	7%	14%	30%	27%	12%	5%	2%	1%
Radio	30%	10%	18%	16%	11%	7%	2%	5%
TV	-	-	3%	13%	27%	24%	16%	6%
Video	42%	3%	7%	13%	20%	8%	4%	4%

Tables 2.1 and 2.2 show that children devote most time to the medium of television. During a normal school day almost half the children watch for at least one hour; only one in five watch less than 30 minutes. At the weekend almost half the children watch two hours and more a day; 22 per cent watch as much as three to four hours.

In spite of the large choice of channels available (Belgium is highly cabled: 91 per cent of households and more than twenty TV channels are distributed), the children to a large extent prefer their own Flemish channels. The commercial station VTM (the only Flemish station with commercials) scores much better than the public service station (BRT): 60 per cent of the children consider VTM as their favourite station. The Dutch stations are in second place: this preference is obvious as a result of the language affinity. Among the foreign language channel, the French-speaking channels TF1 and RTV-TVI are preferred. Here again the commercial channels score better among children.

TABLE 3

PROGRAMME PREFERENCES OF CHILDREN

Programmes	Frequently	Occasionally	Never
Children's News	11%	43%	46%
Typical Children's programme e.g. <i>Samson, Schuifaf</i>	68%	25%	7%
Cartoons	70%	29%	1%
Films for Children	41%	50%	9%
TV-series for Children	42%	46%	12%
Quizzes and Game Shows for Children	31%	53%	16%
Children's Shows e.g. <i>Kinderacademie</i>	37%	48%	14%
Videoclips	15%	39%	45%
The News	17%	51%	32%
Films for Everyone	18%	56%	26%
TV-series for Everyone	20%	53%	27%
Quizzes and Game Shows for Everyone	24%	58%	18%
Music Programmes for Everyone (Pop, Hit parade)	24%	51%	25%
Commercials	29%	60%	11%

Children obviously prefer children's programmes. The news programmes for children score badly because the Flemish stations do not broadcast children's news broadcasts. Yet, children often watch programmes that are not specifically intended for children. Mainly films, series, quizzes and game show but especially advertising spots are 'frequently' or 'sometimes' watched by children.

### Children's attitudes towards advertising

The answers by the parents show that children like to watch commercials (56%), but are sometimes bored by them (55%). A large majority of the parents (79%) is convinced that their child recognizes the commercials as advertising.

The parents themselves accept advertising (62% are not irritated by advertising) but they think that control is desirable (71%). Only 12% are of the opinion that commercials aimed at children should be banned, and 9% think that all advertising should be banned.

**TABLE 4.1**

DOES YOUR CHILD LIKE WATCHING COMMERCIALS?

Very Much	Quite	Not that much	Not at all
11%	45%	34%	10%

Total: YES = 56%

Total: NO = 44%

**TABLE 4.2**

DOES YOUR CHILD FEEL ANNOYED BY COMMERCIALS?

Frequently	Occasionally	Never
8%	47%	45%

**TABLE 4.3**

DO YOU DISCUSS COMMERCIALS WITH YOUR CHILD?

Frequently	Occasionally	Never
6%	54%	35%

**TABLE 4.4**

DOES YOUR CHILD RECOGNIZE TV COMMERCIALS AS SUCH?

Yes, Always	Yes, Usually	No, Usually Not	No, Never
26%	53%	15%	5%

Total: YES = 79%

Total: NO = 20%

In contrast to what is laid down in many advertising codes of standard, the parents have no objection to cartoon heroes, comic strip characters or famous TV personalities being used in the commercial.

**TABLE 5.1**

SHOULD CARTOON HEROES OR COMIC STRIP CHARACTERS BE ALLOWED  
TO APPEAR IN ADVERTISEMENTS AIMED AT CHILDREN?

Yes	No
71%	29%

**TABLE 5.2**

SHOULD FAMOUS PERSONS OR CHARACTERS OUT OF CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMES  
BE ALLOWED TO APPEAR IN ADVERTISEMENTS AIMED AT CHILDREN?

Yes	No
66%	34%

### Purchasing products for children and the role of advertising

The table below shows that parents are mainly influenced by children when purchasing toys, soft drinks and sweets.

**TABLE 6.1**

DO YOUR CHILDREN INFLUENCE YOU TO BUY CERTAIN GENERAL PRODUCTS?

Products General	No Influence	Weak Influence	Quite Strong	Very Strong
Food	41%	48%	10%	1%
Soft Drinks	33%	50%	14%	3%
Toys	17%	41%	30%	12%
Sweets	35%	42%	17%	6%
Clothing	44%	34%	13%	4%
School Necessities	36%	40%	20%	4%

An important question here is the extent of the role of advertising in this. Parents claim that they are hardly influenced at all by TV commercials when buying something for their children. Only in the case of toys do parents seem to be influenced somewhat more by TV: 47%. According to the parents, the children are somewhat more easily influenced by TV commercials when buying something themselves. Again this is more often the case for toys than for other products: 70% are influenced to some extent, while the percentage is 43% for food, 57% for soft drinks and 58% for sweets.

**TABLE 6.2**

WHEN BUYING CERTAIN PRODUCTS FOR YOUR CHILD,  
ARE YOU INFLUENCED BY TV ADVERTISING?

Products	No Influence	Weak Influence	Quite Strong	Very Strong
Food	74%	24%	2%	-
Soft Drinks	70%	27%	3%	-
Toys	53%	36%	8%	3%
Sweets	70%	26%	4%	-
Clothing	78%	16%	4%	1%
School Necessities	72%	22%	5%	1%

**TABLE 6.3**

WHEN BUYING CERTAIN PRODUCTS, ARE YOUR CHILDREN INFLUENCED BY TV ADVERTISEMENTS?

Products	No Influence	Weak Influence	Quite Strong	Very Strong
Food	57%	33%	9%	1%
Soft Drinks	43%	39%	15%	3%
Toys	28%	37%	26%	9%
Sweets	42%	39%	15%	4%
Clothing	66%	24%	7%	3%
School Necessities	52%	33%	12%	3%

Concerning whether a child wants something no matter what after having seen a commercial for it on TV, the most frequent positive answer is again for toys: 18% for 'frequently' and 38% for 'occasionally'. Yet it should be remembered that, for other products, about two in three respondents claim that children do not necessarily want products for which they have seen TV commercials.

The role of TV advertising therefore does not seem to be so crucial in the decision to buy certain products for children. The parents do seem to be convinced, however, that in the case of toy advertising, television exerts a stronger influence than is the case in advertising for other children's products.

**TABLE 6.4**

DOES IT OCCUR THAT YOUR CHILD ABSOLUTELY WANTS CERTAIN PRODUCTS BECAUSE IT HAS SEEN THEM ON TELEVISION?

Products	No Influence	Weak Influence	Quite Strong	Very Strong
Food	11%	22%	33%	34%
Soft Drinks	11%	27%	33%	29%
Toys	18%	39%	26%	17%
Sweets	11%	29%	29%	31%
Clothing	10%	15%	27%	48%
School Necessities	11%	19%	30%	39%

### Selection criteria for choosing toys

Our survey paid special attention to TV advertising for toys. The tables below strongly show a modification in the influence of television. Children choose toys mainly with the help of a brochure (88%), in the shop itself (79%), at a friend's (77%), and on television (61%). TV only comes fourth.

**TABLE 7.1**

## CHILDREN'S CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING TOYS

Criteria	Very Important	Rather Important	Not Important
Child has seen Toy in Shop	22%	57%	21%
Friend has Toy	30%	47%	23%
Child saw TV Advert	14%	47%	38%
Child saw Advert in Brochure	39%	49%	12%
Child saw Advert in Magazine	11%	36%	53%
Child saw Advert on Poster	4%	22%	74%
Other Reason	27%	9%	64%

For the parents the decisive factor is that the children ask for it (98%). The brochure scores 66%, 'other reasons' 53%, the shops 44%, 'magazines' 32% and TV only 26%. The brochure therefore pushes aside television as an advertising medium here. Interpersonal communication such as contacts with friends and the wish of the child itself are important persuasive variables.

**TABLE 7.2**

## PARENTS' CRITERIA FOR BUYING TOYS

Criteria	Very Important	Rather Important	Not Important
Child asked for it	60%	38%	4%
Parent saw TV Advert	4%	22%	74%
Parent saw Advert in Brochure	12%	54%	34%
Parent was recommended in Shop	10%	34%	56%
Parent saw Advert in Magazine	3%	29%	68%
Parent saw Advert on Poster	2%	1%	87%
Other Reason	45%	7%	48%

**Regulations for specific TV advertising**

The parents were asked whether they favour a complete ban on certain TV advertising aimed at children. Almost none of the respondents wants a complete ban but there are two major exceptions: 62% wants a ban on war toys and 20% a ban on computer and video games.

Parents often criticize the misleading character of TV advertising. Eighty-one per cent of the respondents states that TV ads do not always indicate the skills required to use the toy. There is also a certain apprehension about the creation of dangerous situations in TV commercials: 65% of the parents fear that children will imitate dangerous behaviour shown in TV ads and 66% think that TV ads exploit the children's immaturity of judgment and experience.

## Conclusions

TV occupies an important part in the life of children: every day they spend a lot of time in front of the TV set. Most of the children watch TV for at least one hour a day and during weekends the time of exposure amounts to 2 or 3 hours a day. Children do not limit their viewing to children's programmes. Of the overall TV schedule films, series and serials, quizzes and game shows are watched frequently. This behaviour is confirmed by the children's exposure in time to TV: on weekdays they continue to watch television until 8.30 to 9 p.m. and during weekends they often watch until 10 p.m.

Children do not seem to like or dislike TV ads: 56% of them like to watch the ads while 54% are sometimes bored by them. Parents are not irritated by TV ads aimed at children (62%) but would like the ads to be subject to some kind of control (71%). Most of the parents (78%) are of the opinion that children are able to identify TV ads as commercials. They do not even object to the use of cartoons and television characters in commercials, even though most codes on TV advertising forbid this!

Parents are mainly influenced by children when purchasing toys, sweets and soft drinks. The parents claim that they are hardly influenced at all by TV commercials when buying something for their children. Only in the case of toys do parents seem to be influenced to a larger extent by TV. According to the parents, the children are more easily influenced by TV, especially by toy ads: 70% of the children are influenced to some extent. The impact of TV toy ads is strongly modified when the respondents indicate the different selection criteria for choosing toys: brochures, shops and magazines score higher than TV. Interpersonal communication such as contact with friends is also an important persuasive variable. The majority of the parents agree that toy advertising should be allowed but on condition that it is regulated. A minority want a complete ban and one third thinks regulations are not necessary. There is, however, a special concern for war toys and video games: 62% want a ban on war toys and 20% a ban on computer and video games. When drafting a code for TV advertising, this overt concern with respect to war toys and video games will have to be taken into account.

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