Under the Radar?

How Embedded Messages in TV and the New Media Influence Children’s Actions, but not Their Conscious Recall

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1) What do children understand about food advertising in the new media?

2) How are children influenced by food advertising in the new media?
Are children aware that advertising is taking place?

• Can children **identify** advertising in the new media?

• Do children **understand** advertising in the new media?

Can children **identify** advertisements on web pages?

• 161 6-10 year olds.
• % of ads correctly recognised:
  - 6 year olds = 28%
  - 8 year olds = 56%
  - 10 year olds = 73%
Do children understand food advertising in the new media?

1) Movie brand placement
2) Program sponsorship
3) Product licensing
4) Advergames
5) In-game brand placement

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Do children understand food advertising in the new media?

- Interviews with 6-10 year old children
- More sophisticated understanding of TV advertising compared to all non-traditional examples
- Children have particular problems when brands are embedded within an entertaining context (i.e., movie brand placement and in-game brand placement)
How does brand placement work?

- **Embedded**
- **Blurs boundaries** between advertising, information and entertainment (Mallinckrodt & Mizerski, 2007)
- **Fail to demonstrate explicit awareness** of exposure, yet **demonstrate implicit priming** in the form of a positive bias towards the brand (Auty & Lewis, 2004)
- Implicit effects may be **amplified among children**

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How does brand placement work?

- **Explicit memory** = consciously remember seeing the brand within the media

VERSUS

- **Implicit memory** = demonstrate an inclination towards the brand without recollection of exposure
How can we **measure** this implicit influence?

- 6-10 year old children exposed to brand placement in films and video games

- **Implicit memory** = fragmented logo implicit recognition task (**FLIRT**)

- **Explicit memory** = children selected logos they had seen in the film/ video game (**Explicit recognition task**)
What did the FLIRT reveal?

- Improved FLIRT scores = brands implicitly recognised quicker and with less information

- Explicit awareness of exposure was poor
What do we know about implicit memory?

• Traditional theories focus on **perceptual fluency** (mere exposure)

• **Exposure** => ease of processing => familiarity => product benefit => **positive affect**

• BUT: symbolic, meanings, emotions, experience

• **Conceptual fluency** must play a role

How can we explore these conceptual links?

• Personal salience

• Emotional context

• Media engagement
Study 1 – The Role of Personal Salience

• 143 6-10 year olds exposed to a film clip containing:

1) A **highly salient** (Pizza Hut) and a **less salient** (Nike) placement
2) A **control** clip (no brands)

Study 1 - Results

• **Implicit memory:** Significantly enhanced for **personally salient brand** (Pizza Hut) \((p < .001)\)
  Not enhanced for the less salient brand (Nike) \((p = .62)\)

• **Explicit memory:** Poor and unrelated to implicit memory success
Study 2 – The Role of Emotional Context

- 128 10 year olds exposed to a film clip containing Nike in:
  1) A positive context
  2) A negative context
  3) A control clip (no brands)

Study 2 - Results

- **Implicit memory:** Significantly enhanced for positive context compared to negative context ($p = .04$) and controls ($p = .04$)

- **Explicit memory:** Poor and unrelated to implicit memory success
Study 3 – The Role of Media Engagement

- 100 6-10 year olds played one of two video games:
  1) Cool Spot (sponsored by and heavily featuring 7up)
  2) Sonic the Hedgehog (control - no brands)

Study 3 - Results

- **Implicit memory:** Effect of exposure on choice of 7up was greatest among males who were frequent video game players

- **Explicit memory:** Poor and unrelated to implicit memory success
How are children influenced by food advertising in the new media?

- Children implicitly process brands on a conceptual level i.e., with reference to prior experience and emotional context

- Crucially, if a placed brand is personally salient, is presented in a positive way and in a familiar/relevant media, then children are more likely to implicitly respond to it

Implications?

- Children do not understand that they are being advertised to
- Even at the age of 6 children demonstrate evidence of implicit learning outside conscious awareness
- These practices may unwittingly influence children
- This raises clear ethical and policy implications
Thanks!

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