

The ethics of advertising? Let the disadvantaged children speak for themselves

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Abstract

In this paper it is argued that in the context of children's advertising -a generally agreed upon area for ethical concern since they are considered highly sensitive to advertising influences- scientific studies have some challenges to face. For one, advertising literacy research aiming to empower children as to critically process advertising omits to take into account the children's point of view on advertising and them being targeted. The reason could be twofold: a domination of quantitative research and an underestimation of children's moral capacities. Secondly, the socio-economic backgrounds of the children are remarkably rarely considered. Yet on the one hand studies have shown interaction between advertising (attitudes, styles and products) and the socio-economic status (SES) of consumers. On the other hand, within highly consumerist societies it seems advisory to pay attention to those most vulnerably positioned and with the most problematized participation opportunities: children coming from families with a low SES.

Keywords: advertising ethics – low SES children – qualitative research