THE INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL MEDIA AND BRANDS ON CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOR

A influência das mídias digitais e das marcas no comportamento infantil

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence that digital social media and brands have on the behavior of children aged 4 to 9. The research, qualitative and exploratory in nature, was conducted through relaxed interviews with ten children, organized in a game format to encourage authentic reactions. The results indicate that even very young children are deeply impacted by advertising, often unconsciously. Moreover, it was found that parents are not fully aware of the extent of this media influence and tend to believe its effects are limited to excessive consumption, overlooking other potential consequences. From an academic perspective, the study broadens the understanding of the impacts of marketing strategies targeting children, providing valuable insights for future research on child consumer behavior and brand relationships. In practical terms, the findings highlight the importance of greater vigilance on the part of parents, schools, and regulators regarding children's use of digital media. By doing so, it becomes possible to foster more informed and healthier young consumers, minimizing excessive exposure to advertising and its potential negative repercussions on child development.

KEYWORDS: children's consumption, advertising, brands, exploratory study.

RESUMO

Este estudo investiga a influência que as mídias sociais digitais e as marcas exercem sobre o comportamento de crianças entre 4 e 9 anos. A pesquisa, de caráter qualitativo e exploratório, foi realizada por meio de entrevistas descontraídas com 10 crianças, organizadas em formato de jogo para estimular reações autênticas. Os resultados indicam que, mesmo as crianças mais novas, são profundamente impactadas por anúncios, muitas vezes de forma inconsciente. Além disso, constatou-se que os pais não percebem plenamente a extensão dessa influência midiática e tendem a acreditar que seus efeitos se limitam ao consumo excessivo, ignorando outras possíveis consequências. Do ponto de vista acadêmico, o estudo amplia a compreensão acerca dos impactos das estratégias de marketing direcionadas ao público infantil, oferecendo subsídios para pesquisas futuras sobre o comportamento de consumo infantil e a relação com marcas. Em termos práticos, os achados reforçam a importância de maior vigilância por parte de pais, escolas e órgãos reguladores em relação ao uso das mídias digitais pelas crianças. Assim, torna-se possível promover consumidores mais conscientes e saudáveis, minimizando a exposição excessiva à publicidade e suas potenciais repercussões negativas no desenvolvimento infantil.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: consumo infantil, publicidade, marcas, estudo exploratório.

Introduction

Since the expansion of the internet in the 1990s, companies and customers generations have been experimenting new forms of relationship and consumption (Bellato et al., 2010). Each generation is shaped according to the developments and events of the time, and the current generation is made up of digital technologies, from devices such as tablets and cell phones, up to the media and social networks that are provided through internet access (Kesharwani, 2019). This generation can be called digital natives, young people born in this context of easy and fast internet information access (Prensky, 2001), who live life through technological resources, through online and offline relationships and who are technologically adept and interested (Judd, 2018). Therefore, the digital immigrant is that generation that was exposed to digital technology later and fears not having the skills to use it (Bennett, 2012).

Soon, the stories heard by parents and grandparents, that when they were children they played in the street, football, spinning top and hula hoop, gave way to social networks, online games, videogames, brands and consumption. Today, children can read, play, watch movies, series and cartoons whenever they want, often with linked advertisements to just one click. In the advent of the internet, in a confusing and interactive online environment, children can be reached by marketing strategies (Kennedy et al., 2019).

Marketing communication on social media affects all types of audiences (Dey et al., 2020), especially children, who as much as the consumption of a brand's digital content seen on social networks, as much their involvement with the brand (Núñez-Gómez, Sánchez-Herrera, & Pintado-Blanco, 2020). Overall, consumers' engagement with the brand through digital innovations is crucial, as their acceptance is the crutial test of all innovations (Ryynänen & Hyyryläinen, 2018). However, the interaction of children with the brand does not only happen through social networks. In big cities, for example, it is a common family program to spend time shopping malls, which also collaborates in exposure to consumption and the brand (Santos, 2016). The way in each family chooses to educate their children is not the subject discussed in this study, but it is a fact that this escape can harm children's behavior when it comes to precocious consumption.

Facing a consumerist and connected generation (Andrade, 2017), knowing that technology and information are easily reaching children (Malthouse & Hofacker, 2010), it is necessary to understand how much this advance has been beneficial. Digital natives (Prensky, 2001) were deeply inserted in the brand and social media market, as they were born in a connected world and do not see barriers in technology (Kesharwani, 2019). Since they are in full time contact with advertisements, whether at home, watching television, or at school, shopping, cell phones, in other words, brands and the digital world are already part of the day by day of this generation (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019).

From what has been exposed, the general objective is to analyze the level of influence that digital social media and brands exert on the buying behavior of children aged between 4 and 9 years. From this, the intention of this study is to reveal the impacts of brand advertisements disseminated through social media on children's consumption behavior. The studies carried out on the subject so far, show that as much as the interaction of children in social media, as much the preference for the brand, while the present study brings the possible impacts that this interaction can cause on the consumption behavior of children. And, through them, it allows parents, schools and society to better manage the use of these tools by children, in order to form consumers who are better informed, healthier and without dependencies or lack of consumption control. In addition, it has contributions for regulatory agencies to review the way of raising and protecting children who do not have declared power of choice.

Theoretical Reference

The theoretical basis that guides this study is based on to know the media and social networks and what are their roles are in society. From this, to understand the relationship of children with the brand and consumption, analyze if there is influence on the development and children's behavior, and, finally, the regulatory process in the advertising world.

The Media and Social Networks

With the exponential advancement of digital technology, it is possible to observe the increase in the responsiveness of organizations in relation of consumer needs (Foroudi, Gupta, Nazarian, & Duda, 2017), as also the increase in the adoption of social media (Jacobson, 2020), which drive sales, increases operational efficiency and reduces costs (Ritz, Wolf, & McQuitty, 2019). Given this scenario, social media allow marketers to build relationships between consumers and brands at an interactive, direct and social level (Confos & Davis, 2016). This dynamic environment, surrounded by innovation and changes, identifies and categorizes the marketing strategy (Mortari & Santos, 2016).

The difference between the terms networks and digital media, depends on what the user wants, whether they intend to share content or just relate (Carvalho, 2018). Within this scenario, social networks stand out, where consumers interact with each other, share their opinions and experiences, and thus end up influencing or being influenced (Okada & Souza, 2011; Prado & Lopes, 2016). Social media are becoming an integral part of the marketing strategy due to the benefits and opportunities offered to both the company and consumers (Valos et al., 2016). These benefits involve reaching customers beyond geographic restrictions, with quality, agility and cost reduction (Keegan & Rowley, 2017).

Given this, consumers' online and offline lives are interconnected through a complex social orientation and evaluation, direct and influential (Dey, Yen, & Samuel, 2020). When using social media, user data is combined across applications and systems (Tatlow-Golden & Garde, 2020). When a child accesses their device or application, geolocation data, for example, is identified and can generate a specific advertise to the location of these users in real time (Romano et al., 2018). In general, as much access and consumption of content propagated by a brand through media and social networks, much as the consumer's involvement with the brand (Ryynänen & Hyyryläinen, 2018). Therefore, interaction with digital media and social networks has a positive effect that generates brand preferences and loyalty (Núñez-Gómez et al., 2020).

The Influence of Social Media on the Brand

It can be a name, a symbol, or a set of elements, brands come to differentiate themselves from competitors and identify a certain product or service (Kotler & Armstrong, 1998). Therefore, brand equity is the added value given to the product by the brand, which must be considered, as it represents a psychological value for the consumer and, therefore, is an important financial asset for the company (Kotler, 1995; Bizarrias & Lopes, 2017). In this sense, the most valuable assets that companies have are the brands, as they are worth more than the equipment, machines and building (Jacobson, 2020). However, brand equity can be significantly impacted through social media engagement (Lim et al, 2020).

The interaction of organizations on social media promotes engagement with the consumer (Dessart et al, 2015), in addition to helping to build relationships, influence the consumer's ability to recognize and remember the brand and, above all, promote it (Baldwin et al., 2018). In this sense, the brand personality is built through human characteristics associated with it (Aaker, 1996) and for the emotional appeal of social media to conquer the consumer. Organizations have become concerned with customer experience of trust (Jacobson, 2020), from their research to the act of purchase (Moliner-Tena et al., 2019).

The increase in interaction between the consumer and organizations through digital platforms, digital marketing seeks to promote engagement and trust between the brand and the consumer (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). The Search Era (also known as the Consumer Era) seeks the active and interactive participation of consumers, who play the role of content

producers and information consumers on the web (Okada & Souza, 2011). This new market scenario requires a reshape of brand marketing strategies (Claffey & Brady, 2019), that also involves children segment.

The child's interaction through social media establishes a bond and increases their preference for brands (Núñez-Gómez et al., 2020). Digital marketing strategies allow establishing direct, interactive and social relationships between brands and young consumers (Malthouse & Hofacker, 2010). In this way, the internet made it possible for young consumers to stop being passive observers and seek their own content (Confos & Davis, 2016), in addition the social media are contributing to the premature relationship of young consumers with brands (Lopez & Rodriguez, 2018).

Child Consumption Behavior and Marketing Strategies

Children's behavior through advertising actions will depend on how they pay attention to what is shown, how they remember it later and how much they understand the intention of advertising (Calvert, 2008). From 2 to 7 years old, the child pays more attention to the appearance of the product and believes that it can be real, being characterized as the perception stage, then comes the analytical phase from 7 to 11 years old and, finally, the reflective phase of 11 to 16 years old (Piaget, 1998). However, marketing communication seeks to influence the thinking of children through implicit and explicit memory and, from this, part of the messages are processed consciously and others processed unconsciously (Smith, Kelly, Yeatman, & Boyland, 2019).

Children are vulnerable to marketing advertisements because their cognition of distinguishing the persuasion scope of this type of communication is limited (Rozendaal, Buijzen, & Valkenburg, 2010) and the vulnerability to advertising activity is mainly in children younger than 8 years old, as these do not understand the intent of advertisements (Calvert, 2008). Based on the premise that thinking and consumption are also influenced by social and psychological characteristics (Kotler, 1998), when exposed to advertisements in different media, children may develop an emotional attachment to the brand, which can increase the consumption of products and services (Kelly et al., 2019; Lopes & Goulart-da-Silva, 2022).

Therefore, marketing professionals look for strategies focused on children (Chart 1), using of integrated marketing communication (Gurău, 2008) and its ways of communication (online and offline).

Chart 1 – Marketing Strategies on Children Propaganda

Marketing Strategy	Practice
Repetition	Repeat the commercial multiple times to build familiarity and facilitate brand recall.
Characters	Make use of characters known by children, a way to have fun and connect with the brand.
Effects	Make use of audiovisual productions, to fix the brand in the minds of children.
Animation	Imagens in moviment.
Use of celebrities	Use of actors, athletes, and celebrities who appear supporting the brand.
Awards	Offer of toys and objects as award when buying a product.
Merchandising	Expose the product within a program, soap opera, as part of the content so as not to sound like advertising.
Integrated Marketing Strategies	Expor produtos em diferentes mídias, como um brinquedo colocado em uma comida também aparecer em um filme.
Advergames	When advertising appears in online video games with commercial messages.
Tracking Softwares	Software that lets companies know the time spent on a website. Makes it possible to understand who the consumer is and his behavior.
On-line interactive agentes	Virtual form of advertisement, with the programming of robots to answer users and to make the first interaction.

Source: Adapted from Calvert (2008).

The rise of digital technology has significantly transformed human life and overlapped new dimensions on consumer behavior (Dey et al., 2020). Digital Marketing strategies are based on the premise of social exchange (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019), providing solid and important content for potential consumers, who will reward the brand with their loyalty (Taiminen & Karjaluoto, 2015). In this way, it provides interaction between young consumers and brands.

Given this scenario, social networks have been a vehicle of marketing communication, in which they have great power of reaching and persuasion, in addition to gaining consumer loyalty (Carvalho, 2018). Through them, it is possible to get to know the consumer, prepare for their needs, receive feedback on products and brands (David et al., 2017), in addition to interacting with groups of influencers, who propagate and influence followers to buy or not the products and brand services (Massyliouk & Campos, 2016). However, there is concern about the rules and laws that govern communication with this target audience, as well as their sanctions.

Regulation of Advertising for children segment

The digitization of consumption involves approaches, that also involve ownership and protection of personal data, which may present risks for this type of communication (Ryynänen & Hyyryläinen, 2018). Children's engagement with brands occurs mainly through online videos and, therefore, there is a need to include social media in regulations that limit their exposure to digital marketing (Baldwin et al., 2018). Therefore, reducing children's exposure to digital marketing from brands that do not add health benefits, for example, should be a priority for governments (Kelly, Boyland,King, Bauman, Chapman, & Hughes, 2019).

In this sense, it is important to understand that the problems generated by too much contact with consumption go beyond "spending money" or "not appreciating what you have". The impacts of this behavior involve physical, mental, emotional issues, among other aspects, such as childhood obesity (Baldwin et al., 2018), early erotization and decreased desire to play (Alana, 2020). However, historically, Brazil has suffered from censorship of freedom of expression, with emphasis on the dictatorship, which makes it difficult to impose restrictions on mass media and, therefore, the threat to freedom is addressed by companies in a complex way (Lopes, 2010).

According to the Brazilian National Council for Advertising Self-Regulation [Conar] (2019), the agency responsible for guaranteeing the commercial expression freedom and ensuring a good relationship between the advertising market and the consumer. Its mission is to defend expression freedom, preventing the misleading and abusive advertising embarrasses the consumer or the company. Therefore, through this regulatory agency, is possible to receive complaints about advertisements already broadcast.

The Decree 57,690 of February 1st, 1966, regulated the Law 4680, which in its Article 5 states that advertising is any dissemination of message with a persuasive nature by an identified advertiser. In this sense, since advertising reaches children and, because this public is considered unprepared to distinguish what is sale and what is simply information, it has a differentiated protection, which is provided in the Brazilian Constitution and the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA) (Tobergte & Curtis, 2013). In the Article 79, the ECA prohibits the publication of advertisements involving alcoholic beverages, tobacco, weapons and ammunition for children and young people. There is a single and punctual rule that specifically encompasses advertising aimed at children and young people (Lopes, 2010).

However, the ECA articles do not specify the advertising activities when it comes the rating classification by age. This lack of specificity resulted that 6.3% of television

commercials aired in 2002, were considered with inappropriate allusions and appeals to children (Lopes, 2010). To fill this "gap", the Brazilian Consumer Defense Code (CDC) in Art 36, prohibits advertising from taking advantage of the child's inexperience (PROCON, 2019). The CDC imposes on the advertiser the responsibility of displaying a "counter-advertisement", if the first one has been considered abusive.

The Brazilian Code of Advertising Self-Regulation (CBAB), beyond to being the main set of rules to guide the ethical precepts of advertisements in Brazil (Lopes, 2010), has an entire section totally dedicated to the defense of children and adolescents when it's about advertising.

Not as an official regulatory agency, but as a member of the movement against advertising abuse towards children, the Alana Institute (Alana, 2020) began to encourage discussion about child consumption in 2006. The Institute has investing in research on the effects of children's contact with advertising, and also to assist in the education of children under 12 years of age. Since its creation, it has partnered with the Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood Summit (CCFC), a movement to put an end to the exploitative practice of advertising to children, by reducing advertising access to children.

In addition to this partnership, the Institute has been looking for ways to talk about the topic, participating in forums, producing documentaries and, a highlight is the Toy Exchange Fair, launched in 2012, which anyone can organize. The intention is for the child to take a used toy and exchange it for another toy, from another child, giving a new meaning to "consuming". At this Fair, it is forbidden to sell or buy.

Method

The present study is qualitative and exploratory (Minowa & Belk, 2020). Qualitative methods make it possible to comprehensively describe and understand the topic studied (Malhotra & Birks, 2006), as it is based on theoretical approaches and the subjectivity of researchers and research subjects is part of the investigative process (Yin, 2016; Minowa, & Belk, 2020). Because exploratory research seeks to increase familiarity with the research problem (Neves & Conejero, 2012), which, for the most part, use the literature around the object of study and interviews, in search of behavior and experience about the problem addressed (Thiollent, 2009).

This study was based on primary and secondary data. To collect the primary data, an in-depth interview was conducted with ten children aged between 04 and 09 years old, based on the circle of acquaintances of the authors within the family, children of friends and in the Christian community. The focus of the research on this age group was arranged because at this age there is still no clarity regarding the true intention of advertising (Calvert, 2008).

To carry out the interviews, the authors contacted the children's parents and presented the objective of the study. An informed consent form was presented and accepted by the parents. All children were individually interviewed in the presence of their parents, and without the presence of other children. The interviews were conducted in two stages.

The first step was carried out from the collection of drawings, given the difficulty of conducting a traditional interview with this public. They are easily distracted and drawing would bring more pleasure to the activity (Cox, 1992). It was explained to the child that a game would be played and he or she would have to make drawings and, while drawing, the process leader would intervene with questions about the proposed drawing. Drawings were requested for the following situations: (a) what you like to do the most; (b) favorite game; (c) shopping (questions about what he or she likes to do most at the mall, which stores he or she likes to go to, if their parents like to take them there); and, finally, (d) what he or she likes

to do most on his cell phone (asked if he or she spent a lot of time on his or her cell phone, if he or she had his own cell phone and which were the apps he or she liked the most).

The second stage was carried out by printing cards with drawings and brands that are part of the children's daily basis and presented one by one to each interviewee. The objective was to find out if brands impacted children's choice decisions and if they knew how to differentiate products and understand the real reason for each choice. Each card represented: (a) the Ri Happy brand, the largest toyshop retailer in Brazil; (b) an image of a potato and then a bag of Ruffles potato chip snacks; (c) for the girls, a T-shirt with the character Lady Bug and another one without any known brand, both dressed by children; (d) still for the girls, two dolls, one created by Hasbro to look like a real child, the baby alive, and an unbranded doll; and, finally, (e) for boys, two toy cars of the same color, one branded Hotwheels and the other unbranded. These stimuli are presented in Appendix A of this article.

All interviews were record (in audio and video), in order to future analysis could be conducted (Roberts, 2020).

Results Analysis And Discussion

The analyzed group were consisted of 10 children, interviewed separately, 8 girls and 2 boys, all from families belonging to the middle class, residents of the city of São Paulo and aged between 4 and 9 years. As they are minors, their identities are preserved, each interviewee were numbered from 01 to 10.

Table 1- First stage of the interview

Interviwee	Gender	Age	What do you like to do/play the most?	What do you like to do at the Mall? Do you know the Ri Happy brand?	What do you like to do on your cell phone?
01	F	05	Drawing and painting, parents use social networks, but their behavior is not influenced.	She was not interested in the stores, but she knows the brands, such as Ri Happy and Apple	She likes to play games on her father's cell phone and her iPad.
02	F	05	Games such as trough pie in the face, hopscotch, among others for child development without the use of technology.	She plays with the toys installed in malls and buy toys, but she did not associate the Ri Happy brand when she saw the design presented.	Play a coloring game
03	F	06	Spend time with Valentina, a reborn baby, her value exceeded 4 digits	She feels attracted to toys in stores, and when she saw Ri Happy's mark, she recognized it without any difficulty.	Has her own cell phone and likes to watch videos on YouTube
04	F	06	Play and have a toy chest.	Toy stores are the most attractive and Ri Happy brand was easily recognized by it.	Interest in playing and not in social networks.
05	F	04	Playing with a doll and reborn baby doll, acted as a Youtuber without prior stimulation, and invited viewers to follow the video.	She repeated the verb "buy" several times and all purchases related to toys. Regarding Ri Happy brand, she recognized it easily.	Own cell phone, like to play, social networks, like to watch youtubers and access WhatsApp.
06	F	04	Going to play in the park, his favorite toys are the slide and the swing and his favorite game is tag.	She likes to buy toys, but she didn't seem familiar with the Ri Happy brand. She mentioned which mall she likes to go to and that one of her favorite places is the bookstore.	She did not mention any social network, she said she likes to play a game in which she takes care of a kitten.

07	F	04	He wanted to see the Peppa Pig cartoon on TV, she didn't give information about what she likes to do.	Regarding Ri Happy, she didn't say the name of the store, but when she saw the brand she said she would show a toy from it.	
08	M	04	Early on he made it clear he likes to play with Marvel heroes, without any prior stimulus.	Play, eat and buy (last toy was SpongeBob). He drew the sun to symbolize the mall, and when she saw Ri Happy's brand, he said it was the sun in the sky, but then she it was also in the mall. He didn't say the brand's name.	Paid games on mom's cell phone and watching shows like *Patrulha Canina*. Plays many hours on her phone and does not let anyone take it because he is a fast boy
09	F	04	She loves drawing and painting, playing hopscotch, running and other games that don't require the purchase of any material, she just uses her creativity.	Buying things, anything, she liked to play with the toys there and the bathroom is her favorite place. She did not identify Ri Happy's brand and claimed to have never seen it in her life.	Use Youtube to watch videos. Uses application developed by the school, game format, to fulfill part of the tasks
10	M	09	Dynamic activities, without using cell phones or toys. He likes to play football and play "it", with one of his classmates being the clown.	Spend time in the stores and go to Playland, a game space installed in some malls. She quickly identified the Ri Happy brand and seemed familiar with the store.	Watch videos on the YouTube platform about the electronic game Minecraft

Source: Develop by the authors

Regarding what they most like to do, none of the interviewees gave an answer related to the use of technology, such as cell phones or tablets. However, 50% of them mentioned a toy brand and the other 50% mentioned traditional games, such as jump rope and football. When questioned about their behavior in the mall, 50% answered that it was only related to the toys and recreational spaces offered in these establishments. While 40% associated going to the mall with shopping toys. These data illustrate the normality of visits to shopping centers in large cities and the early exposure of commerce (Santos, 2016).

As for the use of smartphones, 60% of the answers involve playing a game and watching videos on Youtube. Only 1 child cited the use of Whatsapp as a pastime on the cell phone. This result gives a space for advertisements. It is common in mobile games to appear pop-ups with advertisements aimed to the target audience of that application. The strategy that would be used in this case would be Advergames (Calvert, 2008). As for YouTube, it is possible to notice that it is increasingly common for children to access this network, which makes it possible to search for content (Confos & Davis, 2016) interact with and influence other users (Okada & Souza, 2011).

In the Ri Happy brand recognition phase, it was possible to notice that older children find it easier to say the name. Smaller children may even show recognition, but not all were able to verbalize. Only 3 of the children interviewed did not recognize the logo in any way. An important fact to be highlighted is that, when the children guessed which brand it was, the mothers cheered along and rejoiced for their child's "conquest" in that activity. Thus, it is possible to see that marketing strategies promote the involvement of young consumers with brands, in addition to allowing the relationship with brands to start early (Lopez & Rodriguez, 2018).

Table 2 - Second stage of the interview

Intervieew	Characters Influence	Potatos	Toy (Doll and Car)
01	She didn't choose the Lady Bug t-shirt, but the case is from "Patati and Patatá" and she was dressed by the cat Marie, her mother mentioned that she always asks for juices from the Disney princesses.	A vegetable present in her daily life, but she easily recognized the potato chips from Ruffles without seeing the brand.	
02	She chose the Lady Bug T-shirt, but could choose the other one because the color did references the character	It turned out that it was part of the routine, as well as the snack, which upon seeing it already identified that it was "potatoes", but did not mention the Ruffles brand	She preferred the Baby alive doll, claiming that it had functions that the other did not have.
03	It was not possible to identify influence of characters and at no time did she mention any other than not choosing the Lady Bug t-shirt option	She had no trouble identifying the potato or the snack but did not mention the Ruffles brand and stated that she prefers the natural potato because it makes mashing possible.	She chose the unbranded one, but after a few seconds, she turned to the baby alive, which is close to the characteristics of the reborn baby.
04	She chose the Lady Bug on the T-shirt and because it has short sleeves, but her mother said there is interest in other moments as well.	She had no difficulty in to identify the potato and potato chips, but she didn't name any brands.	She preferred the Baby alive doll, easily chosen by the Ri Happy brand.
05	Chose the Lady Bug T-shirt.	She thought for a while, identified the potato. She recognized the snack and said she prefers it, doesn't like potatoes.	She said she only knew the baby alive, which is the doll that can be fed and interacted in a different way.
06	Chose the T-shirt with Lady Bug and said she liked her a lot	She quickly identified the potato, but said that she only likes mashed potatoes, but in relation to snacks, she said that she likes to eat this type of potato.	She was surprised to see the doll options and said that she already had that baby alive doll, that's why it was her favorite
07	She is fascinated by characters in general, can sing Peppa Pig songs and chose the Lady Bug t-shirt	As soon as she sow the potato, she associated it with food, but did not say the name of the vegetable. She remembered the snack because she ate it at her father's work, but did not name the brand.	Chose the Baby alive doll
08	There was no dynamic, just for the girls.	Said it was pear, papaya and a sweet potato. He did not recognize the snack because it was not part of his routine.	As for the carts, he preferred the Hotwheels one, because the faster is from Hotwheels brand
09	She chose the white one and said it was because she had Lady Bug.	She identified the potato and the snack, but did not mention the brand and said she only likes the snack.	She did not identify the baby alive, she chose the unbranded doll because she had a hat. Stimulated that she had a baby alive, she said that it was not the same, that hers had "hard" hair and that she had to take care of the wound.
10	There was no dynamic, just for the girls.	He identified it quickly and said he likes fries and mashed potatoes on her hot dog. He identified the snack and named the brand name Ruffles.	He thought for a while, but chose the Hotwheels brand because of the designs. Stimulated, He saw that it was a brand and said the name.

Source: Developed by the authors

Regarding the choices with character products, the influence on the choices was practically unanimous. It is possible to see that the child may even find the unbranded option prettier, but something somewhat unconscious leads him to choose the object that shows the character and the known brand. Even in conversations with the mothers, many of them brought up the difficulty of taking their children to the supermarket, as normally the products that have the characters or a "prize" are usually more expensive and are what the children ask for.

The characters' strategy is pointed out by Montgneaux (2003), who says that characters not only have the role of performing a single consumption, but also in to make the customer loyal to the brand. Calvert (2008) also brings this theme as an important one, since the character has the ability to sell any product, as the child does not notice the sale, he just connects with what he is seeing. These choices can also be influenced due to interaction with brands through social media, which makes them bond and increase brand preference (Núñez-Gómez et al., 2020).

Regarding the food shown in the interview, in general, most children found it easy to recognize both snacks and vegetables, but when asked which one they preferred, preference for snacks was greater. In some cases, the interviewer tried to explain that the two were the same thing, just in different culinary preparations. At that moment, the child was confused and did not know how to explain why he did not like one and the other did. In view of this, the Alana Institute is concerned about the health of children. The view that consumption goes beyond buying is already clear, which also has consequences for childhood obesity. Advertisements are only for snacks and not for the vegetable itself (potatoes), which ends up attracting the child's attention and preference (Alana, 2020).

Through the drawings made by the participating children, it was possible to observe how the visual topic is important for this audience. They choose which one they prefer when they see the characters, or the product that is more colorful. Many of them even managed to draw the brands. Regarding the cell phone, for example, some children drew the Youtube logo almost perfectly and, in identifying the Ri Happy brand, those who did not know how to say the name, could describe where they had last seen it and had perfectly described the colors.

Furthermore, another curiosity is that even without knowing to read, which is the case for the majority, they could speak the names of games in english and what the brands were, just by looking at the graphics (colors and letters of the logo). One of the mothers was impressed when her son chose the car because it was from Hotwheels. She said that she didn't understand how he knew it was from that brand if only the name was written, and he still didn't even know how to write his own name. It was also found that some of the children, despite their young age, already have their own cell phones. This scenario allows greater access to games and social networks, and, automatically, parents are not fully aware of the advertising actions that their children access daily.

Another curiosity is about the choice of girls about the baby reborn doll. As it is a new and very expensive toy, it focused on reactions and opinions about it. Despite the high value, it is still a doll, but this is not seen by its owners or by those who want it. A regular doll is different, it doesn't respond and has no life, that is what the interviewed girls suggested about what they think about ordinary dolls. The reborn baby was designed to look like its owner, it is a real baby and makes them "mothers". This is all the result of emphatic publicity on children's television channels, social media such as YouTube and, above all, the opinions of peers.

In this sense, children's choices have been influenced by the brand's visual components (Lopez & Rodriguez, 2018) and by social media, which trigger greater interactivity and engagement with brands, making children active observers and brand influencers (Confos & Davis, 2016).

Final Considerations

According to the analysis of the data obtained, an intimate relationship between children, consumption and social networks is perceived. It is also seen that parents see these situations as regular in their children's routine and not as something worthy of attention. Children are increasingly inserted in the technology movement and, just as these tools have made adults dependent, the children's audience also grows up feeling the need to use them.

Many parents use cell phones, as well as media and social networks, as a reward or to calm them down at crucial moments. From this, advertising had found a gap to seek the children's audience that has influence on the family's purchasing power. For example, to access YouTube, has already changed children's view of this network. For parents, it is a useful video channel to solve some doubts, most of the time. For children, however, it is a world of possibilities, as they can watch videos, films and drawings at any time. This can generate a different behavior from parents, who as children had to wait for the correct day and time to watch their favorite cartoons.

As a result, children become more impatient and demanding, and some of them already see the youtuber profession as a possibility for the future. Access to Youtube also leads to a greater intimacy with their favorite characters that, if linked to a product, the child will have a greater desire to acquire it, influencing the family's purchases and expenses.

However, as the research was carried out through interviews with 10 children and their families, it is not possible to assume these results as conclusive, since the sample is small, compared to all the children in the class and place involved. But for an initial study on the subject, the results can be considered relevant.

From this, it is suggested that future researchers pay attention to the limitations involved in this work. Because the limitations are about how the presence of the parents can influence the children's responses, interviewing a child of each age to understand the behavior of each year of the child and, finally, interviewing a larger sample with other social classes, because will allow us to understand whether behavior remains the same regardless of social class.

RIMAR Note

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Appendix A – Images presented in the second phase of the interviews.

Ri Happy's logo and without logo

Hot Wheels' car and generic car
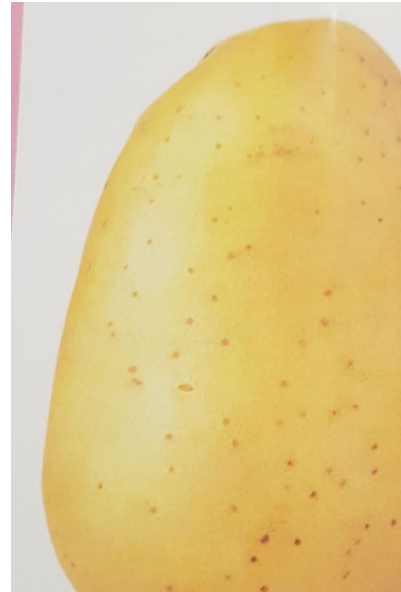

Baby Alive doll

Generic doll

Lady Bug T-shirt

Generic T-shirt

Ruffles' Potato

Potato

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Contribution of each author

Contribution	Flávia Tabone	Evandro Lopes	Joana Carvalho	Pedro Cavalcante
1. Definition of research problem	✓	✓		
2. Development of hypotheses or research question (in case of empirical studies)	✓	✓		
3. Development of theretical propositions (in case of theoretical work)				
4. Theoretical foundation / literature review	✓	✓	✓	✓
5. Definition of methodologial procedures	✓	✓		
6. Data collection	✓			
7. Analysis and interpretation of data (when applied)	✓	✓	✓	✓
8. Revision of the manuscript		✓	✓	✓
9. Manuscript writing	✓		✓	✓