

Disclosing Brand Placement to Young Children

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Abstract

In spite of the EU's prohibition on brand placement in children's programs, it is argued that children may still be exposed to this advertising format in many occasions. Consequently, and as children may have even more difficulties than adults to distinguish the commercial content from the editorial media content in which it is embedded, an advertising disclosure may be necessary to enable them to cope with brand placement. Entailing two one-factorial between-subjects experiments, the current article examined how different types of brand placement warning cues influenced cognitive advertising literacy and the attitude toward the placed brand, among children between 8 and 10 years old.

In a first study, it was investigated how these outcomes were influenced by warning cues with different perceptual modalities (no vs. auditory vs. visual cue, $N = 98$). The results showed that a visual warning cue was more effective than an auditory warning cue (vs. no warning cue) in addressing cognitive advertising literacy. However, this higher cognitive advertising literacy could not account for the effect of the visual warning cue on brand attitude.

In a second study, it was examined whether the effectiveness of this visual warning cue was influenced by the timing of disclosure (cue prior to vs. during media containing brand placement, $N = 142$). Additionally, it was tested whether the effect of the cue on brand attitude could be explained by cognitive advertising literacy if children's sceptical attitude toward the brand placement format was taken into account. The results showed that cognitive advertising literacy was higher when the cue was shown prior to than during the media content. This cue-influenced cognitive advertising literacy resulted in a more positive brand attitude, but only among children who were less sceptical toward brand placement. This positive relation disappeared among moderately and highly sceptical children.

These findings have significant theoretical, practical and social implications.

Keywords: children; sponsorship disclosure; brand placement; advertising literacy; scepticism