Children’s Perception of TV-advertising
A Case Study of 3rd Graders in Sweden

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Acknowledgements

We would like to start to say that these ten weeks of writing this thesis has been a fun and educating experience from start to finish. It has given us more than we at this point not can imagine.

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“We must either find a way or make one” - Hannibal

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Abstract

Since Sweden is a country that has regulation against TV commercials to children, we thought it would be an interesting area to investigate further. The purpose of this study is to provide a better understanding of how television advertising affects young children. To reach this purpose, research questions focused on asking about how children’s perspective on TV advertising in Sweden can be described, as well as how the different types of TV advertisement to children can be perceived. Based on these research questions, a literature review was conducted that resulted in a conceptual framework that provided what empirical data should be collected. In order to collect the data, a qualitative, case study approach was used. A focus group interview with 3rd grade elementary school children at Ekberga school in Västerås, Sweden then took place.

The findings of this study reveal that children are affected by TV advertisement and the more they watch the more they are affected. They are also highly influenced by peers. Furthermore, their behavior towards parents and pester power are also affected by their viewing of TV advertisements. The most memorable commercial advertisement for the children appeared to be the ones using humor and celebrities. Furthermore children's ability to distinguish between reality and fiction is possible for this age group.
Sammanfattning

Sverige är ett land med mycket specifika och relativt andra nationer restriktiva lagar gällande nationell TV reklam riktat mot barn, varpå vi fann vi ämnet intressant att forska vidare i. Syftet med denna uppsats är att få en bättre förståelse av hur Tv reklam påverkar barn och ungdomar. För att uppnå syftet upprätthölls forskningsfrågor angående barnens syn på TV reklam i Sverige samt hur olika typer av TV reklam uppfattas. Med forskningsfrågorna som grund tillämpades litteratur insamling som sedan mynnar ut ett ramverk för vilken typ av empirisk information vi önskade hämta. En kvalitativ fallstudie metod tillämpades och datainsamlingen gjordes genom en fokusgrupp intervju som genomfördes på Ekbergaskolan i Västerås.

Resultatet visar att barnen är påverkad av Tv reklam och desto mer de ser på Tv desto mer verkar de påverkas. Studien visade också att barn även är mycket påverkade av jämlika personer i dess omgivning. Förändrat beteende mot föräldrar i form av tjat från barnen visades också som en effekt av Tv reklam. Den mest ihågkomna reklamen var den som innehöll humor och kändisar och fortsättningsvis så var barnens förmåga att skilja på verklighet och fiktion bra men barnens perspektiv var ändå att du borde inte tro på allt du ser.
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1 Introduction

In this first chapter the topic of TV-advertising to children will be introduced, highlighting the controversy, extent and the complexity of the subject. The first section of this chapter will present a brief background about the subject, followed by the problem discussion, concluding with our research purpose and questions.

1.2 Background

Every day we are all exposed to different kinds of media that are trying to sell products to us. The society today gives the marketing communication business more than just TV and newspaper to communicate to the customer. Advertising has been a tool for companies for as far as the 17th century where Gillian Dyers (1982) found trace from the production of newsheets that worked as information source for the financial market (Giles 2003) who also argues that psychology and advertising have had a strong connection between them since the beginning, but he continues to say that academically, the two subjects have now gone separate ways. The key to success for an advertiser have been their ability to manipulate our decisions and impression (Giles 2003). The different tools to manipulate the target market are, according to Kotler and Armstrong (2001), advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations and direct marketing. Each marketing communication tool have their own specific tool to use when target market are persuade. For example advertising, that reach a high number of people through TV and print media or personal selling, that meet the target market face to face through sales presentation and trade shows.

To reach the target market and communicate effectively a marketer has to understand how the communication process is working (Kotler and Armstrong 2001). Figure 1 shows the different stages of the communication process.

![Communication Process Diagram](source)

The basic process is the sender which is the company that wants to pursue the target market by sending out a massage. Depending on the interpretation of the message by the receiver the result will either be a purchase or an ignorance which is shown as feedback in the figure. The noise shown in the figure, affects the whole communication process. It can be everything from a telephone calling when the company’s advertisement is shown on television or when there is a...
lack of time in the morning for reading the newspaper. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2001) an effective message is when the sender’s encoding process catch or capture with the receiver’s decoding process. A message can consist of words or figures and depending on the senders experience and knowledge of the receiver the effectiveness of the message will be shown in feedback (ibid). Advertisement is one of the marketing communication tools that can be implemented in this communication process.

According to Jobber (2001) advertising is “any paid form of non-personal communication of ideas or products in the prime media, i.e. television, the press, posters, cinema and radio”. Wells, Burnett and Moriarty (2003) say “effective ads work on two levels”. The first level is that the advertisement should satisfy costumer’s objectives. The second level is achieving the advertiser’s objectives. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2001) companies worldwide are spending $414 billion on advertisement annually. Since advertisement is an often used tool Wells, Burnett and Moriarty (2003) point out three dimensions characterizing effective advertisements. The first dimension is strategy; this is where the objectives are carefully examined and the target audience and message is created. Second is creativity; there is a large number of advertisement running, the message have to stick to the target audience’s memory. The last one is execution which is the details, the photography, setting and printing.

One of the opportunities to reach out to the target market is advertising through broadcast media, it can either be through radio, television or internet (Wells, Burnett and Moriarty 2003). These media transmits sound and/or images electronically and gives the advertisement message a deeper feeling mainly because of the movement, sound and picture (ibid). Advertisement in the TV industry can be broadcast in the public television, cable/subscription television, and local television (Wells et al 2003). Depending on what type of broadcast that is used, there are different forms of television advertisement that can be implemented such as sponsorships, participation or spot announcement (ibid). Targeting children through TV can be seen as a successful strategy since they spend 24 hours per week in front of the TV (Oser 2005). Baldes, Gunter and Oates (2004) says that “children have spending power”, for example children in the United States from 12 years and younger spend $28 billion in 2000. They further say that targeting children is a huge market and that the advertisement is often implemented through TV which will be our focus.

1.2 Problem Discussion

According to Dotson and Hyatt (2005) the level of media exposure within households has changed dramatically in the past years and ultimately as media usage is increasing it consequently becomes a dominant influence on children’s consumer socialization. Previous studies have shown that the extent of which young children watch television has gradually increased within the past 15 years (SCB, 2003) Children constituting a major trustworthy segment of the audience underlies the fact that research of this target group is clearly relevant (Children and Media, 1999)

When vulnerable populations such as young children are involved marketing decisions become even more complicated (Hogan 2005). Any corporation looking to target children has to face a major challenge in creating advertisements which are appealing to children but also do not offend or upset the parents. ibid.
Advertising to children is a controversial subject matter and generates a number of concerns for marketers as well as recipients. Questions and concerns such as if it is morally accepted to aim advertisement towards children who are unable to fully grasp the intent of the advertisers? Is television an effective way to market products to children? Is it appropriate that children learn to be effective consumers from an early age? Does encouraging children to buy products lead them to pester their parents and cause family disputes? Does television advertising present an accurate or misleading image of the world to children? Should advertising aimed at children be regulated? If so, how strict should that regulation be and, in a global market place, should regulators draw up common guidelines across different countries and cultures. (Blades, Gunter and Oates 2005)

Recent statistics show that 50 percent of the children in Sweden watch TV 1-2 hours every day and close to 30 percent watch TV more than 3 hours every day. In fact, children in Sweden under the age of 15 spend as much time watching television as they spend time in school. Furthermore close to 36 percent of the children living with a single parent watch 3 or more hours of TV every day compared to 27 percent among children living with both parents. Children in low-income families tend to watch more television than do children in middle class households. The statistics do not reveal any differences between girls and boys. (SCB 2003).

According to Barter (2004) advertising through any type of media towards children has been a controversial subject and foremost in the Scandinavian countries and especially Sweden, who consistently through the nations legislature show more concern and protection about what young children may be exposed to through public media. However Dotson and Hyatt (2005) emphasizes the importance of distinguishing the fact that young children are not a completely homogenous segment, but rather a series of subgroups each having a set of distinct characteristics.

1.3 Purpose and Research Questions

Based on the problem discussion above, the purpose of this study is to provide a better understanding of how television advertising affects young children. In order to reach this purpose, the following research questions are stated.

RQ1: How can children’s perspective on TV advertising in Sweden be described?
RQ2: How are different types of TV ads to children being perceived?
2 Literature Review

The following chapter will review the literature studies relating to our research questions. The first section focuses on the theory discussing how children’s perspective on TV advertising can be described. The next section of the chapter will include theory discussing how different types of ads may or may not be perceived.

2.1 Children’s Perspective on TV Advertising

Children’s perspective on TV advertising is dependent on numerous factors, such as age, parents and peers. Theories that focus on the examples and more will now be presented in this section.

2.1.1 Children’s Development of Logical Thinking

The success of an advertisement campaign on TV is dependent on the level of a child’s logical thinking and understanding. Gunter, Oates, Blades (2003) states that Piaget’s model of children’s development of logical thinking is one of the most frequently used in literature about children’s understanding of advertisement. The model consists of four stages; sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational and formal operational stage. The stages describe different levels of understanding that a child reaches in the range they grow. They will now all be described.

Sensorimotor Stage

This is the first stage which a child is born into. According to Gunter et al. (2003) the stage consists of the child’s development from the birth and early understanding such as independent thought and simple problem solving. The child maintain in this stage to the age of two years. Gunter et al. (2003) further say that “nonetheless, children’s limited language and cognitive development in this period precludes any possibility of understanding advertisement”.

Preoperational Stage

This period occurs in a child’s life between the age of two years up to seven years. It is called the preoperational stage because Piaget thought that young children had limited reasoning at this stage. Gunter et al.(2003) states that Piaget found two limitations for children in this stage. The first one he found was that children had difficulties solving tasks that involved the transforming of materials. The second one is the child’s high level of egocentrism. Piaget describes the term as a difficulty for the child to see another person’s point of view. According to Gunter et al.(2003) children in this stage will likely have difficulties understanding the persuasive meaning of the advertisement, because of the low level of understanding other viewpoints than their own.

Concrete Operational Stage

In the concrete operational stage, children in the age range of seven to eleven years old can reason logically in situations that are problem solving (Gunter et al. 2003). They also have the ability to see two aspects of a task at the same time. Connecting the concrete operational stage to understanding advertisement, the theory sees two aspects (ibid). One side of it is the child’s developed ability to reasoning and there by we can expect a better understanding of advertisement. The other side is the child’s ability to reason is only better in concrete situations, which are situations where they can manipulate and experience at the same time. Gunter et al. (2003) says “without direct experience, we might expect children’s reasoning about television to
be less well developed than their reasoning in other domains that involve more opportunities for interacting with stimuli”.

Formal Operational Stage
According to Gunter et al. (2003) the abstract reasoning from a child can only be expected after the age of eleven. This stage combines all sides of abstract, hypothetical reasoning that can be used in any situation for problem solving. They further state that although this stage is the final stage the development will continue throughout life, a teenager’s logical reasoning is not as developed as of an adult. Connecting it to understanding advertisement on TV, we can assume that children in the age of eleven and up have similar understanding as an adult individual (Gunter et al. 2003).

2.1.2 Effects of Advertising to Children
According to McNeal (1992) figure 2.2 shows the attitudes and behaviour that an advertising campaign can evolve. The attitudes that are produced are towards the product, its producer, the brand and also advertisement in general (ibid). The starting point is assuming that the child has been attracted of the advertisement.

McNeal (1992) says that behaviour can be defined as three different types:
1. Behaviour towards the product, such as searching for it, comparing it with substitute, and buying it.
2. Behaviour towards parents, which can be shown as pester towards the parents to buy the specific product.
3. Peer influence. Friends that talk about the product or bragging of having it.
Children influencing the parents result in behaviour such as purchases, provision of funds to the children, negotiation with the children, and refusal (McNeal 1992). Creating this behaviour will in turn develop an attitude from the parents to the brand, product, producer, the seller and the advertisement in general. Combining attitudes from the children and the parents will affect the outcome behaviour toward these objects by children and/or parents (ibid).

Figure 2.2 is divided into three stages (McNeal 1992). The first stage shows the advertising influencing the children to buy the product or to pester the parents to do so. The second stage is where the parents are considering purchasing the product after they have been influenced by the child. The final stage, the attitudes of the child and the parents that have been induced by advertising and purchase behaviour determine their future behaviour toward advertised products. McNeal (1992) says that there are limitations to the model in figure 2 because it shows advertising effects in isolation. There is hardly just one advertising campaign on TV, instead there are thousands and not just on TV.

The abbreviation in the figure shown as ec and dc are encoding and decoding. Encoding is where a person is trying to communicate a message and decoding is how the receiver of the message interprets it. These two subjects have many problems within them. They affect the communication to the child and some without any specific solution for the advertiser (McNeal 1992). McNeal (1992) lists the four major ec/dc problems.

- **Adult language encoding/child language decoding.** This is not just the most obvious problem; there is no solution for it either. It is most likely to happen when mass communication is used to target a large group.
- **Adult symbol encoding/child symbol decoding.** This problem consists of nonverbal language such as colour, sound, dress and body language. Different colours can be associated differently between children and adults.
- **Adults motives encoding/child motives decoding.** This problem is based on the mindset of children and adults. For example can children be curious about situations that adults are frightening of and opposite.
- **Adult values encoding/child values decoding.** Children’s values change from day to day, one day a frog can be everything and the next it hardly remember its. The only thing you may expect is that children’s values will mirror their parents’. Therefore it can in some situations be a good idea to communicate to a child on the basis of their parents characteristics.

Gunter et al. (2004) supports the fact that age and parents have a significant part in advertising to children. They say that the impact of advertisement to children’s knowledge, attitudes and value does not come alone. They also state that factors, other than advertisement can affect the child.

- **Advertising exposure.** Usually a child sees an advertisement more than once and the influence of advertising may be assessed after just a single exposure. The research evidence is equivalent when it comes to if repeated exposure to the advertisement makes any different (Gunter et al. 2004). Some say it does not, some say it does and that it also has a negative effect.
- **Age of child.** According to Gunter et al. (2004) it is generally known that young and old children respond differently to advertisements.
**Role of parents.** Parents play a major role in the level of influence of advertisement of which a child is being exposed to. How much a parent is taking part is determined by the social class and educational level of the parents. They can either influence directly or indirectly.

The involvement model is a theory that explains the effects of being affected of advertisement. Gunter et al. (2004) says “one that focuses on the idea that behaviour is influenced by external factors to the extent that there are situations in which specific kinds of behaviour are required, expected, or encourage and have significance to individuals”. They continue to say that, the more important a situation is for an individual, the more involved they become in performing the most appropriate and advantageous behaviour in that situation (ibid). Connecting this to advertisement, involvement is referred to the comments the individuals make about the product during the time they are exposed to the advertisement. It is in a motivational state and in terms of commitment to a brand or product type.

### 2.1.3 Perceptual and Attitudinal Effects

Giles (2003) argues that advertisement can affect you to buy the product in two ways. One of the methods is by using perceptual effects, a method which affects the customer without the customer knowing it. It can for example be the use of happy colour and uplifting music to make the customer feel uplifting and happy. Or use a jingle in the commercial and repeat it to the extent that it will seep inevitably into the customer’s unconsciousness. The use of subliminal advertisement is falling under this category. It is an advertisement method that is working at a level below full consciousness. The advertising message is injected into the memory through exposing audience to brief snatches of persuasive text in the middle of television programming (ibid). It was used in the U.S. in the 1950, but after a study that gave the result that the method worked, it was banned and still is. The study however supports that advertisement messages can be injected in our minds without us being aware about it.

Another method to use in advertising is attitudinal. It evaluates the short- and long-term effect of an advertisement on the consumer impression of the brand and product (Giles 2003). The level of involvement is one factor that determents the attitudinal effects (ibid). For example if you have a deep interest in cars and you want to buy a new one, you will look and listen more to the advertisement about cars than on others. Attitudes are not just based on interest it also include social group which are age, gender or ethnicity (Giles 2003). Dependent on how you live, what age you are in and if you are a boy or a girl you respond differently to the advertisement. Giles also argues that advertising is less about the way people are living, but rather about what you dream of being. In other words, it focuses more on aspiration of the consumer than on the current situation that they live in. For example, an advertisement about a snack rather show a smart, active and good looking kid instead of an overweight and tired one. This appeals the children that long for being the ideal person. In fact Bandyopadhyay, Kindra, and Sharp (2001) states that the children will believe the life that are shown in the commercial and when they are about to purchase the product they see their lives as less satisfactory and they may become disappointed. When the product is bought and the expectations do not meet the actual standard, disappointment and anger can occur (ibid).
2.1.4 How Advertising Affect Children

Bandyopadhyay et al (2001) says that “in this age of information overload and fierce marketing competition, targeting children as a market and directing advertisement to them may affect the children negatively because competing companies would begin advertising with persuasive intent to get one product sold more than another.” This will lead to a child’s increased influence of purchasing decision and more and more demands, which leads to more parent-child conflict and it will be a negative effect on the child (ibid). They also state that materialism is a part of our society - a consuming society - and advertising is seen as a facilitation of its existence. The perceived increase of materialism in young children may lead to an increase of parent-child conflicts (Bandyopadhyay et al 2001). This is because the child tries to become part of the consuming, materialistic public, and pressure their parents to buy particular product. The particular products are those who provide instant happiness and satisfaction. Thus products can sometimes be costly and harmful to the children, a fact that an adult can understand but a child can’t. The differences in views can also be a source for parent-child conflicts (ibid).

In many of the parent-child conflict the child gets what he/she wants (Bandyopadhyay et al 2001). According to Giles (2003) this is called “pester power” which is repeated appeals from an advertisement that leads the children to demand the parents to satisfy their needs by buying the product. He also states that an increase of watching television commercial leads to a higher level of pester and particularly after the branded goods.

2.2 Different Types of Television Advertising

The type of advertising is dependant on the product or service it serves to promote. The concept of low involvement was first proposed by Krugman (1965) in an article on the effectiveness of TV commercials. His sense of the relationship between advertising effectiveness and audience involvement was derived from studies about persuasiveness of nonsensical and unimportant messages. According to Gunter and Barrie (2004) advertisement to children generally focuses on a narrow product range.

Toy advertising

Commentators argue that children are particularly exposed to the wide variety of ads during Christmas time adding pressure to parents wishing to grant their children’s holiday wishes (Gunter et. Al, 2004). They further state that toy advertisements tend to dominate Saturday morning television, and the share is increased by 75% around Christmas time.

Food advertising

According to Story and French (2004) one of the major market forces in the food and beverages industry has been children and adolescents. Thus the children’s market has been bombarded with commercialism by food advertisers through a variety of channels and the single most often source of media being used is Television. In the U.S. 75% the advertising budget of food manufacturing companies are allocated to television advertisement opposed to Sweden which is by far the country broadcasting the least amount of food advertisement on television according to a international comparative study conducted by Consumer International. In fact the study showed that Sweden had little or no food advertisement during the times most children watch television (<1 ad/broadcasting hour). The food and beverage industry has been a major market force
children and adolescents as. Children and adolescents are targeted aggressively by food advertisers, as a result they are exposed to a growing and unprecedented amount of advertising, marketing, and commercialism through a wide range of channels. The principal goal of food advertising and marketing aimed at children is to influence brand awareness, brand preference, brand loyalty, and food purchases among youth. Ibid.

Humorous Advertising
According to Gulas & Weinberger (1992) the use of humor in advertising has been estimated to as much as 24.4% of prime time television advertising in the U.S. is intended to be humorous. They further state that while the use of humor is high, the efficacy of humor as a communications device remains uncertain. In attempts to define its impact, humor has proven to be very quite indefinable. The fact is that humor is a complex topic that has been experimentally studied by advertisers in several dozen studies over the two decades. Humor is a multidimensional concept which includes a wide variety of factors. (ibid) However Lee & Mason (2001) argue that does not generate positive thoughts and thus have no significant benefit over non-humorous advertising.

2.2.1 Reality vs. Fiction
According to Bob Hodge and David Tripp (1986) children 6-12-years-old, calibrating television against reality is a major concern for children throughout this age group and other studies by Flavell (1990) suggest that this may well apply to even younger viewers. Hodge and Tripp have argued that watching television may play an important part in helping children to develop concepts of reality and fantasy. Cartoons, they suggest, may have a special function for young viewers. This was the favorite television genre of the 6-8-year-old children while most of the 9-12-year-olds preferred TV dramas. Thus the popularity of programmes amongst these children was directly the opposite of the order of reality, going from most unrealistic (cartoons) to most realistic (real-life characters). After a study of how children made sense of a television program, these researchers argued that nature of cartoons causing confusion between fantasy and reality, the largeness of the gap is helpful to young children in building a capacity to discriminate. Learning to remind themselves of the constructedness of a television program may help viewers to distance themselves from emotional responses to disturbing scenes. (ibid)

Bob Hodge and David Tripp have been closely associated with the study of children’s modality judgments. In a semiotic approach to studying children’s understanding of television in Australia adopted the linguistic term modality to refer to the reality status attributed to television programmes by viewers. Where there seems to be a great distance between a program and everyday reality, television has weak modality, where television seems like a “window on the world” it has strong modality. The point is that the modality of television varies, a dimension hardly allowed for in the approaches adopted by some researchers. Hodge and Tripp note that judgments about reality are complex, fluid and subject and that the modality judgment of young children has a tendency to be polarized, unpredictable and unstable (ibid).

Robert Hawkins referred to in Buselle & Greenburg (2000) nevertheless questioned its adequacy. Many times a perceived reality is looked upon as if it were homogeneous, while at the same time researchers have attempted to measure it by asking quite different arrays of questions. Hawkins stresses that it is misleading to regard perceived reality as a unitary concept, arguing that it is more of a more multidimensional character. He applied factor analysis to 153 children’s
questionnaire responses, and he discerned several apparent subdivisions within the concept. Relating this to developmental patterns, Hawkins noted that given multiple perceived reality dimensions, developmental changes may take place along some dimensions but not others, or changes may occur at different rates or times on different dimensions. Second, to make things even more complex, it is quite possible that children’s dimensional structures themselves differ with age (Hawkins, 1977). Byron Reeves (1978) added that such dimensions may differentially influence how television affects children.

Many commentators have subsequently adopted Hawkins’ references to “Magic Window” and “Social Expectations” dimensions, although often in misleading references to those of Hawkins own. Although theorists may differ slightly in defining the various criteria which they identify in children’s judgements about the reality status of television, researchers in the field generally treat perceived reality as multidimensional. Researchers have referred to various criteria which seem to be involved in viewers’ judgements about whether an object, character, event or setting on television is real.

To track developmental patterns in the framing of television reality, Aimée Dorr (1983) conducted a series of interviews with 54 children aged 5-6, 7-9, 11-12-years-old. Her strategy of asking children what they would tell a younger child who was confused about what to believe on television. Findings show that even before the age of 5-years-old, major developments in children’s understanding of television reality took place.

Although we may reasonably assume the importance of some degree of familiarity with television, Morison & Gardner (1979), in a study of 36 children from 6-12-years-old, could find no relationship between their ability to distinguish reality from fantasy and their degree of familiarity with television. Regarding exposure, there is some evidence that those who are heavy viewers (who watch significantly more television than the average viewer) tend to regard television more realistically than lighter viewers (Greenberg & Reeves 1976).

2.2.2 The Magic Window, Fabrication and Factuality

An important criterion involved in viewers’ assessments of the reality status of specific program content is variously referred to as the “Magic Window” (Hawkins 1977), “fabrication” (Dorr 1983), and “factuality” (Fitch et al. 1993). Robert Hawkins's widely-quoted reference to a Magic Window dimension referred to the degree to which TV programmes were regarded by viewers as either a window onto actual on-going life in the real world or as dramatic fiction. The criterion of fabrication, as framed by Aimée Dorr (1983), relates to whether a television program is perceived by the viewer as “fake” or alternatively as depicting events as they actually happens in real life. Hawkins’s referred to the evaluation of dramatic fiction in particular and of course not all TV-programs fall into this category. However, all television programs including news broadcasts do involve construction, and it is useful to think of this criterion as relating to an awareness of the constructedness of programs.

It is widely noted that young viewers start at the high end of the Magic Window dimension, attributing equal reality to everything on television. In a questionnaire study of 153 children between the age of 4 an 12 years old Hawkins confirmed previous research findings that children tend to perceive fictional television as increasingly less real as they get older. The study reflected
a dramatic increase in children’s knowledge in this regard around the age of 8 years; children over 8-years-old rarely thought of television as a magic window on the world, and understood that programs were made up.

According to Fitch et al. (1993), by around the age of 10, children’s judgements about what these researchers term factuality are about as accurate as those of adults. They further state that this particular criterion appears to be primarily dependent on a child’s stage of cognitive development rather than on such factors as experience with television. Hodge and Tripp (1986) found that methods of media production, actual or hypothetical were the key criterion of reality for 8-9-year-olds.

According to a study by Joanne Quarforth (1979) to which extent of children with mean ages ranging from 6.0 to 10.0 would spontaneously sort pictures of television characters into groups reflecting the attributes human, animated and puppet is displayed in figure below. The various percentages doing so in each age group were as follows: 48% at a mean age of 6.0; 57% at 7.0; 75% at 8.1; 83% at 8.9; 95% at 10.0 (see table 2.3) A similar study by Morison et al (1978) also showed a steady progression in children’s spontaneous classification of pictures as fiction vs. reality.

![Bar Chart](image)

**Table 2.3 Children’s ability to group television characters**

Source: Quarforth 1979

In interviews, children in the study from the age-groups with mean ages of 8.9 and over were significantly more accurate than those from the age-group with a mean age of 6.0 in attributing the quality of being alive to human characters and not to puppets or animated characters. The 6-year-olds were significantly less able to pick out the characters that could walk and talk by themselves than were those of around 7.0 and older. 18% of the 6-year-olds attributed only to human characters both the qualities of being alive and of autonomous movement, whereas 70% of
the 10-year-olds did (Quarforth 1979). While in this study only 15% of the 6-year-olds were able to fully and consistently differentiate human, puppet and cartoon characters, 85% of the 10-year-olds were able to do so (ibid.). However, one should note that the extent to which children ordinarily employ the real/fantasy distinction has been questioned (e.g. Reeves & Greenberg, 1977).

2.2.3 Criteria for Determining of Children’s Understanding of TV Advertising

Children’s judgements of the reality status of television programmes are not based solely on comparing specific program content with their knowledge of the world. They also need to apply their knowledge of television as a medium. Without the use of both kinds of knowledge, a documentary about an exotic country might seem as fantastic as a science-fiction adventure. Progressive sophistication with age and experience is evident in the development of children's use of what are normally referred to as the formal features of the television medium as cues to the reality status of programmes (Hodge & Tripp, 1986, Fitch et al., 1993). These range from production and editing techniques and conventions to TV genres. Hodge and Tripp refer to such medium-specific cues to reality status as internal criteria, in contrast to external criteria, which involve comparisons with the viewer’s knowledge and experience of the world similar to Hawkins’s distinction between the “Magic Window” and “Social Expectations” dimensions.

Kelly (1981) notes that 7-8-year-old children unanimously chose Superman as more real than Charlie Brown on the basis that Superman is filmed rather than animated. Thus, even though these youngsters can chronicle the many tricks underlying Superman’s features, format overrides content when children are forced to make a comparison. At this age, the answer to the question, which is more real? Is quite simply, whichever looks more real (Kelly 1981). 9- and 10-year-olds were much less likely to mention formal features as cues to reality; they were more concerned with content. Susan Howard refers to 9- and 10-year-olds often classifying the animated cartoon The Simpson's as realistic since according to the children the program portrayed characters and situations that were representative of those in real life (Howard 1993).

Stages of cognitive development clearly play an important part in children’s understanding of what is real on television. A number of other factors also play major roles such as: motives for viewing; familiarity with television; relative amount of viewing and real-world experience. James Potter (1988) notes the importance of the viewer's particular motives for watching television. Some motives have been shown to be related to levels of perceived reality, in particular the motive of watching television in order to learn or to seek information. He observes that it is not surprising that people who find television more like real life expose themselves to it to seek information and instruction (Potter 1988). Susan Howard noted that for the primary school children one criterion involved in judging a program was that it was regarded as realistic if it taught them something about the world or about life (Howard 1993).

Investigating children's understanding of the reality status of television programs is far from easy. A major problem for researchers is that young children may not always be able to explain what they mean by saying that events on television are “real”. Aimée Dorr (1983) found that children were only consistently able to do so by the 6th grade (around 11- or 12-years-old). Frustratingly, the most dramatic advances in children’s understanding of television occur before this age. Children’s systems of classification do not always match those of researchers. Hodge and Tripp
have noted that distinctions between fantasy and reality may not always be prominent in a child’s way of interpreting television (Morison et al 1978). Howard (1993) notes that in her study of primary school children, children judged some programs as realistic simply because they liked them or as being unrealistic because they disliked them. Furthermore, the funnier the programs, the less realistic they were regarded as by the children.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

Miles and Huberman (1994) states that, “a conceptual framework explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied”. A conceptual framework is easier to create if research question have been stated before. In order to succeed with our research questions we will focus on the theories that we found was most reliable and applicable to our purpose and research questions (ibid). The theories will be the base for collecting data.

2.3.1 Conceptualization of Children’s Perspective on TV Advertising

McNeal’s model of the effects of advertising to children will be used when collecting data. We see this model as clear and it shows the different ways that an advertisement can go through and problems that can evolve. He defines behaviour from a child in three different ways:

- Behaviour towards the product
  - Searching for the product
  - Comparing it to substitute
  - Buying it
- Behaviour towards parents
  - Comparing it to substitute
  - Being the good child to influence that the child deserves the product
- Peer influence.
  - Class mates talking about the product.
  - The “cool” person in school has the product.
  - Bullied for not having the product.

We further rely on Giles (2003) theory that talks about “pester power” because it is a possible effect of advertisement.

- Pester power
  - Pester until the child gets want he/she wants.
  - The child pester power is dependent on the level of TV-watching

2.3.2 Conceptualization of Different Types of TV Advertising

We choose to rely on the Robert Hawkins’s widely quoted reference to a “magic window dimension” which refers to the degree to which TV programs were regarded by viewers as either a window onto actual on-going life in the real world or as dramatic fiction. An important criterion involved in viewers’ assessments of the reality status of specific program content is variously referred to as the “Magic Window” (Hawkins, 1977).

- Reality vs. Fiction
  - Distinguishing between reality and fiction
  - Superman vs. Charlie Brown
We further rely on Howard (1993) saying that primary school children, tend to judge some programs as realistic simply because they liked them or as being unrealistic because they disliked them. Furthermore, the funnier the programs, the less realistic they were regarded as by the children. We also rely on Kelly (1981) noting that 7-8-year-old children unanimously chose Superman as more real than Charlie Brown on the basis that Superman is filmed rather than animated as well as Lee & Mason (2001) argue that does not generate positive thoughts and thus have no significant benefit over non-humorous advertising.

- Preferences in advertisements
  - What kid’s prefer to watch
  - What advertisement that are more memorable
3 Methodology

This chapter will review the methodology process of the thesis presenting how we are going to collect the data and thereby reach the purpose of the thesis. We will start by presenting our research purpose, approach and strategy. Then we will continue with data collection and sample selection. We will end this chapter by reviewing data analysis and reliability and validity.

Figure 3.1: Methodology Overview
Source: Adapted from Foster (1998), p.81

3.1 Research Purpose

According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003) the most commonly used classification of purpose of research is; exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. They point out that exploratory research resembles the activities of a traveler without a set itinerary in the sense that it is changeable and able to adapt during the course of the process. When conducting exploratory research one has to be willing to adjust if coming across new findings which unexpectedly force the research to change direction. Thus, exploratory research has an initial broad focus which narrows progressively throughout the course of the research (ibid). Descriptive research includes identifying and mapping by signifying, registering and documenting based on the researchers choice of perspectives, aspects, level of depth and definitions (Wiedersheim-Paul and Eriksson, 2001). It is critical to have a legitimate purpose for the descriptive research to be meaningful. In order to be able to move on to the next level which is the explanatory stage, the descriptive research needs to be well executed (ibid). According to Saunders et al. (2003) an explanatory study aims to establish casual relationships between variables. Wiedersheim-Paul and Eriksson (2001) further states that “to explain” means to make an analysis of cause and effect relationships, and similarly to the descriptive stage the analysis has to be based upon various predetermined criteria.

Our study will touch base on all of the above stages but at various levels of involvement. The study will entail exploring, describing and begin to explaining children’s perception of TV advertising. In the initial exploration stage we will derive at the purpose for the thesis, further we will be emphasizing on the descriptive stage, while spending limited time in the explanatory stage drawing conclusions of our findings. Our choice of emphasizing the descriptive stage provides support for using a qualitative research approach when conducting our study.
3.2 Research Approach
This study will be based on a qualitative research. Denscombe (2000) states that a qualitative research approach focuses understanding people’s behavior patterns. According to Saunders et al. (2003), qualitative data is characterized by its richness and fullness based on the researcher’s opportunity to explore a subject in as real a manner as is possible. To capture the richness and fullness associated with qualitative data, a standardized way of collecting data is excluded. The non-standardized and complex data that have been collected has to be classified into categories before they can be analyzed in a meaningful way (Saunders et al 2003). Qualitative data is based on meanings expressed in words (ibid). Backlund and Holmkvist (2006) say that qualitative data gives an insight into question that refer to how people think a certain way and why they think that way. They continue to say that “qualitative research does not measure, it provides insight”. This insight can be capture by a process that consists of analysis that is connected with views given by the respondents (ibid).

Since we want to reach a deeper understanding in how children are affected by advertisement, a qualitative research is our most favorable way of getting the best result. To use a quantitative approach by presenting a survey to the children would question the validity since the level of literacy is varying. There by a qualitative approach will be used.

3.3 Research Strategy
We have chosen to use case study as a tool for our work. Case study is significant for focusing on relations, the process and the fact that the case exists in a natural environment (Denscombe 2000). Saunders et al (2003) way of define case study is “as a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple source of evidence”. They further state that this research strategy is particularly suitable for individuals that want to gain a deeper understanding of the context of the research and the process around it. A case study also has an ability to generate answers to questions asking “why?” and “how?” (Saunders et al 2003). Saunders et al (2003) ends by arguing that a case study can be a meaningful way of exploring an existing theory. They continue to say that if you have a well-constructed theory, you can, by your investigation, challenge the existing theory or even provide source for a new one.

The reason we choose to base our work on a case study is because we are looking at something happening right now, which we do not have or want control over. Time is a fact that we are dependent on and compared to a survey, case studies take less time. As stated before, a case study answers the questions “why?” and “how?” and since one of our research questions ask “how?” we have decided on a case study.

3.4 Data Collection
Our data collecting will be done by using the primary data, interviews. An interview is a purposeful discussion between two or more people. It can help us gather valid and reliable data that are relevant to our research questions and objectives. The interview nature should be consistent with the research questions and objectives, the purpose of the research and the research strategy that is adopted. Ibid.
Methodology

The type of interview that we are adapting is semi-structured. This type of interview is where the interviewer has a list of subjects and questions that is going to be asked. The person doing the interview is determined to let the interview be flexible when it comes to the sequence of the subjects. A semi-structured interview is significant for letting the persons being interviewed speak freely and developing their ideas about the specific subjects. The answers are open and the emphases lay on the person being interviewed that develops their point of view (Denscombe 2000).

The reason for choosing this type of interview is because of the children’s open and unstructured mind. Capturing their thoughts have to be a mix of both structure for keeping them within the subject and unstructured so that deep thought can arise.

The semi-structured interview will be performed in a focus group. The purpose of focus groups is to be able to be more specific, or focused, and linked to the exploration of a known theme or topic (Saunders et al 2003). It can be used to identify key themes that will be used to develop items. Saunders et al (2003) suggest that our data collection begins with a reasonably clear focus. They also suggest that we may choose to design smaller groups as we seek to develop our competence in relation to the use of this means to collect qualitative data. The number of participants in the focus group is in the range of four to eight people (ibid). Pros and cons for choosing a focus group are presented below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRrengthS</th>
<th>WEAKNESSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- It stimulates ideas, thoughts and feelings that may not be raised in one to one interviews.</td>
<td>- Hard to generalize the result, because it lacks representativeness with regard to the target population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ability to quickly and inexpensively grasp the core issues of a topic.</td>
<td>- Possibility of moderator interpretation bias which can reduce the credibility and trustworthiness of the data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Observe reaction to the research questions in an open ended group setting.</td>
<td>- The data are more difficult and subjective to analyze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Participants respond in their own words, rather then being forced into a formalized method, and they can freely react to each other’s responses.</td>
<td>- Less likely than interviews to produce quantities data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Spontaneous and unrestricted.</td>
<td></td>
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Table 3.1: Focus Group Interviews: Strengths and Weaknesses

Choosing focus group as a tool to interview the children is once again for the children to open their mind and feel comfortable. We will be conduction a single interview using a focus group of four boys and four girls. Yin (1994) states “a major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence”. He call this opportunity to collect data, “triangulation”, which he states is the opportunity to collect multiple measures of the same phenomenon which leads to a higher validity (ibid).
3.5 Sample Selection

Researchers question the validity of applying probability sample selection when conducting small-scale qualitative research. In order to answer our research questions and meet our objectives while being descendant with our research strategy we chose to undertake an in-depth study focusing on one particular case. Within a lot of business research and case studies per se, non-probability sampling is the most commonly used sample selection technique (Wiedersheim-Paul and Eriksson 2001). Purposive or judgmental sampling enables you to select samples which are most able to answer your research questions and meet your objectives. Our sample selection consisted of four boys and four girls 9-10 years old attending the same class and same elementary school. Our choice of sample was based on the fact that obtainable accessibility to children among the age group of interest was presented to us by a personal contact who teaches 3rd grade at a public elementary school in Sweden.

3.6 Data Analysis

According to Saunders et al. there are different strategies of how to analyze the data collected. The different strategies can be categorized as follows:

- Understanding the characteristics of language
- Discovering regularities
- Comprehending the meaning of text or action
- Reflection

What differentiates the various approaches is the level of formality vs. the researchers own interpretation of the data as well as the level of structure. The first to categories listed above require a more structured strategy using preset procedures than the other two. The first two categories represent a more analytic approach which is initially deductive, where as the other two start out inductively.

We will be using a within-case analysis approach based on the choice of a single case study in order to be able to focus our time and efforts to this particular case. Wiedersheim-Paul and Eriksson (2001) states that to be able to benefit the most from an interview one should make sure that the analyzing process follows immediately after the interview has been conducted. Thereby you limit the risks of missing important data that may not be documented by interview notes or audio or video recording.

3.7 Reliability and Validity

When conducting research one has to be able to determine the quality of the work. According to Denscombe (2003) the criteria for testing the quality of the work includes the neutrality level of instruments of research and the extent of which numerous researchers manage to draw similar conclusions. A test is valid when it measures what it is supposed to. How valid a test is depends on its purpose. If a test is reliable, it yields consistent results. Reliability is a prerequisite for measurement validity.

Content validity is concerned with sample-population representativeness. To increase content validity the sample population represents an age group of which the level of understanding
supports this. We further chose to conduct our interviews using a focus group based on the fact that we thought we would receive more truthful and extensive responses. The participant where selected by the teacher, based on her opinion on their TV watching experience, ability to express themselves and to stay focused during the interview. The number of children in the group constituted the highest number of allowed in a focus group in order to get as many opinions as possible.
4 Empirical Data

The previous chapter explained how the methodology of the thesis and we will now be presenting our data collected starting with research question one and the followed by a presentation of research question two presented in the same manner.

Our research data was collected by conducting a focus group interview consisting of four boys and four girls, age 9-10 from class 3green at Ekberga school in Västerås, Sweden. The interview followed the conceptual framework of the thesis and we used an interview guide for support throughout the interview process. The discussion lasted for about 50 minutes which we thought was an appropriate amount of time for the children to be able to stay alert. Each child had a nametag in order for us to be able to “call on” the children to repeat answers or inviting them to elaborate on the subject. We wanted to take the children out of the classroom setting so the interview took place around a single table to get a more relaxed atmosphere.

4.1 RQ1: Perspective

Product
The first question asking, what the children do if they see a product that they like on TV? They gave the response that they do go out and look for it in the store. And if it is a product that they really do want, they get their parents to watch the commercial to let them know that this is what they desire to have. One of the respondents said that they on top of that they often let their friends know about a certain product. We also received an example from one of the boys saying that “if there is soccer commercial on, you just want to go out and play and try it”.

The questions if they search for it and compare it to substitute, we got the response that it do happens now and then but not all the time, except from one respondent saying that he liked to make comparisons to a substitute product. “But if you see a chocolate commercial you just want to go out and buy some”.

The group did not unite when asking if they could take their own money to buy the product. The response we received was sometimes, often and always. One of the respondents said that if the product is expensive you may want to try it out first before deciding to actually save up for it yourself. Another person said “I rather not save my own money to spend on it even if it is not that expensive”

Parents
The behavior that evolves towards their parents is described as begging and an example of what the children tell their parents were; “please, please mommy”, “it’s not that expensive”. The group agreed on that they all did work on their parents in a similar manner. Another behavior that was described is that you can help out at home to earn some money for something, for example washing the car or make the keep a promise to not eat candy of a certain periods of time. One of the respondents said that if he didn’t get the product, he stopped caring about wanting it. Another respondent concluded by saying that “I don’t usually get what I want but I can buy anything I want for my own money”.
Empirical Data

About negotiation, they all agree that they do negotiate with their parents. One of them said that she was not allowed to do it because it is like begging. Another one did let us know that in order to get her weekly allowances they had to perform certain chores around the house.

The response to the question if they show their best side of themselves, they responded that it had been known to happen but it is hard if you have siblings. You can for example say to mom that her hair looks nice; she is pretty today and only to follow up by asking for the specific product. Two of the respondents say that it has never happened and another say that “I usually get what I want so there’s no need for it”. One of them said that mom said that you should not believe what they say in a commercial, when they ask for a product in a commercial ad.

Peers
They all agree that they are influenced by peers. One respondent continue to say that if everyone in the class got really cool shoes then he wanted them too. Another said that “if I like the clothes that a person is wearing I will ask where they got it from”.

When asking them if they are influenced by class mates if they are talking about the product, the response was that it has happened but not that often. If someone actually is in possession of that product it is more likely to happen. It is also more likely if more people are talking about it and having it rather than only one does. But if they only talk about it but doesn’t own it themselves, you are not that interested.

The group responded different when we asked if they want a product more if they see the “cool” person having it. They responded with, not at all, maybe and sometimes. The reason for, not at all is simply because he did not care. Other comments was that they did not think that they where so affected and another said the opposite, that they thought they where affected and may buy it to be “cooler”.

On the question if their have been situation where you have been bullied for not having the product, the group is united that there have never been a situation like that. But later on one of the respondents says that he have been bullied for not having a certain product.

Pester Power
When it comes to pestering they all agree that they do nag on their parents to get the things that they want. It could for example be done by saying “mom, please, please and if that does not work I will go up to my room and cry” one of the respondents replied. The result of that was that you may not get the specific product but that you at least got something out of it. Another example was; “come on, it only cost…” or “but everyone else has got it”. One of the respondents said that he does not need to do it and another said that it mostly does not work for him.

They hardly does not use pestering until they get what they want because the parents negotiate that if you continue to do it we won’t do this, for example, funny thing on the weekend. They also agree that they pestering increases the more TV they watch; an example given to us was “I want that for Christmas or Valentines Day”.

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4.2 RQ2: Types

Reality vs. Fiction

Asking the children about their own ability to distinguish reality from fiction opened up the discussion about how different types of advertising were perceived. The general idea was that the children believed themselves to be able to fully tell reality vs. fiction apart. One can simply see what is real and what is not, “you should not be fooled by everything you see” said one respondent. One girl retells a commercial about a man and a woman who after drinking a certain brand of sparkling mineral water jump of the docks into a lake only to pop up after less than five seconds on the complete opposite side of the lake. The girl keeps on explaining how that can impossible be happening and how she doesn’t like the commercial since it is not telling the truth.

We continued to asked the children who they believed to be more real, Superman or Charlie Brown and the immediate response was that Charlie Brown was more real since he was an actual person and Superman has a laser “thing”. The girls agreed and one boy blurted out the opinion that even though Charlie Brown is a person and caretaker of a dog (Snoopy), “he still looks like a big baby with his round face and single piece of hair pointing straight up from his head”. The boys agreed that Charlie brown’s looks were weird and not normal.

To sum up the discussion about reality vs. fiction we asked the children if one can believe everything you see on TV. The group autonomously said “no way!” And nobody seemed to want to argue this matter. One girl brought up “REA” a current television program about “healthy consumption of commercial merchandise” targeting children 7-13 of age. Several of the children regularly watched the program and they each gave examples of what different products had been tested on the show and how they appeared to be different from what the manufacturer had claimed it to be. The children lit up when they started discussing the TV-program agreeing that it was a good that someone told the truth.

Preferences in Advertisements

Starting out by asking the group a general question about what type of commercials the children preferred to watch and why, there was no immediate response and the group quieted down for a few seconds. To get the conversation going we rephrased the question to name specific commercials that they seen on TV and that they liked. The children all agreed on the commercial for one of the top grocery stores in Sweden and started to quote the characters in the commercial. The children were giggling and one girl said that she liked the commercial because it felt real. Another girl said that it is almost like a movie since it has an ongoing story and it is funny. The girls agreed and elaborated on how previews for upcoming episodes of their favorite TV-show as well as movie trailer constituted the best commercials. One girl said that she didn’t like when commercials interrupted a good TV- show. Another girl said she liked fashion commercials the best, because they features pieces clothing that you might want to buy and most of the time she considered them to be truthful. At this point the boys had started to grasp the question and two boys said that their favorite thing to watch was soccer commercials featuring professional soccer players such as Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Ronaldinho. When asking the girls if they enjoyed commercials featuring celebrities they mentioned Britney Spears fragrance and how they believed that you cannot know whether she actually used is herself of not. Another girl added that “and you can’t even smell it”. None of the children seemed to consider excitement a particular appealing factor of a commercial.
Continuing the discussion about the children’s preferences in television advertisements by asking what commercials they thought was more memorable than other. Once again the commercial for the grocery store commercial became the subject and they all agreed on the fact that humor played an important part in what makes an appealing advertisement. A few of the children also pointed out that realistic commercials are better than unrealistic ones.

**Overall**
Overall comments that popped up during the interview were that “the commercial interrupts and make you want to turn of the TV”. “It’s sometimes unreal and often about shampoo”. “But you listen to the commercial and you want to meet the character”. “The background and the things that they stand on can not be bought and that makes it unreal”.
Data Analysis

5 Data Analysis

We will in this chapter analyze our data presented in the previous chapter. We will for each research question conduct a within case-analysis. Furthermore we will be comparing the collected data to the theory reviewed in our conceptual framework.

5.1 RQ1 Perspective

In our conceptual framework McNeal (1992) states that behavior from TV advertisement can be defined as three different types. They are behaviour towards the product, behaviour towards parents and peer influence. Furthermore, Giles (2003) theory talks about “pester power”, which is repeated appeals from an advertisement that leads the children to demand the parents to satisfy their needs by buying the product.

Product

Our interview with the children gave us the facts that they do search for a product that they like and have seen on TV. They also let their parents know what they want as well as their friends. Comparing it to substitute product is used mostly when it comes to more expensive product because of the fact that the child wants it to reach their expectations. When it comes to spending their own money on a product they like differs widely from McNeal’s (1992) theory. The answers where in a wide range from always to never. Some said they could decide to save their own money if they where really shore of the quality of the product and other said that they don’t want or need to spend their own pocket money.

Parents

Behavior towards parents is well known in our focus group. It can either be performed as begging i.e. please, please mom or negotiating i.e. doing one thing to get another. Both aspects support McNeal (1992) theory. Moving on to showing the best side of themselves to get a product, most of them agree that it has happened but it you have siblings the act is harder to perform. Two of the boys say that they have never done it and one of them said it’s because he does not need to do it. Others got the response from their parents to stop believing in what the TV commercial is saying.

Peers

All of the children agree that they are influenced of peers i.e. “if everyone in the class has is, I want it to”. The more people that talks about a product the more influenced they are. But when it comes to being influenced by if the cool person is having it, the answers differ. Some say they sometimes are and some say they would never be. If they where affected they said that it’s because they want to increase the level of “coolness”. But they all agree that there have never been a situation where they have been bullied for not having a product, except one that later on admits that it hade happened to him.

Pester Power

Pester power is used among the members of the group, except from one that said that he did not need to do it. The ones using it is either receiving something for it (maybe not the specific product but something) or being exposed to negotiation from their parents such as excluding a fun
activity if they continue. Others respond that they do pester but it does not work. In conclusion this supports Giles’ (2003) theory that children pester more if the watch more TV.

Table: 5.1 Variables affecting children perception of TV advertising

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables affecting children perception of TV advertising</th>
<th>Strong Impact</th>
<th>Some Impact</th>
<th>Little or no Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Product</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pester Power</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.1 Q2 – Types

Robert Hawkins’s (1977) the “magic window dimension” refers to the degree to which TV programs were regarded by viewers as either a window onto actual on-going life in the real world or as dramatic fiction. Furthermore Kelly (1981) notes that 7-8-year-old children unanimously chose Superman as more real than Charlie Brown on the basis that Superman is filmed rather than animated. And according to Lee & Mason (2001) humorous advertising does not generate positive thoughts and thus have no significant benefit over non-humorous advertising. In accordance with Hawkins’ theory the children believed themselves to be able single out what fiction was and what was not.

In terms of Kelly’s (1981) theory the children disagreed that Superman was more unreal that Charlie Brown, although it’s importance to consider the fact that our study involves 9-10 years olds which consequently of their age has a different perception of reality vs. fiction. One person however believed that Charlie Brown’s human features were fictive and abnormal. The argument to why Superman was more superficial was his ability to release laser rays. The group agreed on the fact that you can not buy into everything you watch on TV and TV programs who find out the truth about TV-commercial were frequently watched and popular among the children.

The discussion about what preferences the children had in the brand name was of higher importance than the components of the commercial. Someone mentioned the color scheme, but other than that the product brand or characters seemed to be of greater importance in deciding whether the children liked a commercial or not. The children seemed to enjoy watching comedy in particular but with no connection that they had intentions of wanted to buy the product which is inline with Lee & Mason’s (2001) earlier findings. Other reasons for the commercial being popular were that “it felt real”. The fact that it included a plot and was telling a story further attracted the children to the commercial.

In relation to previews for upcoming episodes of their favorite TV-show as well as movie trailers turned out to be everyone’s favorite. Negative feelings about commercials were in fact that they interrupt the TV shows. Further on, fashion was popular among the girls whereas the boys like sports commercials in particular soccer commercials featuring professional soccer players such as Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Ronaldinho. None of the children seemed to consider excitement a
particular appealing factor of a commercial. Overall they also pointed out that realistic commercials are better than unrealistic ones and humorous commercials were fun to watch as entertainment.

Table 5.2: Variables Determining Children’s Preferences in TV Advertisements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables Determining Children’s Preferences in TV Advertisements</th>
<th>Much appreciation</th>
<th>Appreciation</th>
<th>Little or no appreciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Realistic</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrealistic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humorous</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Celebrity endorsement</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Previews and Movie trailers</td>
<td>X</td>
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6 Findings and Conclusions

The final chapter will now be presented with overall findings which answers the research questions. Each research question will be reviewed with findings from the empirical data and lead to specific conclusions. The chapter will end with implications for theory, practitioners and future research.

6.1 How can Children’s Perspective on TV Advertising in Sweden be described?

Children’s perspective in Sweden can be described in four P’s, product, parents, peers, and pester power. They are all an outcome of TV advertisement.

Product is the main item brought forward in the TV advertisement and catching the child’s attention. The advertisement makes the child look for the product in the store and internet. They are also eager to tell their friends and family about what they want. If the product is something to have and if they are sure that it will meet their expectations they will also consider spending their own money.

Moving on to behavior towards parents, which evolves after a child sees a product on TV. The behavior can be described as begging, negotiating and in some cases showing the best side of them to get the desired product.

Peer influence had a bigger influence than we thought it would have. They are highly affected if the majority of the class has the product shown on TV. We also found that the more people talk about it, the more they want it. But following the “cool” person or being bullied for not having a product shows week relations.

Pester power is used when they want a desired product from TV. A strong relation is also shown that pester increases when children watch more TV.

Based on these findings the following conclusions can be made.

- Behavior towards parents such as begging and negotiating evolves when a child catches interest for a product shown on TV.
- Children’s interest for a product shown on TV is dependent on peers.
- Children pester and the more they watch TV the more they use their pester power.

6.2 Children’s Perception of Different Types of Advertising

The matter of reality vs. fiction is of major concern when dealing with advertisements aimed towards children. For advertisers to be able to reach the appropriate target market knowledge about the ability to tell reality from fiction is crucial. The subject will always be of current interest and children seem to have no problem separating the two, neither avoiding to fall for the vivid and manipulative minds of media advertisers’. Children not only scope out the traps and manipulative ways of bending the truth but also feel that the more fake the commercial, the less reliable.
Findings and Conclusions

Often the brand name or a specific product has greater impact on the children than the actual commercial and its components. However we found humorous commercials greatly appreciated and always entertaining. And the closer the commercial came to represent reality the better ratings the children gave them.

We found that the most popular TV-ads to watch to be previews for upcoming television shows alongside movie trailers and the children found commercials disrupting their favorite TV-shows incredible annoying. We determined this finding to be in accordance with the fact that the children preferred to watch real life situations which in turn was related to the fact that they seemed to prefer commercials which were able to mirror the truth. At this age the children were rather conscious about what media or any type of advertising for that matter was all about, and their perspective on were highly influenced by the four affecting P’s mentioned above.

TV-programs looking out for consumers and breaking the mystery and sometimes glamour that TV-ads reflect were much appreciated and well respected by the children who once again communicated the children’s beliefs in reality, truth and honesty. How they described Snoopy’s owner Charlie Brown to be more real than Superman were based on his superhero powers although after some reasoning the children came to the conclusion that even though Charlie Brown is an average dog owners who lacks the superpowers of Superman his human features were fictive and abnormal and said to be resembling a premature baby with his round face and single piece of hair.

Boys liked advertiser’s use of celebrity endorsement by national and international professional soccer players whereas the girls had less interest in commercials featuring celebrities. However the girl’s opinion in this case may have been negatively influenced by the featured celebrity in particular. They also believed it do be inappropriate to advertise fragrances in TV commercials where one cannot get a real sense of the core product here being the scent, non the less associating them with celebrities for promotion purposes reassuring no one that he or she actually wears the perfume him or herself. Further more commercials featuring young women’s fashion seemed to be a hit supported by the fact that they were realistic.

Based on these findings the following conclusions can be made.

- Children’s show ability to distinguish between reality and fiction is reflected in what TV commercials they tend to prefer to watch.
- Children have a preference in realistic commercials.
- The more television they watched the more affected they seemed to be by TV-advertisements.
- Children’s overall opinion is that you can not trust everything you see in a TV commercial.

6.3 Implications & Recommendations

The findings and conclusions presented in the previous chapter laid out a foundation for implications useful for application of our study. We will start by presenting implications for
Findings and Conclusions

theory followed by implications for practitioners concluding with implications for further research.

6.3.1 Implication for Theory
The purpose of this study was to provide a better understanding of how television advertising affects young children. We started out by exploring, describing and beginning to explain children’s perception of TV advertising based on our conceptual framework including the literature we reviewed, allowing us to answer our research questions. We used a focus group to explore children’s perception of advertisement and described children’s perceptions of different types of advertisements and begun to explain while answering out research questions.

6.3.2 Implications for Practitioners
Implications for practitioners are suggestions to management based on our data and findings. The following implications are based on the empirical data, analysis, conclusion presented in the thesis.

- Regarding peer influence, management should try to incorporate the sense of belonging into the ads since trends in the classroom tend to further reinforce kids to desire a certain product.

- Regarding parents and pester power, managements must also try to target the parents since they have significance influence on their children’s behavior and attitudes towards advertisement.

- Regarding types and characteristics of advertisements, management should continue or start to use humor, again authenticity was a major concern and we discovered that many times reality was more appealing to children’s minds/eyes than superficiality and science fiction.

Furthermore, children’s general ideas about TV-commercials are that they interrupt the TV shows and therefore it might help to keep the message short in order to not loose the children’s attention. The TV media placement must also be well thought-out since it is the first step to be able to reach the target market.

6.3.3 Recommendations for Future Research
In conducting this study we came across areas that fell outside of the purpose of our research, some of the areas that may be of interest for future research are listed below.

- A study on gender aspects regarding TV advertisements.
- Multiple case studies or simply, just using more than one focus group to be able to conduct a more in depth study.
- What makes children prefer certain ads only in relation to the design and or production?
- Conducting a similar type study comparing children in two separate countries.
List of References


Appendices

Appendix A
Interview guide

1. Basic info
Age?
Number?
Gender?
School?

RQ1: How can children’s perspective on TV advertising in Sweden be described?

Product
- What do you do if you see a product that you like on TV?
  - Do you search for it for example in the store or on the internet?
  - Do you compare it to substitute that is cheaper, better or equal?
  - Do you take you own money to buy it.
  - Do you have anything to add?

Parents
- Can you say any specific behaviour that evolves toward your parents when you want a product shown on TV?
  - Do you negotiate to get what you want?
  - Do you show your best side of yourself to make you deserve it?
  - Do you have anything to add?

Peers
- Are you influenced by the peer? And in what way?
  - Are you influenced to wanting the product if class mates are talking about the product?
  - Do you want the product more if you see the “cool” person having it?
  - Has there been situation where you have been bullied for not having the product that is shown on TV.
  - Do you have anything to add?

Pester power
- Have you ever used pestered power towards your parents?
  - How do you pester?
  - Do you pester until you get what you want?
  - Do you pester more if you watch more TV? For example just before Christmas.
  - Do you have anything to add?
RQ2: How are different types of advertising being perceived?

- **Reality vs. Fiction**
  - Do you think you are able to distinguishing between reality and fiction?
  - Who is more real, Spiderman or Carl and why?
  - Can you believe everything you see in a TV-commercial?

  Do you have anything to add?

- **Preferences in advertisements**
  - What Type of TV-commercials do you prefer to watch and why?

  - Animated
  - Humor
  - Pretty/Cute
  - Exciting
  - Realistic
  - Fictive

  Do you have anything to add?

  - What type pf TV-commercials are more memorable to you and why?

  - Animated
  - Humor
  - Pretty/Cute
  - Exciting
  - Realistic
  - Fictive

  Do you have anything to add?
Appendix B
Intervju guide Svensk version

1. Bas fakta
Ålder?
Antal?
Kön?
Skola?

RQ1: Hur kan barnens perspektiv på Tv reklam i Sverige beskrivas?

Produkt
- Vad gör du när du ser en produkt i en reklam som du gillar?
  - Letar du efter den i till exempel affären eller på Internet?
  - Jämför du den med en likvärdig produkt som är antingen billigare, bättre eller likadan?
  - Tar du dina egna pengar och går och köper den?
  - Har du nått att tillägga?

Föräldrar
- Kan du saga ett typiskt beteende som du har mot dina föräldrar när du vill ha en produkt i en reklam?
  - Förhandlar du för att få det du vill ha?
  - Visar du din bästa sida av dig själv för att det ska se ut som att du förtjänar produkten?
  - Har du nått att tillägga?

Kamrat grupp
- Påverkas du av dina klass kamrater? På vilket sätt?
  - Har det hänt att du vill ha en produkt som en klass kamrat pratar om?
  - Vill du ha produkten mer om du ser den tuffa personen i skolan ha den?
  - Finns det situationer där du har blivit retad för att du inte har den produkten som visas/visades på tv?
  - Har du nått att tillägga?

Tjat
- Har du någonsin tjatat på dina föräldrar?
  - Hur går det till?
  - Tjatar du tills du får det du vill ha?
  - Har du nått att tillägga?
RQ2: Hur uppfattas olika typer av tv reklam?

- **Verklighet kontra fiktion**
  Anser du dig själv kunna skilja på verkligt och overkligt?
  Vem tycker du är mer verklig, snobbens husse Carl eller stålmannen och varför?
  Kan man tro på allt man ser på TV-reklamen?
  varför /varför inte?

  Har ni något att tillägga?

  - **Preferenser**
  Vilken typ av TV-reklam föredrar du att titta på?
  varför/varför inte?

  - Tecknad, dataanimerad
  - Rolig reklam
  - Snygg/fin
  - Spännande
  - Verklig
  - Overklig (ex. Sagan om ringen)

  Har ni något att tillägga?

  - Vilken typ av TV reklam kommer du bäst ihåg?

  - Tecknad, dataanimerad
  - Rolig reklam
  - Snygg/fin
  - Spännande
  - Verklig
  - Overklig (ex. Sagan om ringen)

  Har ni något att tillägga?