
Miscellaneous

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Audiovisual content with advertising intention in children's videos on YouTube: the case of the *Soy Luna* series

Abstract

Advertising on the web has taken new forms (Malin, 2011; Susarla, Oh & Tan, 2012). In this context, videos which appear playful but which have an advertising objective, have positioned themselves as the new trend (Craig & Duncan, 2017; Marsh, 2015) and have penetrated the web space for an increasing number of Internet users, particularly among children (Davies, Coleman & Livingstone, 2014). However, the type and variety of videos with advertising intention that YouTube leads users to when searching for generic audiovisual content for children's audience is unclear. This paper uses a mixed methods approach to analyze the content and visuals present in undercover advertising videos from a sample of 143 videos prompted by the keywords *Soy Luna*, a popular Disney Channel series. The main findings are that three types of sources provide this type of content, namely official channels, YouTubers channels devoting space to the series and its merchandising, and to a greater extent toy exhibition channels. Also, the format appearance and characteristics of the videos make it difficult for users to tell them apart from advertising, as they introduce a novel narrative, incorporate playful twists and appear to be associated to the series. These features go beyond the use of YouTube standardized advertising formats, such as graphic ads, overlays or advertising spots which can be skipped.

Keywords

Advertising, children, internet, new media, video, YouTube, Disney.

1. Introduction

Screens are increasingly taking up more leisure time among children and teens, time that otherwise would be spent playing outdoors or socializing with other minors (Monteagudo, 2007; Pérez Alonso-Geta & Sánchez Peris, 2010). This results in high mediatization of leisure among children, particularly among those ages 10 to 14 (Feijoo, 2015), with exposure to mobile screens being linked to lower parental regulation and higher risks (Stald *et al.*, 2014). By the time they turn 10, 25% of these precocious generations, own a cellphone, 25% of which have internet access, a figure that increases to 93% among 15-year-old users (INE, 2016). Since 2013, in Europe it has been found that, children have access to the Internet from their smartphones from a young age, with 60% of children between 13 and 16 years of age (Stald *et al.*, 2014) having internet access from their phones. In Spain in 2016, mobile internet access surpassed

computer access for the first time, with 95.2% of people having mobile internet access, and 67% of children between the ages of 10 and 15 owning a mobile phone (INE, 2016).

As a result of the incorporation of technologies at an early age, children these ages have been described exhibiting autonomous and self-taught traits. They freely and independently access screens and use them mostly when they are alone (Bringué & Sádaba, 2009). This is not a neutral use of the Internet, quite the contrary, and what they experience shapes how they face the world of consumption and advertising (Trinidad & Zlachesvsky, 2013). Studies regarding children and technologies have mainly focused on access, uses, abilities (Livingstone 2003; 2009), parental mediation (Carlson & Grossbart, 1990; Livingstone & Helsper, 2007) and social and psychological effects (Correa, 2010; Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008), which means minors' exposure to online advertising content has received less attention. This complex and emerging phenomenon arising from technological convergence leads to a participatory culture in which the lines between producer and consumer are blurred, which gives way to a process of collective consumption, involving industries, brands and audiences alike (Jenkins, 2006). New trends appear such as videos featuring toy unboxing, a YouTube genre dedicated to the unpacking, demonstration and use of toys, often using a still camera and narrated by children or adults pretending to be children (Craig & Duncan, 2017). There are also *vlogs* or homemade YouTube videos that provide product information, opinions, demonstrations and experiences, often made by users and which are approved of and disseminated through brand channels (Diwanji & Lee, 2017). This content is disguised as playful instances and, in most cases, gives way to what is called covert advertising. That is, they violate the principle of identification or authenticity that "basically seeks to ensure advertising content in the media is separate [...] so that recipients can clearly identify it for what it is: advertising" (Aznar, 2005, p. 92).

This phenomenon occurs mostly on the YouTube platform, intended for video consumption and sharing, and where children "link content more actively with their fantasies and desires [...] participate in popular culture and step into the market world as potential consumers" (Trinidad & Zlachesvsky, 2013, p. 218). We are describing an emerging scenario, in which mobile devices play an important role, and become an advertising media unbound by regulation (Chen, Zhu, Xu & Zhou, 2013; Craig & Duncan, 2017). The authors base their research on the premise that audiovisual elements permeate our day to day, to the point of being considered "social facts" which cannot be ignored, which have a fundamental impact on economic, political and social life (Loizos, 2000) and whose internet-mediated penetration reaches children ages 10 to 14. This article aims to explore theoretically and empirically the kinds of videos containing advertising intention accessed by children while searching for audiovisual content aimed at children viewing Youtube.

2. Children and advertising on the Internet

Countless economic and social changes derive from the technological evolution. In particular, the introduction of new means of communication has disrupted the pillars of the audiovisual and advertising sector, leading to the disintegration of the leadership of consolidated media (Andersen *et al.*, 2008; Sandberg, 2011). Unidirectionality, as proven by conventional media, does not suffice for critical and demanding consumers who are increasingly abandoning unidirectional communication in search for other means of information, entertainment and expression (Valvi & West, 2015; Wang, Kim & Malthouse, 2016). While brands make the most of mobile devices' portability, interactivity, immediacy and ubiquity (Duffett, 2015; Wang *et al.*, 2016), the literature on childhood and advertising on these mobile media indicates that differentiation and categorization of advertising messages is rather chaotic. Researchers highlight an apparent confusion between content and purely advertising messages, partly as a result of the recent implementation of apps and new platforms which are used as advertising media, together with the lack of regulatory bases which regulate their use (An & Kang, 2015;

Terlutter & Capella, 2013). Moreover, age-based cataloging systems for services or content in apps ignore advertising messages that are inserted in these apps (Chen, Zhu, Xu & Zhey, 2013). This has led the scientific community to question whether children are effectively able to identify possible commercial intentions in certain games available on multiple platforms (An & Kong, 2015). The current situation involves “blurring of the boundaries between advertising and entertainment” (Terlutter & Capella, 2013, p.109), something which can be easily encountered while browsing online products mainly targeted at minors. Thus, in a scenario in which children regularly access mobile screens and participate early on in media, some authors have noted that we face ill-defined rules, and that there is a need to provide information to families and educators on the access to and use of mobile devices among this highly vulnerable segment (Craig & Duncan, 2017).

On the other hand, the evidence shows that the consumer profile and imitative style of children is of special interest for the advertising market (McNeal, 1992, Pérez Alonso-Geta & Sánchez Peris, 2010; Ruiz, 2011). These features derive from children's intrinsic lack of patience for delays, and their need for immediate satisfaction (Salgado Carrión, 2006). The interest of the advertising market also hinges on the fact that children represent three types of market: primary (products acquired directly), future (knowledge and development of attitudes towards brands), and their influence on parental purchasing decisions (Bringué, 2001; McNeal, 1992; Ruiz, 2011). This influence arises from the impact children's opinions have on family purchases, a feature increasingly triggered by recent sociological changes such as minors' access to higher family income given higher female employment; delay in childbearing until financial stability is achieved; an increase in the number of separated parents (who are more inclined to give in to children's whims); and the increasing participation of grandparents in raising grandchildren as well as their sharing available income with the children's nuclear families (Salgado Carrión, 2006).

3. Methodology

The research question this article seeks to answer is What type and variety of videos with advertising intention can children access when searching YouTube for children's audiovisual content. The children's content selected for the research was the television series *Soy Luna*, an Argentinian series produced by the Disney Latin America channel and which has been a great success since it was first aired, both in the region and in Spain in March and April 2016, respectively. From its debut, the show attracted more than 2.3 million viewers in the region and led the time slot for girls aged 4 to 17 (Figueroa, 2017). In Spain, the premiere reached 380,000 viewers on the Disney Channel, doubling the average number of viewers on the channel (Costas, 2016). This success lasted throughout the first season, whose last episode broke ratings records in Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Colombia, Peru and Brazil (Televisión.com.ar, 2016). *Soy Luna* is also highly present in social networks and associated products and merchandising, as well as references to the main character's trademark skates. Catalogued as a phenomenon by several specialized media, the series has a YouTube channel called *Soy Luna Express*, generated by Disney Spain in which a well-known teenaged YouTuber presents the daily progress of the series and comments on the best scenes (Martín, 2016). Thus, inasmuch as it reaches the target population for this study (children and teenagers aged 8 to 17), it is strongly present in social networks, and has developed associated products make of *Soy Luna* the ideal series for this research project.

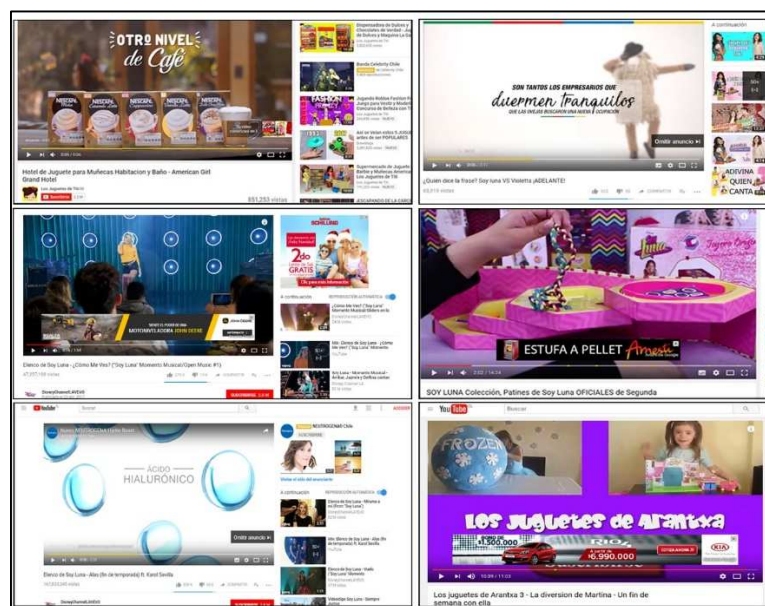
This paper's *qualitative design provides* tools to analyze context-specific phenomena, focusing on the “how” and allowing for a contextualized interpretation of the data collected (Berger, 1998; Esterberg, 2002; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). An exploratory descriptive approach was chosen, as this study examines an emerging problem, for which literature is scarce and it is expected to lay the foundations for future studies on the subject (Bernal, 2010). Its descriptive nature comes from the characterization of the components present in each video

which, in turn, allows for the global analysis of these elements (Hernández, Fernández & Baptista, 2010). A non-probabilistic strategy was used for sample design. First, a simple search on the YouTube home page with the keywords *Soy Luna* was conducted. The hits from the first page of the search (sorted by relevance) were taken as a sample, that is, a total of 18 entries (level 1). In addition, every video associated with these first videos was also incorporated into the sample (associated video category: level 2). The search was conducted the second week of July 2017 and both level videos were downloaded, to ensure a stable data set, as search results differ depending on browser's day and history (Silverman, 2013). In total, the sample consisted of 143 videos (advertisements and non-advertisements). The number of videos analyzed was concordant with the saturation of categories, nature and understanding of the phenomenon, and the collection and analysis capacity of the researchers (Bernal, 2010).

A qualitative analysis of audiovisual content was conducted. This allowed the researchers to grasp their meaning and placing the videos in context, and allowed for interpretation rather than quantification (Andreu, 2002). Content analysis has more than one definition, and thus, for the purposes of this research it is understood as "a technique for making inferences through the objective and systematic identification of specific characteristics of messages" (Holsti, 1969, p. 14, cited in Bauer, 2000, p. 133).

It is necessary to state that the objective of this search was to find audiovisual content of the series itself and, from that point on, identify the kind of advertising messages the viewers (children, in this case) receives when conducting this specific search. In addition, to ensure clarity, it is understood that videos with advertising content are considered to be those in which a product (in this case toys or accessories) becomes relevant by means of demonstration or exhibition. In brief, it includes any videos in which the aforementioned product is the main focus or the central axis of the audiovisual content. This definition for advertising content is different from the advertising strategy in which YouTube videos are used as advertising support, that is, the channel is used as a vessel for commercial messages. This research project did not analyze the latter type of advertising presence; however, it is worth mentioning that most of the reviewed videos served as advertising support. This is accomplished by overlapping ad formats or omitted video ads, promoting goods or services for which the child, *a priori*, would not be an objective public, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Video capture with advertisements.



Source: YouTube.com.

Following Bell (2002) the channel information for each video was encoded. Namely, this included channel description (subscribers, visualizations, creation date), video description (publication date, number of views, number of like/dislike descriptors, number of comments). For those containing advertising, the following technical variables were described: appearance of the image –this refers to whether the image was real or animated; video quality –amateur or professional; properties of the image –color, types of shots, structure and assembly–, with special emphasis on the agents that are in the picture and their level of prominence; narration and/or exhibition –whether a story is told through the products or exhibited; in musical terms –presence of audio, background music; and finally, postproduction effects and overprinting on the image. This data provided for video feature analysis, and thus for the systematization of the units of analysis and a continuous image interpretation (Andreu, 2002) allowing for inferences of advertising intention.

4. Results

Next, the results of the content analysis proposed in this research are presented, organized according to the variables previously described. The first part is a precise contextualization of the sample size taken for this exploratory study. Special care was devoted to analyzing the “channel” and “product” units advertised, given their impact on the subsequent differentiation and classification of the videos selected for this analysis.

As mentioned, this research focused on the videos considered as promotional, given their content. Taking this criterion as a reference, the 18 videos on the first page of the search were classified as shown in following table:

Table 1: Description of the 1st search page on YouTube with the keywords *Soy Luna*.

N°	Video title	Description	Channel	Channel description
1	<i>Elenco de Soy Luna - Siempre Juntos (Soy Luna Momento Musical/ensayo del)</i>	NON ADVERTISING - Series' musical sequence	DisneyChannel LAVEVO	Disney Channel Latinoamérica'a official music channel
2	<i>Elenco de Soy Luna - Alas (fin de temporada) ft. Karol Sevilla</i>	NON ADVERTISING - Series' musical sequence	DisneyChannel LAVEVO	Disney Channel Latinoamérica'a official music channel
3	<i>Elenco de Soy Luna - No Te Pido Mucho (Soy Luna Momento Musical/Luna)</i>	NON ADVERTISING - Series' musical sequence	DisneyChannel LAVEVO	Disney Channel Latinoamérica'a official music channel
4	<i>Customiza tus Patines como Luna Soy Luna</i>	ADVERTISING – Series' official skate customization	DisneyChannel LA	Disney Channel Latinoamérica'a official music channel
5	<i>Elenco de Soy Luna - La Vida es un Sueño (Soy Luna Momento Musical/Open Music #1)</i>	NON ADVERTISING - Series' musical sequence	DisneyChannel LAVEVO	Disney Channel Latinoamérica'a official music channel
6	<i>Soy Luna - Sobre Ruedas</i>	NON ADVERTISING - Series' musical sequence	Soy Luna TV	Fans-created and fans-targeting channel
7	<i>Elenco de Soy Luna - Valiente (Soy Luna Momento Musical/Open Music despedida)</i>	NON ADVERTISING - Series' musical sequence	DisneyChannel LAVEVO	Disney Channel Latinoamérica'a official music channel
8	<i>♥ DIY: Fidget Spinner Reversible de SOY LUNA y Simón ó Matteo ♥</i>	ADVERTISING – Spinner customization using series accessories	Alexa C	Youtuber
9	<i>Ruggero Pasquarelli - Princesa (Soy Luna Momento Musical)</i>	NON ADVERTISING - Series' musical sequence	DisneyChannel LAVEVO	Disney Channel Latinoamérica'a official music channel

10	<i>Alas: la primera canción de Soy Luna</i>	NON ADVERTISING - Series' musical sequence	DisneyChannel LA	Disney Channel Latinoamérica's official music channel
11	<i>Soy Luna Canción: Eres - (Luna y Simón) Karol y Michael - Letra /DanielitaSoyLuna</i>	NON ADVERTISING - Series' musical sequence	Danielita Kawaii	Youtuber
12	<i>Soy Luna 2 - Vives En Mi (Momento Musical)</i>	NON ADVERTISING - Series' musical sequence	Soy Luna TV	Fans-created and fans-targeting channel
13	<i>Elenco de Soy Luna - Fush, ¡Te Vas! (Soy Luna Momento Musical/Open Music #1)</i>	NON ADVERTISING - Series' musical sequence	DisneyChannel LAVEVO	Disney Channel Latinoamérica's official music channel
14	<i>Huevo Sorpresa Gigante de Soy Luna de Plastilina Play Doh en Español</i>	ADVERTISING – Surprise toys	Casa Mágica de Juguetes	Toy exhibiting channel
15	<i>Soy Luna 2 - Luna llora porque Matteo no llega - Capítulo 26</i>	NON ADVERTISING - Series' content	DeliveryVideos	Account closed for infringing copyright rights
16	<i>Soy Luna En Vivo: Radio Disney - Completo (HD)</i>	NON ADVERTISING – Broadcasting of part of a live concert by series' cast	DC Central	Fans page for Disney Channel LA
17	<i>¿Quién dice la frase? Soy Luna VS Violetta ¡ADELANTE!</i>	NON ADVERTISING - Contesto n the series	Comedian	Fans page – series tests and games
18	<i>Elenco de Soy Luna - ¿Cómo Me Ves? (Soy Luna Momento Musical/Open Music #1)</i>	NON ADVERTISING - Series' musical sequence	DisneyChannel LAVEVO	Disney Channel Latinoamérica's official music channel

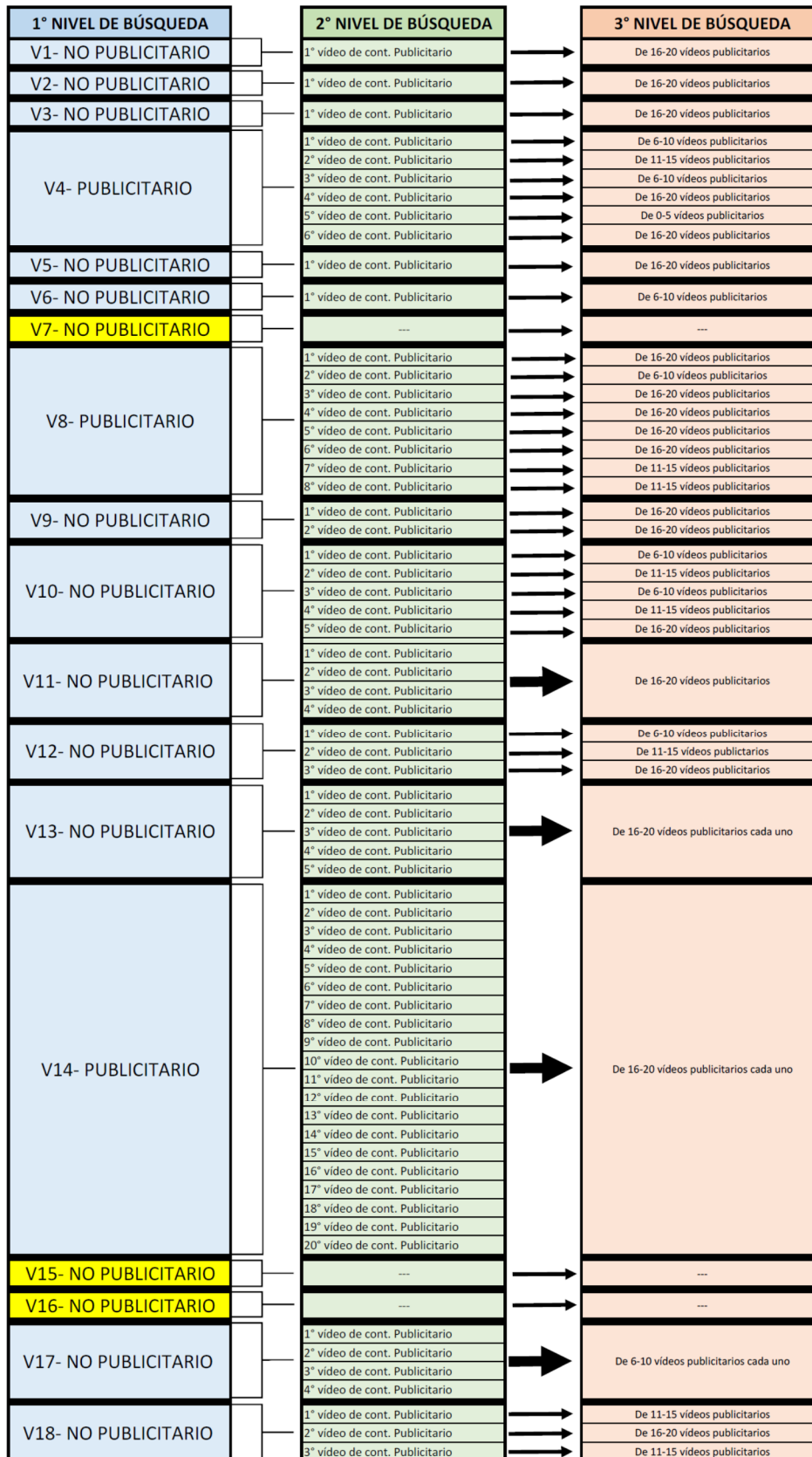
Source: Author.

In this first level of samples, the pieces classified as “non-advertising,” 14 of the 18 videos, are series content, mainly musical moments uploaded by Disney's official channel LA VEVO and by fans. Three videos were classified as advertising, all thematically related to the series.

In order to “follow the trail” of advertising content for this project, the sample was expanded to a second level of analysis also observing the list of the 20 suggested videos that Youtube lists to the right of the highlighted video and which are automatically played (default), selecting again for those with commercial intent.

Thus, from three videos with advertising content in level 1, the analysis of level 2 revealed 65 advertising videos. It should be noted that videos classified as “non-advertising” also presented audiovisual pieces with promotional content in their suggested list, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Ranking of the selected advertising video.



Source: Author.

As we move from the first to the second level of analysis, advertising grows exponentially, from three entries (level 1) to 65 (level 2), as can be seen in Figure 2. A dramatic increase is observed when level 3 is analyzed (that is, YouTube-generated list of videos suggested by the 65 videos of level 2). Analysis shows that videos that were classified as advertising brought about more advertising videos in subsequent levels. A tendency to repeat the same pieces of advertising in the different entries analyzed was also seen: thus, 21 of the 65 videos analyzed in the second level of study are repeats, which is to say one in three videos appeared more than once on average.

4.1. YouTube channels with "advertising content"

The analysis of channels hosting content defined as advertising was a key element in this research. Three channel profiles show promotional videos as can be seen from the analyzed sample:

Table 2: List of channels found in 2nd level of search with advertising videos.

	Official channels	YouTuber channels	Toy channels
1	Disney Channel LA	Annie Vega	Casa Mágica de Juguetes
2	Decorando pasteles Oficial*	Alexa C	Los juguetes de Titi
3		Pasteles y pinceles	Juguetes Chulos
4		Lola Land	Unboxing Fantástico
5		Bianki Place	Mejores Juguetes
6		Tv Ana Emilia	Villa Juguetes
7		LauraTrev1	Juguetes Fantásticos
8			Superdivertilandia
9			Diver+
10			Mundo de los Juguetes
11			Juguetes y Sorpresas
12			PomPom Toys
13			Juguetes Felices
14			Sorpresas Divertidas

Source: Author.

- Official channels: advertising content is presented in the form of promotional products for the series. Emphasis is placed on the original skates worn by the protagonist, which are also the symbol around which the story revolves. Advertising content is not presented as direct reference, but as tutorials, tips, and tricks to help users customize their official skates so as to resemble those of the main characters of the series.

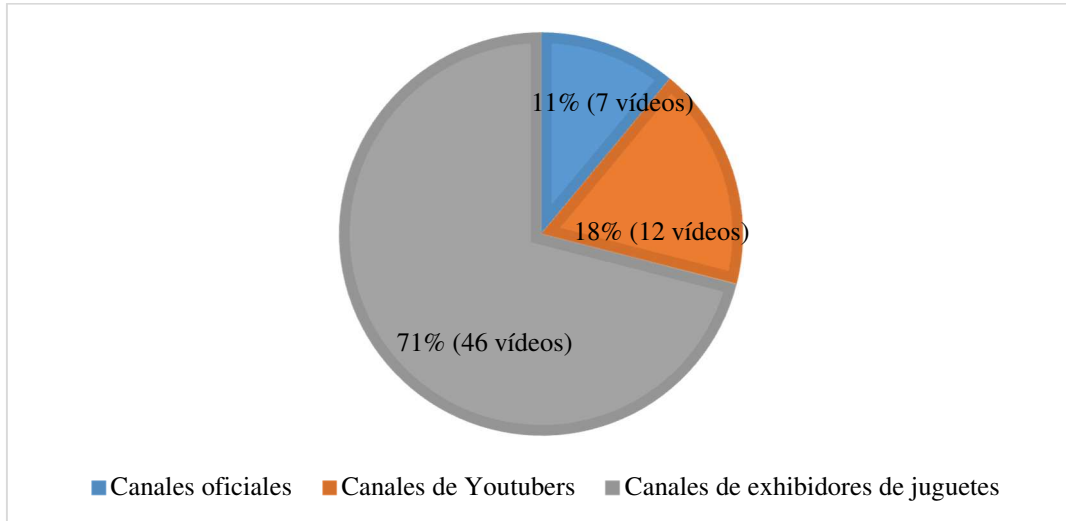
- YouTuber channels, led by girls of the same age as the viewers of this youth series. Their commercial messages are along the same line as the official channels, that is, they promote merchandising from the series in a warm and personal way, with the official skates holding a prominent role. This is the case of Annie Vega's channel¹. In one video she appears to be very excited after purchasing the aforementioned skates at a toy store and, in another, she shows how she took them out for inaugural run. In sharing these moments, she builds a continuity strategy on a consumption strategy.

- Toy exhibition or toy unboxing channels: these mainly depict toy unpacking, review and/or demonstrations. Some also include games and contests in which toy exhibition also holds a pivotal role or stories in which dolls reveal the features and introduce viewers to complementary products. Videos from this channel type do not aim to promote products

¹ Annie Vega's channel, available at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6l4DRGozMrd5eiBZAmGe5Q> (Accessed on 20th December 2017).

related to *Soy Luna*; however, their metadata include a list of popular names of toys and series and thus, they appear in the search. In doing so, they enhance the promotion of toys and accessories beyond those linked to the brand of the series. This content positioning strategy endows toy exhibition channels with an increased “flow” of advertising content, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Video sample distribution per host channel.

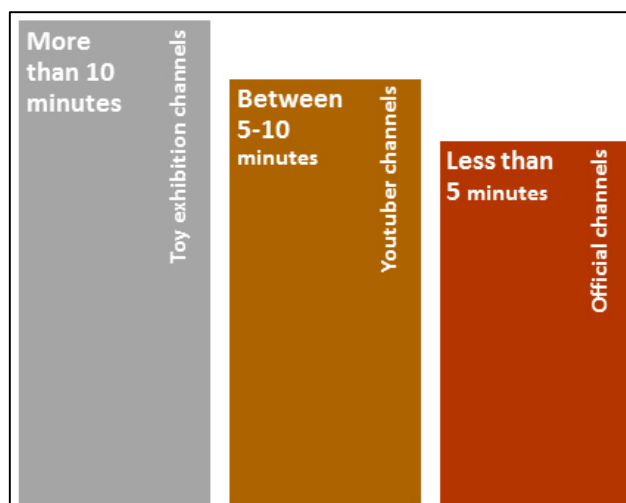


Source: Author.

4.2. Time length

Time length of an advertising video is directly influenced by the type of host channel. By default, YouTube, requires uploaded content to last 15 minutes or less. Longer videos can be uploaded after requesting and being granted permission. Keeping this in mind, the following trend was detected: official channel pieces lasted less than 5 minutes; and Youtuber pieces, between 5 and 10 minutes. However, toy exhibition channel videos (71%) always exceeded 10 minutes, and among these, a considerable number exceeded YouTube’s default 15-minute limit.

Figure 4: Time length of advertising pieces per type of channel.

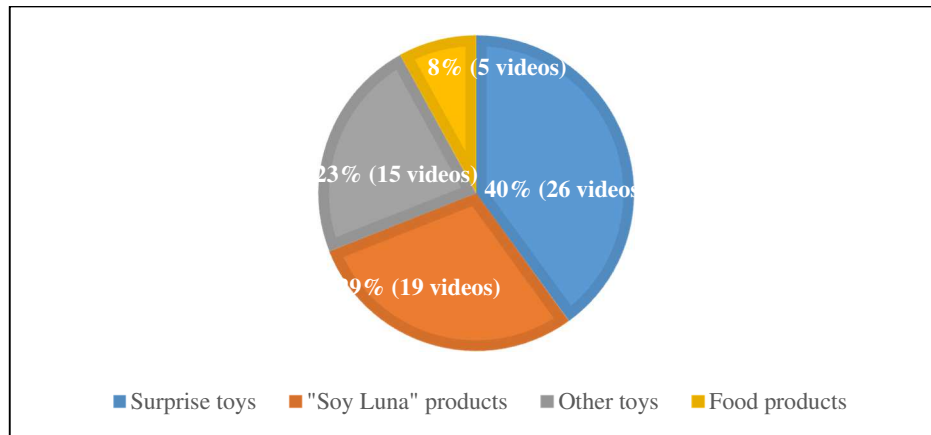


Source: Author.

4.3. Differentiated products and brands

Once the sampled videos characterized as advertising content were reviewed, advertised products (all aimed at children) were subsequently classified into four main types: i) surprise toys, present in 40% of the videos analyzed; ii) *Soy Luna* products, present in 29% of the sample; iii) other toys (mainly spinner and dolls), which were featured in 23% of the videos and iv) food products, found in 8% of the analyzed videos.

Figure 5: Sample video distribution per "advertised" product.



Source: Author.

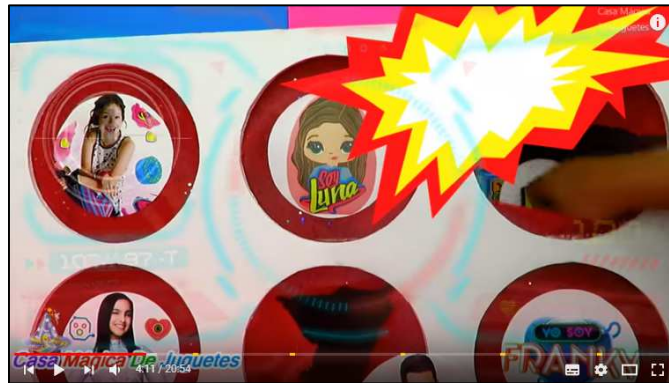
- Surprise toys: these are packages, containers, wrappers, or bags containing small toys to be discovered and opened by the consumer, which build on the surprise effect generated while revealing its unknown content (eggs, boxes or surprise bags). This type of product is shown directly to the camera under the classic technique of unboxing and demonstration.

Figure 6: Screen shot in which surprise toys are exhibited.



Source: YouTube.com.

In this direction, there were cases in which video producers devise games and/or contests to also exhibit the toys following the surprise effect strategy. As an example, one of the analyzed pieces used a roulette for on-screen participant to take turns in the unpacking of a wide assortment of toys and accessories (from miniature Minions figurines to beauty accessories), which incorporated fascination as a key element.

Figure 7: Screen shot displaying games and contests.

Source: YouTube.com.

- *Soy Luna* products predominate in the sample, which is due to the keywords used for the search. As previously mentioned, the most recurrent product are skates whether explicitly (YouTubers acquiring the product and demonstrating their use) or implicitly (Disney Channel tutorials aimed at how to customize the official skates of the series). Likewise, merchandising objects such as school supplies, makeup and, small accessories also appeared during the viewing of the videos, as shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Screen shot displaying *Soy Luna* products.

Source: YouTube.com.

- Other toys: in addition to toys making the most of the surprise effect and those exhibiting the *Soy Luna* brand, a third line of products of interest to a young female audience was identified: dolls and fidget spinners; the former appearing in the foreground, the latter being promoted as is or customized –fidget spinners are a small rotating anti-stress accessory patented in 1993, intended as a tool to reduce anxiety and increase concentration capacity; they became the “it” toy in 2017 among school-aged kids. These audiovisual are distinguishable from other categories as they present a narrative component, that is, in addition to showing the doll’s functions, stories are created (trips, pool afternoons, visits to hotels ...) around said toy which are animated by human hands.

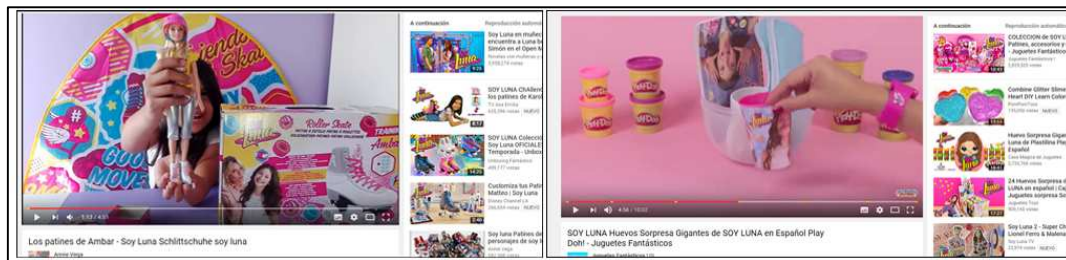
Figure 9: Screen shot of a spinner and a human-animated doll.



Source: YouTube.com.

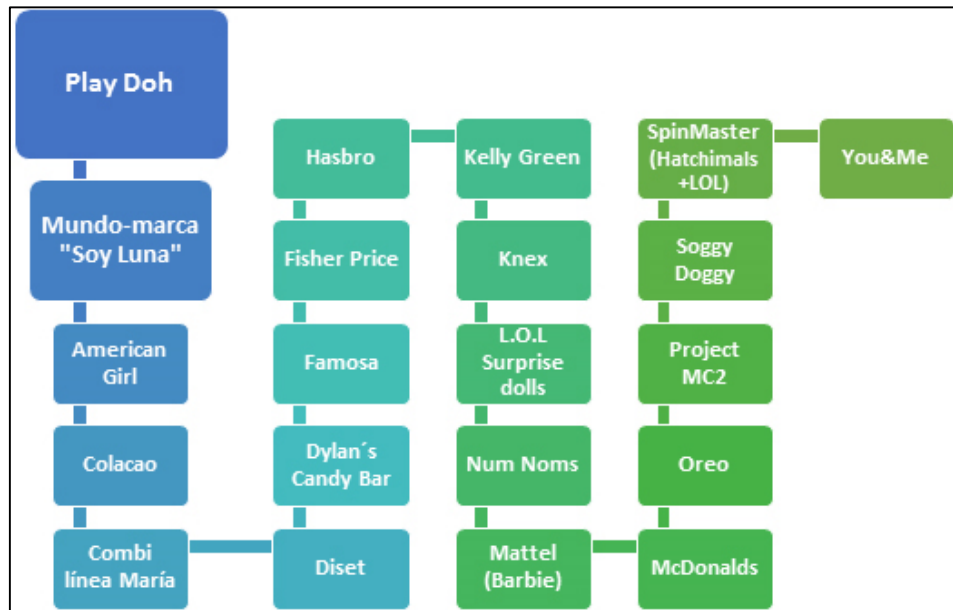
- Food products: food products are present in a smaller proportion than other categories and mostly as sweets such as cookies and, cakes. They promote products and brands (e.g. Oreo, Cola-Cao (a powdered chocolate drink)) as well as ingredients; for instance, as a tutorial for making a spinner-shaped cake. There was one instance of a McDonald's Happy Meal Box, a particularly popular product among children.

Figure 10: Screen shots showing *Soy Luna* licensed products.



Source: YouTube.com.

As part of this research, the brands appearing throughout this study were recorded. Play-Doh and the world-brand of *Soy Luna* (Scolari, 2013) have a strong presence. They appear under a licensing strategy by which certain brands (Play-Doh, Mattel, Diset or Knex) link their product functionality to the prestige and success of a series. This marketing resource benefits both companies, as the brand's products remains present beyond the moment advertisements are aired and the licensed products “grow on” the added value of Luna Valente’s story (Tur Viñes & Ramos, 2008). The list of the brands identified during the viewing of the analyzed videos can be found in Figure 11. Notice that not all articles and products are necessarily related to the series. The only two things they have in common: the target audience (girls) and a goal of advertising consumer products (toys, in this case).

Figure 11: List of brands found in this study.

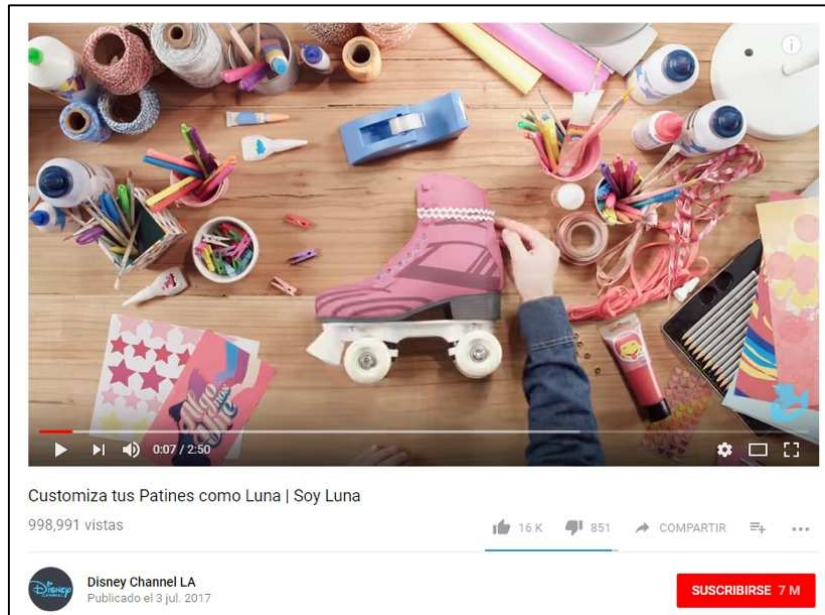
Source: Author.

4.4. Technical analysis of videos

In order to deepen in the content analysis of selected videos, a formal-technical description is presented herein. This is accomplished by looking at each type of channel, considering channels as the main categorization variable influencing other analysis units. Pursuing an audiovisual logic, these analysis units were followed: appearance –the use of real or animated figures; quality of production; image processing (color, assembly, agents in the frame); level of narrativity; audio and postproduction.

4.4.1. Official channels

Advertising videos in *Soy Luna's* official channels revolve around merchandising of the series. Professional image quality and post-production effects are used and focus on the product, which resembles being at a toy-“workshop.” There, for example, the auditors can replicate the protagonist's style in terms of skates. The setting appears real, but it is a digitally animated video. By using colors and emulating the youthful style of the series, the videos position the product as a central object, accompanied only by the hands or arms of the actor, generally with a woman wearing the same jacket the protagonist wears. A still camera provides full shots and medium shots, and close-ups set up in a professional montage, in a youthful setting, in the series' logo colors. There is no narration, only music. The procedure is shown as a step-by-step tutorial illustrating how products (spinners, skates) can be modified so that they look exactly like the ones in the series, with the ultimate goal of exhibiting detailed images of products and elements. Postproduction effects are subtle, for instance 360-degree object displays use flashes of light and object animations.

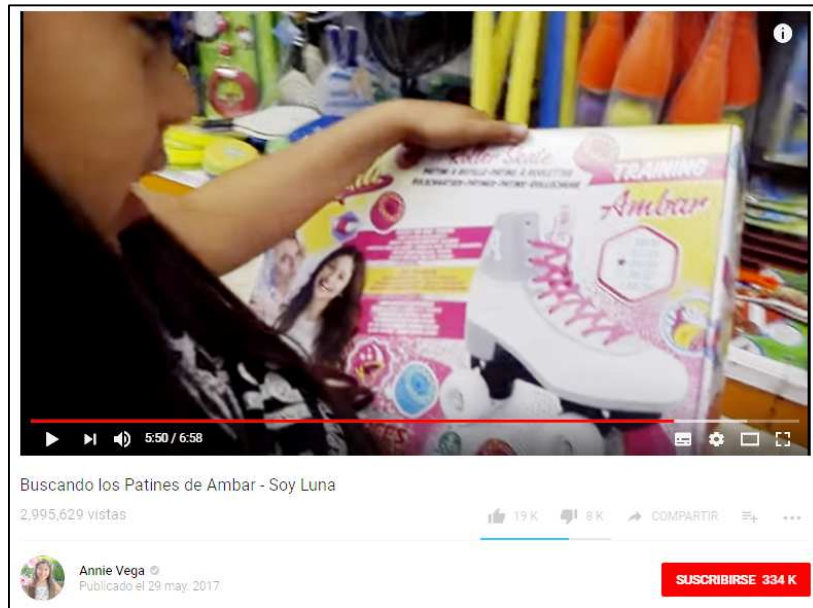
Figure 12: Screen shot of a skate customization tutorial.

Source: YouTube.com.

4.4.2. YouTuber channels

Comparatively, these channels appear to be less professional than official channels. They aim at bringing the protagonist closer to its audience. Produced with a still camera at multiple angles, the protagonist is the YouTuber, who emulates interaction with the viewer by speaking directly to the camera. Some videos do not show the YouTuber directly, though their voice narrates the sequence, and subtitles display the message in the same language that is being spoken. Scenarios range from neutral backgrounds, recognizable domestic areas (living rooms, bedrooms) to outdoors. The narrative incorporates guests or actors. The protagonist always is the YouTuber, who appears with the advertised product. For example, some videos show the skates which are raffled among those hitting the “like” button and subscribing to the channels. These videos highlight the properties of the products and relate their use or appearance to moments in the series. Images are accompanied by repetitive music and sound effects. A still camera can be seen, and post-production elements are used to dynamize tunes. For instance, changes from color to black and white, zooming, picture repetition and symbol insertions (e.g. emojis). In general, the presence of these elements increases toward the end of videos, when Twitter and Instagram addresses are usually inserted so as to promote additional social media following of Youtuber images and videos. Video narratives are connected to *Soy Luna* series merchandising, product displaying, but detached from its storyline.

Figure 13: Screen shots of a Youtuber purchasing *Soy Luna* skates.



Source: YouTube.com.

4.4.3. Display channels for toys

These homemade-looking videos are notable because they use a centered still camera and are free of postproduction. Viewers can only see people's hands and part of the arms, as if they belonged to the viewers themselves. The central focus and key elements of these videos are the toys being displayed. The videos include a playful narrative, and may begin with unboxing the toy, occasionally using high-speed video effects. Soundwise, they include repetitive background music and the voices of those interacting with the toys. Images are clean, free of inserted elements, the story-telling narrative is based on the toys, and highlights their positive features. There can be one or more people, for example, an adult woman and a girl, or two adults and a girl, commenting on the most characteristic aspects of the products, acting surprised, and pretending this playful dynamic is their first contact with the product.

Table 3: Technical description of videos containing advertising per channel.

VARIABLES	CHANNEL TYPE		
	OFFICIAL	YOUTUBERS	TOY EXHIBITORS
APPEARANCE	Real	Real	Real
QUALITY	Professional	Semi-profesional	Amateur
IMAGE	Color	Color	Color
	Takes and montage variety	Long takes/ frontal stills	Front-facing still camera
	Frame focuses on: product	Frame focuses on: YouTuber+product	Frame focuses on: product+ voice's hands
NARRATION/ EXHIBITION	Narration and exhibition (tutorials)	Exhibition	Exhibition
AUDIO	Off-voice + music	Environmental sound	Environmental sound + music
POSTPRODUCTION	Edited	Slightly edited with cuts and overprinting	Slightly edited with cuts, simple special effects and overprinting

Source: Author.

5. Discussion

The main point to reflect on is the amount of advertising messages that appear from a YouTube search originally intended at viewing content from the *Soy Luna* series. Right from the beginning, at level 1 searches, users are exposed to promotional productions. On Disney Channel Latino, by the fourth hit, videos exhibit the series official skates. Although whether defining this type of content is advertising and whether this categorization defined by the authors is applicable to other types of research is arguable, little doubt remains that entertainment is not the ultimate purpose of these videos. It is rather to demonstrate the features and functionalities of products and toys related to the series. The fine line delimiting what is series content and what is advertising is something that even adult users are only able to appreciate once they have begun to view the video, and not before. Compared to more classic digital advertising formats, in which overlapping ads and video ads can be skipped, viewers are not explicitly warned about this new format. Inaccuracy in advertising content cataloging has also been reported in other recent digital formats such as advergaming or the use of apps as promotional support (An & Kang, 2015; Chen, Zhu, Xu & Zhey, 2013; Terlutter & Capella, 2013). Thus, there is a need to reflect on the desirability of going further and questioning whether children viewers, series' target audience, are able to identify these plentiful commercial intentions which gradually increase as the user continues to click into deeper hyperlink levels or the default autoplay continues to play.

It is also interesting to note that the effort put into adapting the advertising formats and "integrating" promotional content into the routines and digital habits of the youngest viewers, ends up resorting to the same conventional marketing strategies used to attract user attention in general. McNeal (1992) categorized predominant child needs per degree of importance and per age (achievement, affiliation, autonomy, change, exhibition, game, perception, attendance). These features define the behavior of child consumers' attention. Children always seek to satisfy several needs in one action, which is why a significant proportion of the analyzed advertising content alludes to both the need to play, as well as other types of needs such to show, perceive or change. This is accomplished employing presentation techniques such as by *unboxing* or the surprise effect in many of the toys promoted.

Regarding advertising strategy, these videos resort to basic approaches, in which creativity revolves around the exhibition and demonstration of the product and is presented as an amateur audiovisual production so as to convey closeness to the viewer. Sometimes the techniques used in these videos are reminiscent of those used in *product-placement*. However, the fact the main goal is product exaltation and the lack of insertion of the object into a narrative thread disqualifies them as such. As mentioned earlier, this advertising style which could be defined as primitive, calls upon the promotional messages which characterized mid-20th century advertising. The newer version mainly highlight product functionality, and have merely been adapted to fit into the new communication channels deriving from social networks.

In essence, we are seeing child audiences consuming non pre-identifiable promotional content which has clear and direct commercial messages. We need to know whether this user profile is aware of the type of content it is consuming and the impact and advertising memory it generates among our young. It may be timely and relevant to address these issues in future research.

6. Conclusions

The main issue to be addressed is the level of advertising present and identified while performing a simple search for audiovisual content on YouTube. As shown in Figure 2, promotional content increases in number as the sequence of hyperlinks deepens, more so if the original video being viewed is advertising. In other words, advertising leads to more advertising and, it is here revealed, even the first page of the YouTube search engine (the first

level of analysis) calls up three entries which are classified as promotional based on *Soy Luna* keywords. We could define this situation as an advertising chain exhibiting features that render it, *a priori*, non-distinguishable or measurable by users given that it contains formats that fall beyond what is considered standard and identifiable, such as graphic advertisements, overlays or skippable advertising spots.

In this context, it could be expected that *à la carte* content selection would reduce the level of advertising saturation compared to other mass media not offering this option. However, part of the effectiveness of this selection option is lost, given the presence of videos that combine advertising and non-advertising and whose presence is enhanced by their strategic positioning in suggested automatic play lists.

The fine line between series content and commercial messages becomes worrisome when it is present in videos addressed at children and teenagers, an audience which is particularly vulnerable, and to which special attention must be paid in terms of the suitability of the audiovisual products to which they are exposed. The relevance of the information revealed in this research project becomes evident when we reflect on the level of awareness exhibited by children receiving these commercial messages. We must also question the level of knowledge children have on the amount of advertising "floating around" a simple search such as the one used for this research. The authors consider it relevant to continue working from the communication perspective.

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