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Introduction

Advertising literacy research:

How do children cope with advertising?

- Since 70s: recognizing & understanding commercial *message* > tactics
 - in TV commercials
 - promoting product quality & features
 - Focus on cognition

Today: recognizing, understanding & evaluating commercial *tactics* > message

- New advertising formats
 - Integrated (e.g. brand placement)
 - Interactive (e.g. advergames)
 - Personalized (e.g. pre-roll video ads)
- New advertising tactics
 - Pre-/subconscious persuasion
 - E.g. subtle, prolonged & repeated exposure
 - E.g. positive affect transfer
- Focus on cognition, attitudes and moral reasoning

Research questions

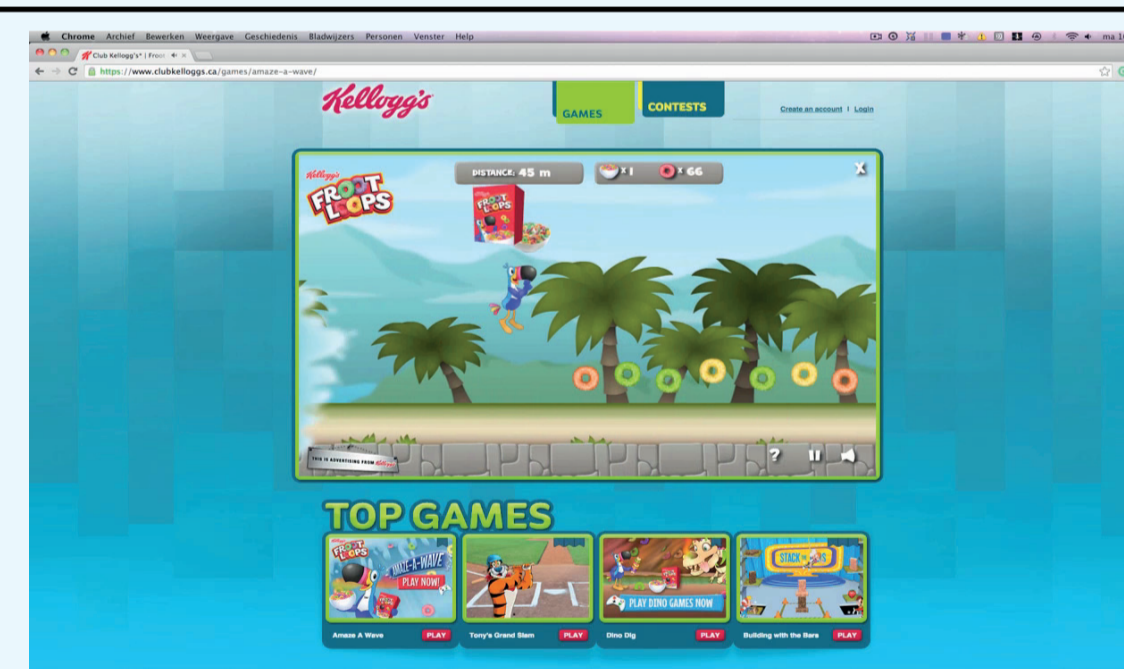
- Q1: What do children **know** about the new advertising tactics?
 Q2: How do children **judge** the new advertising tactics?
 Q3: What are the **reasoning strategies** underlying children's judgments of the new advertising tactics?

Method

Child-centric approach

12 focus groups (n=60), 5th and 6th grade primary school (9-11yo)

- ① 3 videos illustrating
- Brand placement
 - Advergame
 - Pre-roll video ad



Example 1) probing technique: advergames

= probing for ad tactic knowledge
 e.g. 'What did you see in the video?'

- ② 3 scenarios
- Presented as comic
 - Possible dilemmas
 - regarding the 3 advertising formats
 - 2 characters w/ different perspectives: tactic 'advantages' vs. 'disadvantages'



Example 2) eliciting technique: advergames

= eliciting (moral) reasoning about ad tactics
 e.g. 'With whom do you agree, the mother or the girl? Why?'

Results

Knowledge of advertising formats & tactics

> Recognition integrated advertising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not vigilant Connection editorial content: 	"M&M's are in the movie because they are blue, just as the Smurfs"
> Basic understanding of advertising: seeing = buying <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ...though mention tactics as 'positive affect transfer': yet unaware of personalization/retargeting 	"Because the M&M's appear in a fun movie, children think M&M's should also be nice. And then they will ask their parents if they can also have them"
> After explaining tactics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nearly every child understood & spontaneously mentioned other examples: 	"I surfed for clothes and then, on YouTube, I wanted to see a video, and all of a sudden I see advertising for clothes! I thought to myself, what is going on here?"
> However, not convinced of tactic effectiveness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Question pre-/subconscious persuasion: 	"I don't know why they pay for appearing in the movie, as nobody notices it anyway"

Judgement of advertising formats & tactics

> Initially: judgment ≈ (positive) experience:	"I do not care if I play such a game. I just like to play it. Even if you actually know you play for advertising"
> First reaction after explanation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Clever', good for company ...yet little useful/new info about products: 	"...in a commercial break, they tell you where you can buy it [the advertised product], and how much it costs. But in a series they just hold it, and you know nothing about it" (brand placement) "...if you only get advertising for the things you like, you can't see new things" (personalized ads)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remain indifferent + few issues with appropriateness embedded advertising (cf. effectiveness): 	"...actually I don't realize it at all that it is advertising too, so I don't think that that it pays off. If it's a fun game, it doesn't really matter"
> After deeper reflection: deceptive	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes them force parents to buy things ...they didn't want before, or that are regretted later: 	"...you should buy things on your own accord"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personalized ads: explicitly mention 'privacy': 	"I think that's actually a bit of privacy you don't have. Because they know what you like and what not" "...it's a bit like blackmail"

> After discussing dilemmas: moral judgments	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consequences for others: 	"They [advertisers] should show that [the presence of advertising] to everyone because children do not realize yet there is advertising in it..." (integrated ads)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Also unknown/abstract: 	"If you play a game, and the computer lives too, than he wouldn't like it either if you are looking at what he's actually doing" (personalized ads)
> ...yet often it is a trade-off	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual 'advantages' vs. moral 'disadvantages': 	e.g. embedded ads are 'fun' but also 'bad' "because some people do not know that it is for advertising"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moral 'advantages' vs. individual 'disadvantages': 	e.g. "A company has people to make the software right, they have to be able to pay them too" (personalized ads)
> Remarkable: institutional < social privacy:	e.g. PA on YouTube: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> R1: "They are watching something of your private life, but you don't want them to know that" R2: "Yes, in your internet diary" R1: "And your family can't know that either, and then they do know. And if your mom and such get on YouTube on your phone, then they see all your private" R2: "I think that's even the worst!"

Discussion & conclusion

- Main conclusion:** if we want children
 - to cope consciously and critically
 - with new ad formats
 - that make use of implicit tactics
 they need to be...
 - ...made aware of the ad tactics
 - ...made aware of sub-/preconscious persuasion
 - ...encouraged/nudged to morally evaluate them
- Challenge:** apply this thinking during exposure to ads
 - Develop heuristics via class-based interventions:
 - Tactic recognition heuristics
 - Effectiveness heuristics
 - Appropriateness heuristics
- Critique:** What does it mean to 'critically think' about advertising?
 - Most studies: having negative attitude → resisting persuasion
 - Our study: also positive evaluations
 - e.g. when brand placement is
 - Creative
 - Shows how to use a product
 - Appropriate (sponsorship disclosed)
 - positive brand/product evaluation

Highlights

- Children have a **limited understanding** of new ad formats & tactics
 - yet able to understand them
 - & to morally reflect on it
- Challenge**
 - Look beyond fun experience of new ad formats
 - Acknowledge implicit influence of embedded advertising
 - Become aware of the existence of personalized advertising
 - Imagine ad tactic consequences for others

Contact

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