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MARKETING TO CHILDREN

MARKETING SKIEROWANY DO DZIECI

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Summary. The aim of the article is to describe the impact of marketing to children. The article shows the influence of advertising on children depending on their age. Moreover, it lists the types of negative behaviours among the youngest. The paper also describes the marketing techniques to children such as television advertising, Internet, buzz marketing, in-school marketing, product placement, kids' clubs, toys and products with brand logos, and youth-targeted promotions. The paper also provides a concise description of food marketing and the issue of childhood obesity.

Key words: children, consumers, marketing, childhood obesity, advertising.
Słowa kluczowe: dzieci, konsumenci, marketing, otyłość u dzieci, reklama.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of marketing strategies targeting children sparks heated, worldwide debates. The importance of children as a target market has emerged over the past decade. Children are not only considered as today's market but are also viewed as an important future market as they grow up, in addition to having a vital influential role in family purchasing decisions. Marketing has been held responsible for nurturing materialism in the society (Adib and El-Bassiouny 2012). Many researchers have examined the process by which materialism is inculcated and transmitted among the youth, a process known as "consumer socialization". Consumer socialization is defined as the process by which young people obtain skills, knowledge and attitudes relevant to their functioning as consumers in the marketplace (Ward 1974).

Changes in the family structure can explain the increased significance of children in the marketplace. Nowadays parents are willing to buy more material goods for their children due to certain societal trends such as small nuclear families or dual incomes. What is more, working parents or divorced parents seem to engage in a kind of compensatory behaviour, buying things in order to make up for time spent away from their offspring. Children are not only showered with material possessions, but also receive substantial amounts of money. Children have got their own disposable income and make their own decisions about purchases. The report of the U.K.'s Halifax bank from 2013 showed that children younger than fifteen years of age had access to more than £6 per week in pocket money, most of which was spent rather than saved. Similarly, in the United States, children between ages

eight and eleven were thought to spend an estimated \$30 billion per year (Angell and Angell 2013). Because kids and youngsters have increasing spending power, marketers need to treat them seriously and as independent markets.

The aim of the article is to describe the impact of marketing to children.

THE IMPACT OF ADVERTISING ON CHILDREN

Younger and older children differ in terms of their general understanding of advertising's purpose. Younger children very often do not understand the persuasive intent of advertisements, and even older children have difficulty understanding the intent of marketing techniques that blur the line between advertisements and television programs.

By about age five, most children can make a perceptual distinction between commercials and television programs. Young children can articulate that commercials are shorter or funnier than programs (Moore 2004). Before children reach the age of eight, they do not understand that commercials are designed to persuade them to buy specific products and believe that the purpose of commercials is to help them in their purchasing decisions (Calvert 2008).

Between age seven and ten, children begin to comprehend the world more realistically. By about the age of eight most children have at least an initial understanding that advertising aims to sell products. Older children, ten to twelve years old, acknowledge that advertising does not always tell the truth and are more likely to express sceptical views of advertising. However, a general understanding and sceptical attitude may not be sufficient.

Children between the ages of eight and twelve tend not to invoke their knowledge of persuasive influence attempts when viewing a television commercial, unless explicitly reminded to do so (Moore 2004).

TYPES OF NEGATIVE BEHAVIOURS AMONG CHILDREN

Sometimes craving for material goods among children leads to negative behaviours such as conspicuous consumption, conflicts with parents, compulsive buying or even shoplifting (Zaharie and Maniu 2012).

Conspicuous consumption. This kind of behaviour refers to spending a lot of money on luxury goods or services in order to maintain social status or prestige. Children very often want to impress their peers by having goods in the hope of being admired by them. Teenagers, for example, are interested in wearing branded clothes to make a good impression at any price.

Conflicts with parents. Children view between 20000 and 40000 commercials each year (Chaudhari and Marathe 2007). That is why the demands for advertised products or brands can never be satisfied by parents. In consequence, parental refusal to children's purchase-influence attempts can put a strain on family relationships and lead to family conflicts. The ability of children to nag their parents to buy a product is known as "pester power".

Compulsive buying. When shopping becomes excessive and is experienced as an uncontrollable, irresistible urge, the behaviour is considered compulsive. There are many examples of compulsive shopping among youth. Young people very often use shopping as a way to improve self-esteem, self-image or relationships with others.

Shoplifting. Children and teens steal because they cannot afford to pay for what they need or want — for example, they may steal to get popular name-brand items. What is more, young people steal in order to impress their peers.

THE ROLE OF PARENTS AND GOVERNMENT

Parents are the ones that start talking about consumption to children. They are the first and main agents of consumer socialization until children reach adolescence. Parents should provide parental care, education and protection to their children. What is more, parents ought to protect their children from invasive marketing and educate them on the nature and meaning of advertising. It is believed that child's health is mainly the responsibility of the parents, their actions and the way they exert control over their children's behaviour. Parental control may be expressed through parents' willingness to indulge children's requests and their day-to-day actions, such as whether they offer a fast food meal or add sweets to a school lunch box as rewards for appropriate behaviour. The majority of parents believe that the government should impose restrictions on the use of non-broadcast media to market unhealthy food to children. Most of the parents reported that their children always asked for food that they had seen advertised, and that these purchase requests were more frequently made by younger children than adolescents (Kelly et al. 2009).

There are some ways to protect children from overwhelming marketing. One of them is to control their exposure to commercialism including television, Internet, and other areas where children are exposed to advertising and marketing. Another one is to discuss with children the nature of marketing and effects of advertising. There are different approaches to teach children about marketing motives – Table 1.

Table 1. Approaches to teach children about marketing

Problem	1st Approach	2nd Approach	Results
Children assume advertising as objective information instead of persuasion	ask kids what they think about commercials or the toy premiums they receive in happy meals	allow children to purchase toys and realize that what they saw in the ads is not applicable in real life	children will become more aware of advertising and not see it as objective information
Children do not understand the different methods of marketing	discuss and look together for the common themes of marketing on TV and in restaurants	demonstrate that brands and specific products do not guarantee happiness	by understanding the methods, children will better understand advertisements
Constant exposure to marketing and advertising	restrict children's access to television and internet	monitor what children are looking at online and when watching television	children will not be as continuously exposed to and persuaded by marketing
Advertising in schools – children consider this endorsement from the school	explain to children that schools are not endorsing the brand advertised	become involved with your child's school to see what level of advertising is occurring and work to decrease that level	children will have an area where they won't be exposed to advertising

Source: Fast food marketing to children, https://www.wpi.edu/Pubs/E-project/Available/E-project-082107-231740/unrestricted/Appendix_1.pdf, access: 19.09.2015.

In many countries, policy makers have issued regulations or directives to the advertising industry to protect children from harmful consequences of high advertising exposure. For instance, Flemish Belgium does not permit advertising five minutes before and after programs for children under twelve. Sweden does not permit advertising aimed at children under twelve, does not allow programs to be interrupted by advertising and does not permit advertising before or after children's programs. The Swedish government views advertising to children as morally and ethically unacceptable, since children have difficulty distinguishing between the purpose of advertising and other modes of communication. In Finland McDonalds' cannot promote toys in its advertisements (Chaudhari and Marathe 2007). The UK has banned advertisements for unhealthy foods during children's programs. Australia and Norway do not allow advertisements during programs aimed at preschool children (Verhellen et al. 2014).

The importance of protective measures is also highlighted by the European Union in the Audiovisual Media Services Directive. According to article 9 of the Directive, Member States and the Commission shall encourage media service providers to develop codes of conduct regarding inappropriate audiovisual commercial communications, accompanying or included in children's programs, of foods and beverages containing nutrients and substances with a nutritional or physiological effect, in particular those such as fat, trans-fatty acids, salt/sodium and sugars, excessive intakes of which in the overall diet are not recommended. What is more, according to article 20, the transmission of children's programs may be interrupted by television advertising once for each scheduled period of at least 30 minutes, provided that the scheduled duration of the program is longer than 30 minutes (Audiovisual Media Services Directive... 2010).

FORMS OF MARKETING TO CHILDREN

Marketing to children uses many different channels such as television advertising, Internet, buzz marketing, in-school marketing, product placement, kids' clubs, toys and products with brand logos, and youth-targeted promotions.

Television advertising. Television is still considered to be the largest source of advertising to children. Children spend many hours during the week and the weekend watching television. Marketers use several different methods to attract children's attention, such as portrayal of fun, action, and emotion. Moreover, advertisers rely on strong visual images, including both live action and animation, to reach children. Television is one of the media that most contributes to the attitude of children towards products and brands (Estrela et al. 2014). Television is a medium that has a pervasive influence on children's lives.

Television food advertising affects children's food choices, food purchase requests, diets and health. Many television commercials use animation, colours, songs, melodies ("jingles") or slogans designed to be striking and memorable, which may remain in the minds of children. Song lyrics and rhymes can replay in children's heads, leading to automatic rehearsal and memory of content. When children are shown the same commercial repeatedly, they are more likely to remember the product advertised (Calvert 2008). The incidents of obesity is the highest among children who watch 4 or more hours of

television a day and the lowest among children watching an hour less a day. What is more, for many children reducing television viewing reduces weight (Chaudhari and Marathe 2007). Food is the most frequently advertised product category on US children's television and food ads account for over 50% of all ads targeting children. Children view an average of one food commercial every five minutes of television viewing time. The most frequently advertised food products are high sugar breakfast cereals. There are no advertisements for fruits or vegetables among the food advertised. The food advertised on children's television programming is inconsistent with healthy eating recommendations for children (Story and French 2004). It is said that television is a major source of children's exposure to unhealthy food advertising.

Internet. The Internet is another fast growing advertising venue. More than 13 million children aged 2 to 11 use the Internet and their numbers are increasing rapidly. Advergimes¹ are a common feature on websites designed for children. Approximately 64% of children (aged 5 to 14) who access the Internet do so to play games. With the growth of the Internet, advergimes have proliferated, often becoming an integrated part of brand media planning in an increasingly fractured media environment. The main objective of advergimes is to strengthen the brands (Evaluation of the European Platform... 2010). Advertisers use advergimes to promote their products and brands. They may be more persuasive than traditional television advertising as a result of the frequent use of animated imagery and children's immersion in the game (Owen et al. 2013).

The Internet is an extremely desirable medium for marketers wanting to target children because of some elements, such as (How marketers target kids... 2015):

- it is part of youth culture; this generation of young people is growing up with the Internet as a daily and routine part of their lives;
- parents generally do not understand the extent to which kids are being marketed to online,
- children are often online alone, without parental supervision;
- unlike broadcasting media, which have codes regarding advertising to children, the Internet is unregulated;
- sophisticated technologies make it easy to collect information from young people for marketing research, and to target individual children with personalized advertising;
- by creating engaging, interactive environments based on products and brand names, companies can build brand loyalties from an early age.

Buzz marketing. Many companies are using "buzz marketing". The idea of buzz marketing is to find the coolest children in a community and have them use their product in order to create a buzz around it. Buzz, or "street marketing," as it is also called, can help a company to successfully connect with the savvy and elusive teen market by using trendsetters to make their brand the "cool status" symbol. Buzz marketing is particularly well-suited to the Internet, where young people in particular use social networking platforms to spread the word about music, clothes and other products (How marketers target kids... 2015).

In-school marketing. Companies realize the power of the school environment for promoting their name and products. Marketers are eagerly exploiting this medium in a number of ways, including:

¹ Advergame: digital games or fantasy worlds with inbuilt advertising or branding.

- selling foods such as fast food, soft drinks, and snack items out of vending machines, student stores and snack bars;
- advertising placed on buses, billboards, posters, banners, and on book covers in exchange for funds;
- supplying schools with technology in exchange for high company visibility;
- sponsoring cultural events or sports events in schools;
- sponsoring contests and by giving away coupons in schools;
- placing logo of the company on educational material, awards and prizes, equipment, and clothing;
- giving away by food and beverage companies free product samples to promote and encourage consumption of their products.

Product placement. Product placement is growing in popularity and becoming a commonplace marketing technique. Product placement is a form of advertisement, where branded goods are placed in a context usually devoid of ads, such as music videos, songs, movies, comic strips, the story line of television shows, or news programs.

Kids' clubs. A kids' club is a kind of fan club created around a commercial entity that caters to children or families or the entity's mascot. Memberships in such clubs are usually restricted to children ages twelve or under. Club members usually receive direct mailing such as membership cards, birthday cards, holiday greetings, and newsletters. What is more, they can participate in contests, receive coupons and branded items such as screensavers, posters and discounts for items with the club's logo. Examples of this type of club include Burger King Kids Club, the Ronald McDonald Club and Disney. The Burger King Kids Club has got more than 5 million members (Story and French 2004).

Toys and products with brand logos. Food companies tend to advertise toys and products with brand logos to young children to develop positive relationship with the child and thereby promote brand awareness and preference. The food industry has partnered with toy manufacturers to create toys that advertise food – for instance Barbie doll is dressed in a McDonald's clerk outfit. She has got a tray of French fries, hamburger and soft drinks. The second example is Fisher Price Oreo Matchin' Middles Game – a matching game for young children to learn shapes with plastic real looking Oreo cookies that pull apart to reveal shapes (Story and French 2004).

Youth-targeted promotions. Promotions are one of the marketing methods for reaching children and adolescents and include cross-selling, tie-ins, premiums, and sweepstakes prizes. Cross-selling and tie-ins combine promotional efforts to sell products. Cross-selling is the action or practice of selling an additional product or service to an existing customer. A tie-in is an authorized product based on a media property a company is releasing, such as a movie, video game, board game, television program, or literary property. Tie-ins are a form of cross-promotion used mainly to generate additional profits from that property and promote its visibility. In the United States the food industry cooperates with Hollywood and Network studios, toy companies, and sports leagues.

Burger King has formed a linkage with Nickelodeon. Burger King has sold chicken nuggets shaped like Teletubbies. Disney has launched cross-selling campaigns and tie-ins to promote its characters. Kellogg's also has an agreement with Disney to extend the Disney

characters to cereals. McDonald's has formed partnership with the National Basketball Association (Story and French 2004). Premiums are promotional items such as toys, souvenirs that are linked to a product, and often require proofs of purchase to acquire. Sweepstakes are a form of contest where a prize may be awarded to a winner.

Sweepstakes are very often used as marketing promotions to reward existing clients, and to pay attention to a product. Cereals usually give premiums in the form of toys, puzzles or games. In 1909 Kellogg's Corn Flakes had the first cereal premium with The Funny Jungleland Moving Pictures Book. The book was originally available as a prize that was given to the customer in the store with the purchase of two packages of cereal. The offer was available for twenty-three years (Kellogg's Corn Flakes...). Fast food restaurants commonly use premiums in children's meals giving away toys. Toy premiums, offered with McDonald's Happy Meals, are a prominent form of food marketing directed at children.

FOOD MARKETING TO CHILDREN AND THE PROBLEM OF OBESITY

Many food products marketed to children are not healthful and promote obesity. Children are eating more food away from home, drinking more soft drinks and snacking more frequently. The growing epidemic of childhood overweight is a major public health concern. Obese children often face serious psychological problems and health risks due to their weight. Food choices established in childhood are maintained into adulthood. Obesity costs in children are already high, but, as children become obese adults, society is likely to incur additional enormous economic costs.

The World Health Organization (WHO) highlighted the scale of the problem by declaring obesity a worldwide epidemic in the twenty-first century. Concerns focus on the significant impact of obesity on quality of life and healthcare costs. The global problem of obesity, also among children, is the consequence of more sedentary lifestyles and the increased access and consumption of energy dense foods such as sweets, carbonated soft drinks, and snack foods (Childs 2011). Nowadays, according to WHO, being overweight and obese is the fifth leading risk for global deaths. More than 42 million children under the age of five were overweight or obese in 2013 and the issue is growing in low- and middle-income countries, particularly in urban settings. In developing countries with emerging economies (classified by the World Bank as lower- and middle-income countries) the rate of increase of childhood overweight and obesity has been more than 30% higher than that of developed countries. WHO specifies why obesity during childhood creates risk for future adults. An increased BMI (Body Mass Index) increases the risk of diseases such as cardiovascular diseases (mainly heart disease and stroke), diabetes, musculoskeletal disorders (osteoarthritis) and some cancers (endometrial, breast and colon). Childhood obesity is, according to WHO, associated with a higher chance of obesity, premature death and disability in adulthood. Additionally, obese children experience breathing difficulties, increased risk of fractures, hypertension, early markers of cardiovascular disease, insulin resistance and psychological effects (World Health Organization 2015).

The increase of food marketing to children has coincided with significant deterioration in the healthfulness of children's diets. Children's diets are now significantly deviating from the recommended diet. There has also been a dramatic rise in soft drink consumption. Between 1965 and 1996, the per capita daily soft drink consumption for boys aged eleven to eighteen rose from 179 g to 520 g, and from 148 g to 337 g for girls. Another important change is the growth of meals eaten outside the home and fast food consumption. In the late 1970's children ate 17% of their meals away from home and fast food accounted for 2% of their energy intake. By the mid to late 1990s those figures had increased to 30% and 10% (Schor and Ford 2007).

CONCLUSIONS

Nowadays children play an important role in consumer society. Children have become consumers, both directly as purchasers and indirectly through their influence on parents, grandparents, and others who spend money to buy things for them. Children are an attractive target group to marketers because they have got their own purchasing power, they influence their parents' buying decisions and they will be adult consumers in the future.

Children are targeted aggressively by advertisers, and are exposed to a growing amount of advertisements through a wide range of channels. Marketing channels include television advertising, Internet, buzz marketing, in-school marketing, product placement, kids' clubs, toys and products with brand logos, and youth-targeted promotions, such as cross-selling and tie-ins.

Food advertising is effective in changing children's food preferences, eating habits, and purchasing choices. Growing health problems such as childhood obesity and overweight can be linked to the advertising of high fat and sugar foods aimed at children. In the past decade, the problem of obesity emerged as a global health concern and received an accelerating amount of attention in the public health arenas.

Marketing is an inevitable part of the world we live in. Therefore, it is probably impossible to completely protect children from marketing messages. Children are more susceptible to the effects of marketing than adults. Young children are particularly vulnerable to this type of advertising because they are less able to understand the persuasive intent of commercials. Immature cognitive development limits the ability of children younger than eight to grasp the persuasive intent of commercials. Older children and teenagers can be manipulated by the strong emotive messages of advertisements. That is why parents must take active steps in order to protect their children from commercial influences that may negatively impact their health and well-being. Reduction of exposure to marketing will be a central part of any successful anti-obesity strategy. The government can also help by passing regulations that will ensure that unethical targeting is stopped.

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Streszczenie. Celem artykułu jest opisanie wpływu marketingu na dzieci. W artykule pokazano wpływ reklam na dzieci w zależności od wieku. Ponadto wymieniono typy negatywnych zachowań najmłodszych. W artykule opisano również techniki marketingowe skierowane do dzieci, takie jak reklamy telewizyjna, internetowa, marketing szeptany, marketing w szkole, lokowanie produktu, kluby dla dzieci, zabawki i produkty z logo marki, a także promocje skierowane do młodzieży. Uzupełnieniem artykułu jest charakterystyka marketingu produktów żywnościowych i przedstawienie problemu otyłości dzieci.

