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Co-creating advertising literacy awareness campaigns for minors.

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Abstract

Purpose – The study explores which media 9 and 10-year-old children and 12 and 13-year-old teenagers encounter and which campaign elements (media, spokesperson, appeal and message) are most appreciated by these target groups in awareness campaigns to raise their advertising literacy.

Design/methodology/approach – **The study applies a methodology that is commonly used in design sciences to the field of advertising.** Co-creation workshops with minors and professionals are used for the development of awareness campaign stimuli. In the first study four co-creation workshops with 19 children (11 girls and 8 boys) of the 4th grade and four co-creation workshops with 16 teenagers (10 girls and 6 boys) of the 7th grade were organised. In the second study, nine professionals who work for and/or with minors or have experience in product design or marketing, participated in a co-creation workshop.

Findings – Children are best approached through traditional media, whereas social media are used best to reach teenagers. Children prefer cartoons, whereas the results for the most appealing spokesperson in teenagers are mixed. Humorous campaigns with a short message are preferred by both target groups.

Research limitations/implications – **The results offer implications for practice and public policy with respect to awareness campaign building and social media marketing campaigns targeted at children and teenagers. To further corroborate the findings of this study, more pupils from different schools and different age groups should be studied. Moreover, the method used in this study can be applied in future research on awareness campaigns aimed at minors for other causes.**

Originality/value – The methodological contribution of the study is the application of co-creation tools and techniques on the development of advertising campaigns for minors.

Keywords – Advertising literacy, awareness campaigns, children, teenagers, co-creation

Paper type – Research paper

Introduction

Children and teenagers are seen as a relevant target group by advertisers since they function as economic actors themselves and influence the purchase decisions of their families (Buckingham, 2009, Calvert, 2008). Nowadays, children and teenagers live in a world dominated by both traditional and online interactive media in which advertising is ubiquitous. As a result, advertising is omnipresent in children's and teenagers' lives (Calvert, 2008, Blades et al., 2014) and advertisers' efforts and expenditures to target them have expanded (Moore, 2004, Livingstone and Helsper, 2006). As a consequence, children and youngsters frequently encounter commercial messages. The amount and type of advertising minors are exposed to depends largely on their media use. Media use is strongly related to their age (Zarouali et al., 2015). Despite the availability of various online media, television is still one of the most popular media channels today amongst children between six and twelve years old. Watching television is their most dominant media activity (Zarouali et al., 2015). On average 62% of American children between eight and 12-years old watch television each day (Common Sense Media, 2015). When they reach teenage years, this is about 58%. Next to television, watching videos on YouTube is a common, popular media activity amongst children (Apestaartjaren, 2016). Moreover, in Europe there is a tendency that children between nine and 16 years old start using online devices from a younger age onwards at more occasions and in different places during their daily lives than before (Livingstone et al., 2010).

When children mature into teenagers, the importance of television diminishes and the use of social media and mobile devices increases (Apestaartjaren, 2016, Zarouali et al., 2015). Children mostly play games on a tablet or a smartphone. The smartphone is the most used game device amongst Flemish teenagers (Apestaartjaren, 2016). During the past years, the importance of several social media amongst Flemish teenagers has expanded (e.g. YouTube Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram) (Apestaartjaren, 2016). In 2015, almost every teenager in Flanders, Belgium (97.6%) has watched a video on YouTube. Video bloggers (so called '*Vloggers*') are extremely popular amongst teenagers. Research on the perception of teenagers towards advertising shows that advertising is perceived as irritating by 65.7% of the Flemish youngsters. They try to avoid advertising as much as possible (Apestaartjaren, 2016).

With respect to advertising aimed at minors, two phenomena have become important in the way in which children and teenagers are approached by advertisers, i.e. *integration* and *interactivity*. Integration refers to the inclusion of persuasive advertising messages in media or entertainment context (Buijzen, van Reijmersdal, & Owen, 2010, Calvert, 2008, Wright et al., 2005). Novel, more implicit and integrated advertising techniques have emerged as a result of developments in communication technologies (Blades et al., 2014). Compared to traditional advertising techniques such as television commercials, these implicit advertising formats embed commercial messages in (interactive) entertainment content and virtual environments. The integration of commercial messages blurs the line between advertising and other media content (e.g. product placement, advergames, online behavioural advertising, etc.) (Calvert, 2008, Kunkel et al., 2004, Wright et al., 2005, Blades et al., 2014). Since even for adults it is difficult to be aware of embedded advertising tactics, it is even more challenging for children and teenagers to recognize integrated, implicit advertising formats that try to persuade them, because they often lack the cognitive abilities to do so (Friestad and Wright, 2005, Moses and Baldwin, 2005, Rozendaal et al., 2010, van Reijmersdal et al., 2015). Rozendaal et al.'s (2010) findings show that, at age 12, children have not reached the cognitive ability yet to understand television advertising's persuasive intent as adults do. It can be assumed that children's ability to understand novel, implicit advertising is even more underdeveloped.

The concept of ‘interactivity’ is inherent to the Internet (McMillan & Hwang, 2002) and relates to all media activities and advertising that is happening in the online world. The interactive character of current advertising practices leads to phenomena that are less present in traditional advertising, such as the integration of commercial messages in interactive and entertaining media content. One of the major issues in that respect is privacy concerns (Buckingham, 2009, Tuukkanen and Wilska, 2015). New online advertising formats often try to collect personal data from the receivers of the advertising messages by persuading them to create an account or to register in order to receive future information about the product or brand (Bright and Daugherty, 2012). Children and teenagers are not always aware of the amount of information they disclose online and advertisers’ potential usage of this information. As a result, especially minors are vulnerable to these tactics (Wilking et al., 2013, Youn, 2008).

The Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM) (Friestad and Wright, 1994) describes how individuals develop persuasion knowledge and how they use this knowledge to cope with marketers’ and advertisers’ persuasive attempts. Persuasion knowledge develops depending on basic cognitive skills and insights into social encounters. The PKM posits that *product knowledge* (knowledge about the advertised product), *agent knowledge* (knowledge about the advertiser behind the persuasive attempt) and *persuasion knowledge* (knowledge about advertising formats and persuasive tactics) are crucial factors to process advertising (Wright et al., 2005). The more easily identifiable a commercial message and the persuasive attempt made is, the more likely it is that persuasion knowledge will be activated (Tutaj and van Reijmersdal, 2012). Although Friestad and Wright (1994) did not explicitly have minors in mind, it is clear that the skills required to develop persuasion knowledge develops through the stages of childhood and adolescence (Wright et al., 2005). The difficulty for children and teenagers growing up in the current media environment is to identify interactive and integrated commercial messages as advertising when these messages are disguised as being part of other media content. As a result minors’ persuasion knowledge will be activated less automatically or not, since the elements triggering this knowledge are less notably present. This can ultimately lead to advertising that influences minors in an unconscious manner.

Due to the implicit nature of integrated (interactive) advertising formats, the privacy concerns raised, and the lack of persuasion knowledge, it is important to raise awareness amongst minors in order to inform and educate them about these advertising techniques. The knowledge a person has about advertising, the specific advertising techniques used, as well as the persuasive intentions behind these techniques is referred to as *advertising literacy* (Roedder John, 1999, Rozendaal et al., 2011). Being able to distinguish advertisements from editorial context and to recognize the persuasive tactics and intentions behind them, are two crucial components of advertising literacy (Livingstone and Helsper, 2006, Roedder John, 1999, Blades et al., 2014). A study comparing traditional and non-traditional advertising formats with children aged 6-7 years and 9-10 years found that many children consider novel, implicit advertising formats merely as a type of entertainment (Owen et al., 2014). This finding demonstrates the need to raise awareness in minors concerning advertising practices to increase their advertising literacy and to activate their persuasion knowledge in order to make them critical and informed consumers, and enable them to make informed decisions and to protect and defend themselves against misleading advertising messages or tactics (Livingstone and Helsper, 2006, Buckingham, 2009).

One way to raise advertising literacy is the use of awareness campaigns. In order to develop an advertising literacy awareness campaign to reach children and teenagers effectively, it is

necessary to gain insight into the different media contexts these target groups encounter in their daily lives, and to explore which message components of an awareness campaign, such as the medium, spokesperson, appeal and concrete message, are appealing (De Pelsmacker et al., 2013). The purpose of the current study is, by means of co-creation workshops, to generate insight into the exposure of 9 to 10 and 12 to 13-year-old children to media contexts, their perception of advertising in these media, and their appreciation of campaign elements, in order to develop effective advertising literacy awareness campaigns. Our first research question is:

RQ1: In terms of reach and preference, which are the best media contexts to reach 9 and 10-year-old children and 12 and 13-year-old teenagers to spread an awareness campaign on advertising literacy?

The second research question focuses on four components of an awareness campaign; media channel used, spokesperson, appeal and the concrete message. It is important to learn which implementations of these elements are most appreciated by the target groups:

RQ2: How should media, spokespersons, appeals and concrete messages be implemented in awareness campaigns to generate positive attention of 9 and 10-year-old children and 12 and 13-year-old teenagers?

The age groups used in this study correspond to two stages in the consumer socialization process of children (Roedder John, 1999). Children between 9 and 10 years of age belong to the *analytical stage* and children in the 7th grade (12 and 13 years old) belong to the *reflective stage*. According to Roedder John (1999), children have the ability to understand advertising and marketing only from the reflective stage onwards because only then children have a sufficiently developed way of reasoning and gain more insights in the understanding of people's perspectives. Therefore, 12 to 13-year-olds are the focus of this study. Additionally, a survey amongst both advertising professionals and parents of minors showed that the best age to inform minors about the commercial intentions behind advertising is on average 10-years (Daems and De Pelsmacker 2015). The second target group is therefore 9 to 10-year-olds.

The methodological contribution of the current study is the use of co-creation workshops and techniques for the development of advertising stimuli, to be used in advertising literacy awareness campaigns. Sanders and Simons (2009) define co-creation as *any act of collective creativity that is experienced jointly by two or more people*. The current study focuses on co-creation with two stakeholder groups, i.e. the receivers of future awareness campaigns (children and teenagers) and professionals who work for and/or with minors and who have experience in the advertising and marketing field. Co-creation workshops with children, teenagers and professionals aimed at developing awareness campaigns is, to our opinion, a novel research method in the field of advertising. The current study uses co-creation tools and techniques from product design sciences and applies them to advertising. The advantage of the use of co-creation in this study is that insights can be generated jointly with stakeholders (professionals working with/for minors) and receivers (children and teenagers) of future awareness campaigns on the topic of advertising literacy, that cannot be generated otherwise. By means of co-creation, information that can enhance the effectiveness of awareness campaigns can be obtained directly from the children, teenagers and professionals themselves instead of relying merely on information from professional campaign designers.

Method

Two studies are reported with identical research objectives, but different participants and tools: minors (both children and teenagers) in the first study, and professionals working for and/or with minors in the second study. The research objective of both studies is twofold: to explore which media 9 and 10-year-old children and 12 and 13-year-old teenagers encounter in their daily lives and, as a consequence, are therefore best suited to reach these target groups (RQ1), and to investigate in which way four campaign elements (media channel, spokesperson, appeal and specific message) should be developed to generate positive attention of the two target groups (RQ2). The methodology is described separately for each study. The results of the first study were used as input for the second study.

Study 1: Children and teenagers

Participants

Four co-creation workshops with children from the 4th grade (9 and 10 years old) and four co-creation workshops with teenagers from the 7th grade (12 and 13 years old) were held in October and November 2015. Two groups of each age category participated in co-creation workshops with respect to each of the research questions. Respondents were pupils of two class groups of a school in a large city in Flanders, the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium. In total 19 pupils of the 4th grade (11 girls and 8 boys) and 16 pupils of the 7th grade (10 girls and 6 boys) participated in the study. Parental permission (active, informed consent) was obtained. Parents were informed that the workshop was recorded on video and that the videos were only used for the research objective of this study. Pupils were rewarded for their participation.

Creation of the workshop scenarios

Twelve master students in product design sciences facilitated the workshops in return for credits for an elective course on co-creation facilitation. In a preliminary session on advertising literacy, the students were randomly divided into four groups of three students each. The session introduced them to the purpose of the study and the objective of the co-creation workshops. In cooperation with the researchers, the groups of students had to create workshop scenarios to obtain answers to the two research questions. The session ended with scenarios for four different workshops, two workshops answering one particular research question each. To avoid inter-moderator differences, two different student groups facilitated one workshop each per research question. The four different workshops were used for both age groups, resulting in eight workshops in total.

Co-creation workshops

The co-creation workshops took place in school during the first two hours of the school day (100-120 minutes) in a room which was not used for teaching tasks. Organising the workshops in a different room than the class room was important to stimulate creativity and out-of-the-box thinking of the pupils. Otherwise, the classroom environment could prevent creative thinking of the children (Vaajakallio et al., 2009). The children of each of the age categories were randomly assigned to four groups (resulting in eight groups in total). Each group contained four to five pupils, both boys and girls. Four to five participants is the ideal group size for workshops, especially for children (Gielen, 2008). The co-creation process in each workshop was moderated by three master students. One of the students acted as an

observer and took notes. The other two master students facilitated the workshop. Each group had a video camera at their disposal to record the workshop. During the co-creation workshops the researcher observed the workshops and took notes.

Each workshop followed a scenario structured around four topics. First, one of the students briefly introduced the purpose of the workshop to the participating pupils. The pupils were then asked to introduce themselves to the other children and the students, to make them feel at ease. All pupils were told that there were no right or wrong answers, and that they could freely express their ideas. This was followed by asking pupils questions about advertising in general, i.e. whether they **know** what advertising is, what they thought spontaneously when they **hear** the word 'advertising' etc. After this introduction, each workshop continued with a group-specific workshop scenario. These scenarios are briefly explained in the next sections.

Customer journey

The four workshops with a focus on the first research question (media contexts minors encounter) used the customer journey approach as a research technique. *Customer journey* is a framework used in service design to investigate customers' behaviours, feelings, motivations and attitudes across a 'journey' and to search for solutions regarding problems that appear during the customer journey (Zomerdijk and Voss, 2010). Applied to the development of awareness campaigns, the customer journey technique was used to identify all the relevant media and advertising contexts minors encounter during a normal school day and to explore their attitudes towards advertising campaigns in these contexts. During the workshops the pupils went through their day from the moment they wake up until they go to bed, and reflected about all the things they consider as advertisements. To gain insights into their attitudes towards media and advertising in these media, the children went back to each of these advertising moments and enriched them with thoughts and feelings. They were probed to reflect whether they liked it to encounter advertising on these media channels or not. Figure 1 shows the customer journey.

(Insert Figure 1 here)

Games

The four workshops that focused on the elaboration of the four campaign elements (media channel, spokesperson, appeal and specific message) to answer the second research question used games and brainstorming techniques as workshop tools. In order to have the children generate as many ideas as possible, the tools used had to be adapted to the environment children are familiar with. Games are often used as tools in co-design with children to have them reflect upon their experiences and to stimulate their creativity in order to overcome constraints (Vaajakallio et al., 2009). In the present study, an adaptation of the goose board game and a game using brainstorming techniques were used to explore which specific campaign elements draw most positive attention and are most appealing to the target groups. During the game, pupils had to answer questions about and discuss advertising and campaign elements, and had to complete advertising-related tasks. For example, pupils had to rank different existing awareness campaign visuals from the campaign they preferred the most to the campaign they preferred the least. The moderators probed why the pupils ranked the campaign visuals in a particular order. When the question or task referred to one of the four main campaign elements, pupils had to discuss in group which type of element they preferred the most in a campaign. Finally, when all campaign elements were discussed, pairs of pupils

had to make an advertisement consisting of the four campaigns elements chosen by the whole group for a specific product type.

The discussion about appropriate campaign elements, was structured on the basis of four components. These components were further specified into subcategories (Table 1). The subcategories of spokespersons are based on the content analysis of Reece et al. (1999). Their study indicated that nearly 50% of food commercials targeted at children featured animals, cartoon figures and real persons (adults, children, teenagers or celebrities). Mascots were not considered as a subcategory in their content analysis. However, a brand character can be considered as a mascot (Beirão et al., 2005). The appeals are based on a content analysis of food marketing to children (Roberts and Pettigrew, 2007). From this study it appeared that fantasy, humour and action/adventure were the most often used appeals. Fear appeals were added as another potential appeal. A fear appeal could draw consumers' attention to privacy concerns. The fourth element of a campaign is the message itself. Children like music, jingles, animation and colours (De Pelsmacker et al., 2013). Therefore, the element 'message' can be subdivided into visuals, audio, specific language use and potential rhyme.

(Insert Table 1 here)

Study 2: Professionals working with and for minors

In the second study, nine professionals who work for and/or with minors or have experience in product design or marketing, participated in a co-creation workshop (an organizer of a festival aimed at children and teenagers, an organizer of youth camps, a 3th grade teacher, an employee of a creative agency, two youth workers, a researcher in pedagogical sciences, a researcher in marketing, and a person with a background in product design). The purpose and the research questions of the second study were identical to that of the first study. At the beginning of the workshop, the professionals were randomly divided into two groups and were asked about their preferences for advertising, which campaigns aimed towards minors they perceived as inspiring, and which as unethical.

Study 2 used the customer journey technique with a persona as a projective tool to answer both research questions. A *persona* is a tool used in product design which represents a concrete fictitious target user and represents a group of customers or users with shared characteristics (Miaskiewicz and Kozar, 2011, Adlin and Pruitt, 2010). The fictional representation consists of a name, a picture, characteristics and a narrative created around the persona. The narrative created in this study was the customer journey. The results of the first study with minors were used as input to create two personas, one that represented each age group, and the customer journey. One subgroup received a customer journey for a 10-year-old boy and the other subgroup for a 13-year-old girl. The professionals had to discuss in group whether the moment(s) when the persona encountered the fictitious awareness campaign was/were effective to use towards the target group represented by the persona. Additionally, the effectiveness of the four campaign elements (medium/media, spokesperson, appeal and concrete message) was discussed.

Data analysis

Within a week after the workshops took place, each group of master students provided the researcher with a short written report about the workshops. The researcher watched and

analysed all workshop videos, as did the master student who made notes of the workshop with the professionals. Videos were analysed by transcribing all video material.

The data obtained was analysed with *NVivo*, a software package designed to analyse qualitative data. Both an *a-priori* and an *inductive* approach were used to code the data (Mortelmans, 2007). The *a-priori approach* starts from a codebook to attach codes to the obtained information. In the present study, the codebook referred to different media channels, subcategories of the campaign elements and the different moments during a specific day in children's and teenagers' lives (customer journey). Data which could not be coded according to the media contexts and the campaign elements, but which provided relevant information to answer the research questions, were coded according to the *inductive approach*, which focuses on information that emerges from the data itself.

Results

RQ1a: Media and advertising contexts of 9 and 10-year-old children

Children of the 4th grade use both traditional and online media. Television is the most popular media channel in this age group. Digital media, such as computers, laptops, tablets and smartphones, are mainly used to play games or to watch online videos. Children encounter most advertising during the evening and in the morning, whereas advertising is encountered the least during their time at school. Children spontaneously refer to traditional television advertising as the most familiar advertising format. Especially on their way to school, children also notice outdoor advertising, such as, billboards or posters.

Children are aware of advertisers' commercial intentions and the potentially misleading character of advertising: "*Sometimes not everything advertising says is true, since they tell or write some things which appear not to be true*". Some children are aware of video advertising on YouTube and sponsored messages along search engines' search results. Other pupils mention having noticed advertising as *overlayers* which appear in between levels while playing games. These implicit advertising techniques were, however, not mentioned spontaneously by children. The moderators had to trigger them to think about potential advertising they encounter while interacting with digital or mobile media. Moreover, novel advertising formats that were noticed, appeared to be of a non-integrated nature (e.g.: overlayers), since they appear separately or independent of media- or program content. Therefore, they can rather be considered as online or mobile appearances of traditional advertising formats. For instance, overlayers which appear between game levels resemble a traditional 30-second spot which appears between different parts of a television program. Furthermore, children report that they only encounter online advertising rarely, whereas in reality they are exposed to online commercial messages several times a day. These results show that it remains important to raise awareness of integrated advertising formats which are embedded in media- or program context since children do not notice embedded advertising formats and the persuasive intentions behind them themselves.

Although they express that advertising blocks on television can be boring, they prefer this type of advertising the most. Children consider advertising that appears in games annoying. As one boy described it: "*If I cannot skip the ad, it irritates me and I get mad*". As a result, they mention that they try to circumvent these advertisements by closing the banners whenever possible. This indicates that a positive attitude towards a particular media channel (e.g. tablets for gameplay) does not necessarily lead to a positive attitude towards commercial

messages placed in these media channels. Consequently, in order to generate positive reactions towards an awareness campaign, attention should be paid to the attitudes children express towards advertising or campaigns placed in these media, and not to the attitude towards the media channel alone.

There is some disagreement amongst the professionals whether television is still an important medium amongst 9 to 10-year-old children. X: *"I perceive television as an outdated medium. (...) Nowadays, television functions more as a background medium. Children will turn the television on, but at the same time they are watching YouTube videos on their tablet. As such, you notice that watching television has changed and children do not like the idea that the programs do not appear at that specific moment when they want them to appear"*. Another participant agreed with this and added: *"They put both the television and the tablet on, but on YouTube they can access and search more easily and actively the content they are looking for"*. However, the teacher of the 3th grade notices that television viewing is still important to her pupils. Professionals mention that *YouTube* is an important platform in children's lives, and that it could be an opportunity to work with popular video bloggers (so called 'vloggers') who are several years older than the children of the target group, to enhance the distribution and persuasiveness of an awareness campaign.

The results of the workshop with professionals seem to correspond more or less with the findings of the workshops with the children themselves. Both television and online media (especially YouTube) are popular amongst 10-year-old children. Especially television in the early evening is particularly popular amongst children of the 4th grade. Outdoor advertising is noticed by children on their way to school as well. Online video blogs in collaboration with a popular video blogger appear to be an appropriate channel to attract 9 and 10-year-old children. In-game ads should not be used as a channel to spread an advertising literacy awareness campaign, since children hold negative attitudes towards this type of advertising and try to avoid it.

RQ1b: Media and advertising contexts of 12 and 13-year-old teenagers

Social media and mobile devices (tablet and smartphone) are heavily used by teenagers. Teenagers use these devices especially in the evening. Smartphones are used in the morning as well, but to a lesser extent. Tablets are mainly used to play games. Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Spotify and YouTube are the most popular social media and applications used. Teenagers do not use traditional media in the morning, whereas they do watch television in the evening. Therefore, television and, more importantly, social media are the most appropriate media channels to reach teenagers from the 7th grade.

Traditional television advertising is also mentioned spontaneously by teenagers. Teenagers are aware of the commercial intention behind advertising: *"Advertising serves to let people buy things or to download things on Facebook"*. They express having noticed sponsored messages amongst their Instagram pictures. They encounter advertising for other games while playing casual games on their smartphones. One teenager mentioned that advertising messages appear between search results in Google: *"If I search for something on Google, advertising appears between the search results on the right side on the screen in yellow or with the text 'ad' next to it"*. From these results it is clear that teenagers are aware of some online advertising formats. However, information about novel, integrated advertising formats and how they work needs to be explained to them (product placement, online behaviour advertising). Online behavioural advertising is a technique by which individuals are targeted

by advertisers, based on their previous surfing behavior on the Internet (Smit et al., 2014). Although teenagers have an enhanced advertising knowledge compared to pupils from the 4th grade, it is still necessary to educate them and to make them aware of advertising formats and commercial tactics.

Also according to professionals who work with youngsters, social media are very popular amongst teenagers. Moreover, it is mentioned that radio advertising is considered as something stupid for adults. They also mention that banner advertising in a game is not a good medium either to spread a campaign.

In sum, when teenagers are a target group for an advertising literacy campaign, social media appears to be the key medium to spread a potential media literacy awareness campaign.

RQ2a: Campaign elements appealing to 9 and 10-year-old children

Medium

As indicated previously, children of the 4th grade appear to have the most positive attitudes towards television advertising and video blogs on Youtube. Traditional media (television and billboard), mobile devices (smartphone and tablet) and social media (YouTube) are the most appropriate advertising media to spread an awareness campaign. The use of in-game advertising is annoying. Children try to avoid pop-ups in games and videos by closing them. Marketing professionals consider linking an advertising literacy awareness campaign to educational packages at school as a good alternative to a media campaign.

Spokesperson

Both boys and girls have a preference for advertising showing models of their own gender. Boys have a preference for cartoon figures, whereas girls prefer the use of real persons, such as peers or celebrities. In the end, cartoon figures were chosen as spokespersons by the whole group. Professionals notice that both cartoons and well-known persons such as local and popular celebrities can draw children's attention to a particular campaign. However, they warn for the potentially undesired effect that celebrities can draw all the attention to themselves, with the risk of the target audience not paying attention to the campaign message. Furthermore, the use of a well-known figure can easily fade over time. As a result, the choice between a cartoon or a celebrity should be considered carefully. Another idea mentioned by professionals was the organisation of a flash mob at school with the cartoon figure or mascot used in the campaign.

Appeal

Two different appeals were preferred, namely a humorous appeal and a playful, fantasy appeal with colourful elements. It could be recommended to combine both elements, in order to create a humorous campaign with a playful atmosphere consisting of several, colourful elements. The professionals added that children like humour used in cartoons or slap stick humour. Potential elements used in a humorous appeal towards this age group can be slips of the tongue or teasing elements.

Message

Children prefer short messages. Campaigns that contain a lot of textual information are disliked. Marketing professionals add that jingles, music and rhymes are popular amongst children of the 4th grade.

RQ2b: Campaign elements appealing to 12 and 13-year-old teenagers

Medium

As mentioned before, teenagers associate advertising primarily with traditional television advertising, although various social media are much more popular with this age group than with the younger one. Especially YouTube is a popular medium. However, video pre-rolls are disliked. Also in-game ads are not an appropriate context to spread campaigns. Professionals emphasize that the medium that is used to spread the campaign should not be too cursory. For example, a bus stop (where people are waiting) should be preferred over a passing bus. The smartphone is mentioned as a medium that teenagers often use. However, to avoid reluctance amongst the target group, attention should be paid that mobile ads are not perceived as annoying.

Spokesperson

Both mascots and real persons are indicated as preferred spokespersons. Teenagers choose a mascot as a spokesperson because of its potential humorous nature and cuteness. The professionals recommend using a real person to prevent that the campaign would look too childish. Further, professionals add that it is important to create a link between the spokesperson and the teenagers. This can be done by linking the spokesperson to activities in teenagers' lives.

Appeal

Teenagers hold a strong preference for a humorous approach. They report that a humorous campaign is remembered more easily. The professionals agree X: *"Humour can work better than fear or a prohibition or a ban to have people act in a certain kind of way. (...) Nevertheless, here again attention should be paid that the humour used is not to childish"*.

Message

Teenagers prefer a clear, short message, as was the case with children from the 4th grade. Professionals confirm that it is best to keep the message short. They recommend using a positive message instead of a negative one. According to teenagers, jingles, rhymes and funny music should be included in the message as well, since a message with a jingle or rhyme is more easily remembered. However, professionals mention that jingles or rhymes work better towards a younger age group. Teenagers prefer a slogan in English, since they consider English a cooler language than their mother tongue (Dutch). Moreover, teenagers express a dislike for advertising that is repeated. Personalization seems to be a strategy which grabs teenagers' attention.

An important insight resulting from all workshops is that minors initially focus on the visuals of a campaign, instead of on the verbal elements of the message. Only if they were explicitly asked to concentrate on the message text, they paid attention to it. This finding is confirmed by professionals who also recommend to focus on the visual part of the campaign. The

message should thus be made clear from the very beginning, and the visuals used in the campaign should be appealing enough to look further than the surface of the campaign. Furthermore, the professionals add that creating a narrative about the campaign and making a connection between the medium and the message can generate attention as well, and can ensure that the campaign message is kept in mind.

Conclusions, discussion, and implications for marketing, public policy and further research

The purpose of the current study was exploratory, i.e. to gain insight into how to make youngsters aware of being the target of advertising, and into which campaign elements should be present in an awareness campaign to draw minors' attention to the topic of advertising literacy and in which media contexts such an awareness campaign should be placed. The current study focused on co-creation in workshops with target groups of a potential awareness campaign on advertising literacy and stakeholders involved with the subject or the target groups.

This study also touches upon the question to what extent children and young teenagers are adequately coping with current advertising formats that they encounter during their customer journey. The Persuasion Knowledge Model describes how different knowledge structures develop and how individuals use them to cope with persuasive attempts made by advertisers and marketers. Although minors to a certain extent recognize advertising formats and understand their persuasive intent, our results indicate that this is only the case for traditional formats, such as television or outdoor advertising or online advertising formats that mimic traditional advertising, such as overlays or banners. However, children and teenagers do not spontaneously identify or recognize more novel, integrated formats, such as product placement or behavioural advertising, that are harder to identify as advertising. As expected, this is more outspoken the younger the minors are. The more easily recognizable a commercial message is, the more likely the activation of persuasion knowledge (Tutaj and van Reijmersdal, 2012). The development of advertising literacy could enhance minors' knowledge about novel advertising formats, which can eventually lead to the activation of the different components of persuasion knowledge when they are confronted with persuasive messages.

Overall, the results show that each age group should be approached partly differently according to their own skills, interests and needs. This corresponds to the stages in consumer socialization of childhood in which both age groups of the present study belong to different stages (Roedder John, 1999), and also to partly different patterns of media use. As to the latter, the findings of the current study confirm that minors' media use and the advertising they encounter depends on their age, as was found by Zarouali et al. (2015) and Apestaartjaren (2016). Despite the popularity of online media, traditional media, such as television and outdoor advertising, remain very important for the youngest age group (9 and 10-year-old children). Online media are specifically used to play games or to watch funny videos in the evening. These results correspond to the media use report by Zarouali et al. (2015). Video blogs are extremely popular amongst children of the 3th and 4th grade. As children mature into teenagers, their time spent online increases and the purpose of their media usage shifts. The interpersonal and social context becomes more important, hence the importance of having their own smartphone and the popularity of social media amongst teenagers (Apestaartjaren, 2016). In Flanders, 40.9% of the children in primary school possess their own smartphone, whereas this number increases to 90.5% when they enter the 7th and 8th

grade. In the present study, teenagers use online and social media to play games as well, but to a lesser extent than children of the 4th grade.

Attention should be paid to minors' attitudes towards advertising and campaigns embedded in different media channels. The popularity of certain media types within a particular age group does not necessarily lead to positive attitudes towards advertising and campaigns embedded within these media. Children and teenagers frequently mention that they dislike or even hate to be disturbed by advertisements when playing a game or watching a video. This result is in line with the findings of Apestaartjaren (2016), that a majority of Flemish youngsters perceives advertising as irritating and tries to avoid it.

With respect to the spokesperson in a campaign, the results of our study show that characters with male characteristics, with whom both boys and girls can identify, are most appealing. This strategy is indeed often applied by marketers who target children (Acuff and Reiher, 1997). Pupils from the 4th grade show a preference for a cartoon figure, whereas for teenagers of the 7th grade, a real person appears to be most appropriate, in order to prevent the campaign from being too childish, as this can be a risk when cartoons are used towards this target group. Professionals add that it is important to have the spokesperson involved in a narrative and linked to life experiences and the environment of the target group. This strategy is applied by the usage of brand characters as well (Hémar-Nicolas and Gollety, 2012). Both age groups prefer a humorous appeal. However, the preferred humorous execution is different in each age group. Slap stick humour with slips of the tongue is most appreciated by children, whereas a humorous appeal towards teenagers should not look too childish. As indicated by Sayers (2006) and the professionals who participated in the workshop of the current study, both age groups show a preference for a brief, clear and simple message. Usage of colourful visuals and images could enhance children's memorability of the campaign, whereas teenagers express a preference for sounds or a catchy jingle. Children's preference for colourful visuals and images is in line with the findings of managers' strategy in the usage of brand characters towards children (Hémar-Nicolas and Gollety, 2012).

The current study has a number of implications for marketing practice and public policy. It is recommended to use both traditional media channels (television, and billboards), and online media channels (video blogs or YouTube videos) to generate awareness in 9 to 10-year-old children. Due to the popularity of social media amongst teenagers, social media appear to be the most suited channel to spread an advertising literacy campaign amongst teenagers of the 7th grade. The results also show that minors do not encounter advertising much within their school environment. Since there is not much ad clutter within the school context, the school environment could also function as a potential channel to spread awareness campaigns on advertising literacy. Such a campaign can also be linked to educational packages on the topic of advertising literacy (Nelson, 2016, Hudders et al., 2015). Children and teenagers dislike advertisements during games or videos. Consequently, these media channels should not be used to spread an awareness campaign since the major challenge for social marketers is to draw attention in an overly cluttered media environment and to compete against commercial marketers who are better funded (Evans, 2008). When targeting children, a cartoon figure should be used, whereas for teenagers a real person appears to be most appropriate. Both boys and girls can identify with a male spokesperson or cartoon figure. Spokespersons or brand characters should be integrated in a narrative and linked to life experiences and the environment of the target group. Both children and teenagers prefer a humorous appeal and brief, clear and simple messages. Colourful visuals and images should be used for children, whereas teenagers have a preference for sounds or a catchy jingle.

Besides implications for marketing communication practice, our results also have public policy implications. Governments, public policy organisations and consumerist organisations could use our insights to develop awareness campaigns and/or to integrate messages in, for instance, educational packages for schools. Our insights can also be used to develop awareness campaigns for other issues that are relevant for children and teenagers, such as traffic education, promotion of healthy behaviour, protection of nature and environment, etc.

The study uses a co-creative methodology to avoid the more rational and deductive way of finding answers to a research question in traditional survey studies. The methodology starts from the real-life experience of children and teenagers, taking their costumer journey concerning media use and advertising into account. It allows to playfully and more spontaneously explore their knowledge, concerns and motivations. The idea generation and early concept developments with youngsters was used as an input for the workshop with the other stakeholders leading to an iterative knowledge building process. Further, the current research explored the use of specific tools that were developed to stimulate divergent and convergent thinking during these specific workshops, which can also be used in other research with these age groups.

Due to its limitations, the current study also provide other avenues for further research. All participating pupils study at the same school located in a large city in Flanders. This implies that all pupils have more or less the same socio-economic background and characteristics. Future studies should involve pupils from different types of schools and schools which offer different study tracks. Moreover, it appeared that some pupils received a lesson on advertising in primary school. Therefore, some results can be distorted and can give the impression that certain teenagers have a good knowledge about advertising already. However, advertising literacy is not an obligatory educational subject in Flemish schools, and not all schools offer it to their pupils. Hence, teenagers' overall level of advertising literacy might be lower than the level of some teenagers who participated in the workshop. A replication of this study amongst younger children and older teenagers is also called for, since media use and appreciation for campaign execution elements can differ substantially between age groups.

The standard theory about advertising literacy development in different stages in children and teenagers' lives was proposed in the era of traditional media and advertising formats. The perspective of the current study was to gain insight into the development of persuasive advertising literacy campaigns in traditional media as well as in more integrated and interactive online campaigns. Our results suggest that this framework needs to be reconsidered, as the expectation is that minors' advertising literacy will develop slower as advertising tactics become more interactive, integrated and sophisticated. More research is thus needed into the impact of novel advertising formats on the evolution of minors' advertising literacy.

Besides testing our findings by setting up formal experimental studies in which the effectiveness of these campaign elements is assessed, the insights of the current study can also be used to develop advertising awareness with different tactics and formats. For instance, serious games to enhance advertising literacy could be developed and tested, in which the insights of the current study are applied. These games could be promoted and spread via social media and/or used in class. Our insights can also be used and tested in other novel formats. For instance, video bloggers could be approached to spread advertising literacy messages and their effect. Advertising literacy could also be enhanced by adding disclosure

cues in offline and online media content that contains commercial messages (for instance an overlay that explains that part of the content has a commercial intent).

Looking to the future, with the emerging Internet of Things trend, different types of persuasive tactics may appear in children's everyday life, in the things they use or the toys they play with. For instance, sensors that in a more direct way monitor or measure or even influence behaviour may be integrated in the packaging of toys or food, or in the toys themselves, or at the locations they visit. These tactics would go beyond children consciously or unconsciously interacting with advertisers. They are about leaving traces that are captured by the things that surround them and that might be used for commercial purposes. In the near future, tools for advertising literacy development should be prepared to cope with these eventually new persuasive communication strategies.

Note

1. More details about the tools and techniques used can be obtained from the authors

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Figure 1. The customer journey

Table 1. Campaign elements

Medium		Spokesperson		Appeal	Message
Traditional	TV	Animal		Humorous	Specific characteristics of slogan or message: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Visuals- Audio- Language- Rhyme
	Print				
	Radio				
	Outdoor				
Online Media		Brand Mascot		Fantasy	
Social Media		Cartoon figure		Fear	
Mobile Media		Human	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Peers- Older peers- Parents- Teachers- Celebrity	Action/Adventure	