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MARKETING TOWARDS CHILDREN
Ethical Concerns

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Abstract

The aim of the thesis is to analyze respondents' perception regarding marketing towards children. The central questions which will be presented by the theoretical portion of the research are.

- 1) How does the children's consumer market of today differ from the past and what method are today's marketers using in order to reach the children
- 2) How do these methods work, in what way is it apparent that the method work and is the marketing practice ethical
- 3) Where does the responsibility for shielding the children from marketing lie and what are the concerns of marketing towards children?

The conclusion can be made that the manner in which marketing towards children is done has become so sophisticated that to the extent that it is increasingly more difficult for parents to protect their children from being targeted by marketers. The evolution and emergence of new technology and a rapidly evolving society add to the difficulty. A new study in the subject should be made within 3-5 years in order to make a comparison regarding method and results.

As part of primary research, 100 visitors of Uhuru park Nairobi were interviewed in order to ascertain their perception concerning marketing towards children. It was surprising that majority of the interviewees had no idea of what is being marketed to their children, however majority confirmed that children are more targeted by marketers nowadays than it was 20-30 years ago

Keywords

Marketing, children, perception, quantitative research, Nagging

CONTENTS

1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION.....	6
1.1 Motivation for choice of research topic	7
1.2 Research Question	7
1.3 Goal of the Research.....	8
1.4 Description of Materials Used.....	8
2 INTRODUCTION TO THE SECONDARY RESEARCH.....	10
2.1 The Evolution of the children’s consumer market	10
2.2 Creation of “Tween” Market	12
2.3 Consumer Behavior	12
2.4 Commercialization In Schools	13
2.5 Online Advertising.....	14
3 TACTICS EMPLOYED BY MARKETERS	15
3.1 Creating a Need	16
3.1.1 Nagging.....	17
3.1.2 Adverts visibility	18
4 ETHICS IN MARKETING	20
4.1 How Parents Can Deal With Marketing	21
4.2 Advertising of Junk foods	23
4.3 Concerns.....	23
4.4 Findings and Applicability of Theoretical Research	24
4.5 Utilization of the theoretical part in the later part of the thesis	25
5 PRIMARY RESEARCH	26
5.1 Description of Method	26
5.2 Acquisition of Research Data.....	27
5.3 Back ground questions	28
6 CONCLUSIONS.....	40
6.1 Validity and reliability	41
6.2 Suggestion for further research.....	41
APPENDIX 1 ATTACHMENT 1: Survey Questions	48

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: <i>Coke machine inside a school</i>	13
Figure 2: <i>Scooby picture printed on a school bag</i>	14
Figure 3: <i>Junk food pictures</i>	23
Figure 4 <i>The gender of the parents</i>	28
Figure 5 <i>The age of the parent</i>	29
Figure 6: <i>Number of children</i>	29
Figure 7. <i>Which age category does your child belong to?</i>	30
Figure 8. <i>Has the way in which products are marketed changed</i>	30
Figure 9. <i>How informed are you on what is being marketed to your child</i>	31
Figure 10. <i>How often does your child nag after a product?</i>	32
Figure 11. <i>Is the nagging effective</i>	33
Figure 12. <i>Are marketers manipulating children?</i>	33
Figure 13. <i>Are marketers targeting younger children than they have in the past?</i>	34
Figure 14. <i>Has the children's consumer evolved</i>	34
Figure 15. <i>Has the children's consumer market become more materialistic</i>	35
Figure 16. <i>Are marketers promoting both values and products?</i>	36
Figure 17. <i>Are companies upholding good business ethics when marketing towards children?</i>	36
Figure 18. <i>How much responsibility in the children's consumer market</i>	37
Figure 19. <i>Responsibility in the children's consumer market</i>	37
Figure 20. <i>Are more mature (Expensive) products being marketed</i>	38
Figure 21. <i>Is there cause for concern regarding children's wellbeing</i>	38
Figure 22. <i>Should the children consumer market be regulated?</i>	39
Figure 23. <i>Has this survey helped you/made you more aware</i>	39

1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Advertisers spend 100s of billions of dollars a year worldwide in endless efforts of enticing people to purchase their products, besides luring peoples into purchasing what they do not actually need. Advetising interferes with individual security, offers deceiving solution and encourages mass consumption which is harmful to the environment (Beder Sharon 2009). Children are the most vulnerable to this sort of manipulation. Advertisers have now realized the potentiality in children consumer market and advertisers are increasingly targeting young children for three main reason:

- Because of the money children spend themselves for example in buying sweets and other items
- The influence they have on their parents spending
- As next generation consumers, advertisers are aware that brand loyalties and consumer habits formed when children are young and vulnerable will be carried through to adulthood.

Whereas Child-targeted advertising concentrated on simple things such as toys and sweets, it has now expanded and includes expensive and sophisticated items such as Computer products, sports equipment, clothes, toiletries as well as cars and credit cards. (Beder Sharon 2009.)

Factors such as smaller family size, two employed parents and postponing children until later in life when they are financially stable, have ensured that parents of today have more disposable income and hence are able to buy more for their kids (Dr Gursharang Singh 2009)

Marketers have realized that children of nowadays are more independent and powerful when it comes to making decision on what the parent should buy and they are taking advantage of that situation to arouse the child nagging power in order to make the parents buy the product (The media awareness network 2009).

Marketing towards children is considered unethical and there is a growing movement to protect the children from marketing. Organizations and coalitions including the Cam-

paign for a Commercial-Free Childhood have formed to stop the commercial exploitation of children (Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood 2010).

In Kenya children's consumer market is regulated by Consumers Association of Kenya but influence of marketing towards children's is nevertheless apparent, how do Kenyan parents perceive the idea of marketing towards children's in Kenya? . Are the same agendas and concerns applicable in a market which is regulated by legislation?

1.1 Motivation for choice of research topic

The motivations for the topic aroused after the Author watched a program aired on a Kenyan local television which talked about ill effects of marketing towards children, this prompted the author to search for more information concerning the topic in books, internet, articles, magazines and DVDs. The author found a lot of materials concerning this topic and has used this information as the frame of reference to compile this report.

Also this topic is major marketing issue that any Business administration student should not ignore. It focuses on major theme of children consumer behavior and deals with ethics of marketing to children. If a business is to be sustainable it should maintain a high standard of ethics and protect the rights of children in the society. Even if children pose a profitable market segment marketers are not justified to overlook their welfare and concentrate on maximizing their profits.

1.2 Research Question

The theme of the research will build around the following three main research questions, which are reflected below:

- I. In what way does consumer market of today differ from the past and what methods are today marketers using in order to reach children's.
- II. How effective are these methods, and are the marketing practices ethical?
- III. Who is responsible of protecting the children's from false commercial and what are pros and concerns of marketing towards children's.

These research questions will form the basis of the entire thesis. The aim of the research questions will address matters such as the evolution of children's consumer market, marketing methods applied to consumer markets, how these methods work and what reactions they create, the ethics behind marketing to children's, where does the responsibility for this market lie and what are the resulting concerns of the children's consumer market on the children

1.3 Goal of the Research

The main aim of the research is to assess the Kenyans parent's attitudes towards the different forms of the children's consumer markets at Uhuru Park in Kenya. The alternate aim of the research stems from the primary research to analyze the level of awareness of the children's consumer market in Kenya and also to alert the respondents concerning children's consumer market.

The author plans to acquire information through quantitative research, analyzing the evolution of the children's consumer market, the marketing methods used and the effectiveness of these methods, the ethic employed in marketing to children's and who is responsible for this market.

1.4 Description of Materials Used

To acquire information the author has relied on articles found on internet and hard copies, websites, DVDs and also televised documentary programs. In order to attain the ultimate goal of the thesis and to answer the presented question the author has conducted a literary study and conducted an empirical research using a questionnaire. Questionnaires are primarily used to collect descriptive or explanatory research (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2003,281)

The theoretical portion of this thesis begins in chapter 2 with an introduction 02

The research will employ theories derived from the United States market as the foundation and analyze its applicability with the gathered sample of the Kenyan respondents.

Although the results of this research are meant to be applicable universally, the problems are actually limited to the opinions of parents' visitors at Uhuru Park Nairobi. The idea of this thesis was to generally cover as many facets of the children's consumer markets in order to get a more comprehensive overview of the state of the market as a whole rather than an in depth analysis of one of the facets of the market, since all facets of marketing towards children's are the cause for this phenomena, Analyzing the different marketing methods and also children's perception of the marketing are two very important areas but due to time constraints this facet fell beyond the scope of this research. The focal point of the research has been limited to the following core elements: the manner in which marketers target children, the change in the way children's are marketed to in comparison to the past, the ethical aspect of marketing towards children's, and the4 impacts of marketing.

2 INTRODUCTION TO THE SECONDARY RESEARCH

This chapter will provide an overview of marketing aimed at Children's and the evolution of the children consumer market

2.1 The Evolution of the children's consumer market

In order to understand the evolution of the children's consumer market today, it's ideal that one must comprehend how different chain of events led to the point where we are today in the United States consumer market.

The two main factors are:

- The USA federal trade commission (FTC) unsuccessfully attempted to ban the televised advertising towards children in the late 1970s
- The economic policy of the Reagan Administration which came to be known as "Reaganomics" in the 1980s.

(Media education foundation 2008.)

The United States Federal Trade commission (FTC) is an independent agency of the United States government, established in 1914 by the federal Trade Commission Act. Its main task is the promotion of consumer protection and the elimination and prevention of anti-competitive, fraud and deceptive business practices (Federal trade Commission 2010) In the late 1970's the united United States Federal Trade commission set out to ban television advertising towards children between the ages of 8 to 12 specifically targeting ads for products such as sugared cereals, their argument were that children's are being deceived by television adverts since at this age they cannot be able to differentiate commercials and a program. It was also decided that adverts aimed at children of the ages 8 to 12 years old were also inherently deceptive and were basically manipulating children. (Campaigns for commercial free child, 2005.)

The industries which were heavily affected as a result of this ban included toy manufacturers, the sugar and cereal companies. They responded by forwarding their case to the United sates Congress (Media Education foundation 2008). The United States congress is the Bicameral legislature of the federal government of the United States of America, consisting of two hous-

es i.e. the senate and the House of Representatives. Both senators and representative are selected through direct election (House of representatives 2008).

To counter the ban of advertisement the toy industry along with Candy producing corporation proceeded to plead their case of not enforcing the ban, through the plea of the corporation's, the United States Congress removed much of the federal Trade commissions' authority to regulate marketing to children.

In 1980 United States Congress finalized the removal of the ban by passing FTC improvement act, the law that mandated that the FTC would no longer have any authority to spread any rule in the children's advertising proceedings (Media education foundation 2008).

The legislation which regulates business practices has three core functions: Regulation is enforced in order to shield companies against unjust competition, to shield consumers against unjust business practices and to shield society wellbeing against unrestrained business practices (Kotler 2000,151).

During the Reign of President Ronald Reagan (1981-1989), His government had totally de-regulated children television by 1984. This led to revelation among the corporations involved that congress would not interfere in children marketing since they no longer had power in the matter. So during the next 5 years of president Reagan Reign Corporations exerted even more freedom in the unregulated children market, the flood gates had been opened (media education foundation 2008). In the past marketing has been described as a means to increase the volume of sales, by today standard this is not the case. Marketing is nowadays a means to satisfy customer needs (Kotler 2005,6)

In the past child targeted market has been a very inexpensive market with concentration on products such as candy and toys, today it is much more advanced and more adult like products ranging from clothes, shoes, a range of fast foods, sports equipment, computer products and home electronics, In addition today's child-targeted market even includes expensive and advanced products such as cars and credit cards which are deemed as strictly adult products. Marketing towards children and the children consumer market in itself is not a new concept by any means, this market has existed for over a half century, but there is something disturbingly different in the way and the length marketers go to target children (media education foundation 2008). No longer are the adults seen as the sole consumers, each year marketers spends billions when marketing towards children. Up until the age of Eight years old children believe everything they are told. Marketing

portrays an extremely twisted view of the real world where the message clearly is that one must focus on obtaining, trading and accumulating. Childhood is being spoiled with such jaded characteristics of marketing towards children as: promoting sexuality, violence and poor nutrition (Murphy 2007)

2.2 Creation of “Tween” Market

The changes within children’s consumer market has evolved in such a way that there has been created a completely new market segment known as the “tween” market which includes children’s from the age of nine to twelve and the ability to define it has been one of the most significant current development in advertising towards children. Marketers are realizing that by treating tweens like teenagers there’s much money to be made, the tweens are forced by market industry to grow up rapidly. According to industry research, children aged eleven and older do not think about themselves as children any longer. This is apparent as the toy manufacturers have lowered the maximum age of their target customers for toys to ten years from the previous 14 years.

When companies treat pre-adolescents as independent, mature consumers the marketers have, in a subtle way, been very successful in taking the gatekeepers who in this case are the parents away from the picture. Fashion marketers such as Calvin Kleign, Fitch and Guess uses detrimental marketing campaigns which incorporates young models, this adverts in a way promotes adult sexuality. (Media Awareness network 2009.)

In year 2008 it is estimated that tweens spent \$51 billion on themselves while another \$ 170 billion, this makes it an attractive market segment to the marketers. Walker(2009)argues that tweens are no longer interested in toys, instead tweens are interested in fashion, music and celebrities. Tweens are now more involved with technology than before, as a marketer you can reach tweens by utilizing technology such as email and cell-phones. Children will rarely check their mails.

2.3 Consumer Behavior

According to Varey (2002,42) Consumers buying behavior is about what people do as consumers and the process they use to select, secure, use, evaluate purchases and how

they influence others . The consumer market as a whole is comprised of final consumers. Marketers ask themselves one fundamental question; in what manner are consumers responsive to a variety of market stimuli they are faced up with? There is a greater application for this knowledge since the company can figure out how consumers react to diverse product features, prices and advertising appeal has an immense benefit compared to their competitors (Kotler 2005, 255).

It is fascinating to conceive of children as people who are continually in the process of obtaining the functions of a grown-up person. A research presented by Wrad, Wackman and Wartella (1975) in which they portray how children acquire the knowledge of how to make purchase acknowledges this process as “consumer socialization of the acquisition of marketplace skills” (Zaltman 1979:11,271)

Kids identity should never be defined on the basis of materialism just like it is now. The media has continuously reflected kids as consumers and they are extending their advert to younger children. Children should be raised to be responsible citizens rather than just consumers. Creating healthy, happy families means spending time together rather than spending money Journal of America medical association has said that children between the age of 2-17 on average spend 15,000-17,000 hours watching television compared to 12,000 hours they spend on school (Media awareness network 2009).

2.4 Commercialization In Schools

To keep up with the budgets, schools authorities have allowed corporation to access children in schools in exchange of cash,computers and educational materials.



Figure 1:*Coke machine inside a school* (Fresh healthy vending 2010).

Corporations have realized the potentiality there is in promoting their products at a schools environment since it is one of the places they are sure of capturing the youths. Corporations are exploiting this opportunities in a number of ways which

Includes:

- Organizing contests and incentives for example, the Pizza Hut reading incentives program in which children are awarded a monthly pizza coupon for achieving a monthly reading goals
- Adverts posted in classrooms, school buses, on computers and common halls in exchange of funds
- Sponsoring events in schools in which they cunningly display their products
- Supplying schools with technology in exchange of high company visibility
- Sponsored education materials which reach schools by way of conferences, unsolicited mass mailing and offers in education journal for example McDonald's has student design a McDonald's restaurant

(Media awareness network 2009.)

2.5 Online Advertising

Unlike television advertising, internet advertising is not highly regulated and marketers are finding internet as a very potential medium for targeting kids. Kids go online to play games, Listening to music online or downloading, search for TV programs and searching information about TV characters (Kids and Advertising 2010).

Through internet marketers can create a profile of the children will effectively be used later to sell them product. Also marketers uses internet to introduce TV characters, those TV characters are later modeled into toys, printed on school bags, T-shirts and sold to children for example many kids would opt for school bag that is having a picture of Scooby doo



Figure 2: *Scooby picture printed on a school bag* (Gumtree 2008)

3 TACTICS EMPLOYED BY MARKETERS

This chapter begins by shedding light on how marketing methods are used to reach children. How marketers are creating need, in what form do these needs manifest themselves.

In the world today marketing towards children spans across several different types of media outlets, ranging from televised to printed media. Children televisions programming whose main characters are created in the image of toys are essentially a version of an advertisement aimed at children. By the year 1988 an estimated 64% of merchandized toy were toys connected with children television programs, cartoon characters would appear in television series after which they became merchandised on hundred of products ranging from T-shirts and toys (Curley 2008).

When viewing a television program for children one does not anticipate becoming a target for marketers and advertisers simply through viewing the show. When perceiving television programs for children, things such as entertainment and education come foremost to mind but not consumerism. However this is not usually the case, marketing and advertisement that reaches children through television and several other medium is extremely apparent. (Curley 2008.)

Also the child is unable to distinguish between the program and the advertisement in between (Grossberg 1998).using several techniques, marketers and advertiser make their presence in the world of children seen and heard at an early stage in their life."Marketers plant the seeds of brand recognition in very young children, in the hopes that the seed will grow into a lifetime relationships" as presented by Media awareness network (2004)."According to the centre for a new American dream, babies as young as six months of age can form mental images of corporate logos and mascots". To make an almost certain deal the company just need to create a logo and make sure that said logo gets imprinted into the children mind (Curley 2008).

In today market kids represent a consumer group with huge purchase power, this is due to the fact that today's children influence their parent's decision on what to buy. Another important factor that the companies are aware of is that the children of today will be the grown up consumers of tomorrow, so by introducing their brand into the awareness of a child at a fairly early age, might ensure that when the child becomes an adult he will still be fond of the product. The amount of cash used on marketing for children has sky rock-

eted in the past ten years, from a mere \$100 million in 1990 to a staggering \$2 Billion in the year 2000 (Association of Consumer Research 2009)

The so called “Buzz marketing” is possibly the single most unfair means of treatment when marketing towards children. This marketing method can be described as “a new twist on the tried-and-true word of mouth” method. The idea is to find the” coolest” kids in a community and have them use or wear your product in order to create a buzz around it” (Media awareness network: How marketers target kids 2009). This is a devious marketing method as it essentially promotes materialistic values to children by creating an impression that only the “coolest Kids” poses the latest and greatest products in the market. Parents should be concerned about the effects excessive materialism can have on the development of their children self image and values” as presented in the media awareness network” special issues” (2004).

When taking a closer look at the connection that exists a midst consumerism and children, one can see that the child’s parents are a large part of the equation. Fundamentally it is the parents who end up purchasing the products and not the children. The grounds for the phenomena is part of the ethical structure of the American society in the 21 century, “parents today are willing to buy more for their kids because trends such as smaller family size, dual incomes and postponing children until later in life mean that families have more disposable income.

3.1 Creating a Need

Marketers continually create and develop attractive products and create a marketing strategy to try and win consumers to buy them thus creating a need

(Marketing terms 2009). Marketers have often been criticized of influencing consumers into thinking that they “need” several material things, in addition to the creation of said need marketers convey that individuals who do not posses these material things are discontented and viewed as lesser people, this question is very tricky but at the same time is a question worth putting into consideration: Are marketers meeting the actual needs of the consumer or are they just dictating to the consumers what they should need (Solomon 2007,21).

Before a marketer can start marketing to the children he or she must get inside mind of a child, to do this marketers utilize the services of top psychologist and researchers to get a clear picture of children development, emotional and social needs at different stages of their lives. In 1999 this way of utilizing psychologists to aid marketers gained a lot of attention, prompting a group of mental health professions in America to issue a letter to American psychological association encouraging them to declare the practice as unethical, the APA is still examining the issue (American awareness network: How marketers target kids 2009).

Markers are to blame to the guilt that working parent's experience. Working parents perceive that their children are "missing out" and therefore are prone to do anything in order to bridge that gap. Fueled by these emotions parents will cater to their child's desires regardless if it means buying the newest toy out on the market or the latest fashion trend (Curley 2008).

Gury Ruskin and Allen Kanner along with 60 more psychologist, who together signed the letter addressed to the American Psychological Association, intended to unveil the exploitation and manipulation of children to public awareness. The letter to APA also contained information regarding how marketing towards children was dealt with in other countries. "Sweden and Norway prohibit television advertising directly targeting children below the age of twelve, Greece bans television advertising of toys between 7:00 am and 10:00 pm. Quebec prohibits advertising directed at children below the age of thirteen. In USA there is no such protection to kids against harmful commercials (Commercial Alert news 1999).

The danger of not protecting an American child lies within the value which are being relayed to the children's through this manipulation;"when advertisers are using psychological principles to sell products to children, they are not only selling that product, but they are also selling larger value that says making money and using money for the purchase of material things will make you happy" as presented by HAYS (1999).

3.1.1 Nagging

Among the reasons why the children are targeted by marketers is because of their persuasive methods of how to convince their parents to purchase items for them. The children

of today are more independent than the previous generations and this has resulted in children being more articulated when trying to persuade their parents into purchasing something “pester power” is what is referred to when children get their parents to buy something for them, by annoying them, which they would have normally not purchased. The marketers who target children have their ultimate goal of strengthening the children pester power because they are aware of how a powerful marketing tool it is (Media Awareness Network 2009).

A research was carried out to determine the height of tempers at which the child would get their way and ensure that the product will be purchased by their parents (Media education foundation 2008).

One very important issue that marketers have discovered is what the children’s parents have known for a long time, children like to collect things. In the past a child’s collection comprised of marbles, bottle tops or coins, but today children build immense collections of items that are only attainable through store purchase. These items are for example Beanie babies, Barbie dolls or Pokémon collectors’ cards and figures. An example of a simple yet effective marketing campaign is that Pokémon, all you need to do is create 150 Pokémon characters, and then they launch a marketing campaign carrying the slogan “Gotta Catch Em All”. The essence of the campaign is to buffer children to purchase all of the 150 cheaply made, overpriced figures. (Connor 2002.)

Federal trade commission’s report also pointed out that toys made as characters from mature entertainment are often marketed towards young children, such as action figure from movies such as The Terminator, The Texas chainsaw Massacre, Alien and various other actions and horror movies. Problem lies in the way these products are marketed ,Video games with mature and teen ratings are advertised in magazines aimed at a younger audience while toys and action heroes based on restricted movies and mature rated video are marketed to children as young as four years old (Media awareness network-special issues for young children).

3.1.2 Adverts visibility

Advertising is everywhere and cannot easily be avoided. It is estimated that we see about 3000 adverts per day, this is no exceptional to the kids. Experts says that by the age of ten an average child is familiar with about 400 brand names. Even outer space is not safe from commercialization. Russian space program launched a rocket bearing a pizza hut

logo and some companies have even investigated to place some adverts in space which will be visible from earth (Media awareness network 2010).

Big corporation uses the term educating children whenever they are confronted concerning the adverts they place on kids, they argue that they are providing information about the benefits of new products. Most media relies on adverts for their funding and hence getting rid of adverts aimed at children would mean kids media will never be made anymore (Kids and Advertising 2010).

4 ETHICS IN MARKETING

This chapter portrays the ethical aspects of marketing and further how parents can deal with marketing towards children

Business ethics are behavioral regulations that steer dealing in the market place-they are principles against which the majority of the populace in a society review what is correct and incorrect, acceptable and unacceptable (Dictionary of Business Terms 2010). These general principles are comprised of sincerity, dependability, equality, admiration, impartiality, concern for others, responsibility and devotion. Ethically conscious business can be seen as superior business.

A survey of the U.S consumer, conducted by a conference board, concluded that social responsibility in areas such as employment practices, business ethics and environment issues were the most significant decisive factors for the majority of the respondents when asked to generate opinions regarding corporations. In the eyes of the consumer, it is the company which exercises better business ethics that also has superior products. Ethical behavior is in itself not simple to define the perception of right or wrong differ immensely between individuals, organizations and cultures. This way of thinking applies to business as wheel. Some business perceive it to be their prerogative if sales personnel market products by any means necessary, even if this type of approach entailed them to give out wrongful information , on the other hand there are companies which believe that anything but the absolute truth is a terrible injustice towards consumers (Solomon 2007,20).

The general idea of marketing is the generation of competitive advantage, an advantage for an organization is attained when the said organization manages in a superior, to suit the product and service obligations of its target market in comparison to its competitors. As societies general economic system has become more accomplished in catering to the requirements and desires of its target market, the organizations' focal point has shifted towards holding on to ethical values rather than plainly supplying products (Encyclopedia of Business and Finance 2009).

To neglect ethical marketing practices can lead to disgruntled clients, unfavorable media attention, loss of trust, discontinued business relationships, in some instances legal action.. These looming issues are why organizations are aware of the wants and opinions of their clients and this is the reason why the organizations strive after methods to care for

their enduring interests. Secondly, organizations that neglect ethics can veer into situations where they are pressured either by society or governing bodies to take more responsibility for their actions. Since neglect is obvious in some cases there are individuals who are convinced that these dubious business practices flourish. This has resulted in the substantial power on marketing by interest groups, professional associations and self regulatory groups. This apparent need of social accountability has introduced marketing practices to an array of national and state regulations intended to protect customer rights or to fuel trade. (Encyclopedia of Business and Finance 2009.)

4.1 How Parents Can Deal With Marketing

Advertisers are aware that creating the 'nag' factor is all they need to make parents subject themselves to the needs of their children. It is unreasonable to always criticize children for wanting what they have seen being advertised. Still it does not warrant buying all what the kid demands (Kids and advertising 2010).

When parents want to educate their children about how young people are targeted in advertisement and marketing they must explain that the idea of advertisement and marketing is to entice people to buy the products. The parents should explain that it is the companies that have created the demand and supply of the product; by using the advertisement they ensure themselves that the child will also experience a need for the product. Also the parents should make the child aware that marketers are not always after the welfare of the child but they are concerned about maximizing their profits (Peter Drucker 2009).

The parent should also engage the children in a discussion where they explain how companies target children and what different techniques marketers use to do so, it would also be useful to try to map out if the child feels like some of these techniques have encouraged them into wanting an item that they did not know existed before they saw it in an advertisement (Communications Research Group 2005). Parents should also educate their children's on what is unethical for the advertisers to do. Parents should also study commercials and printed adverts to measure how the child has reacted to their guidelines. Parents are also encouraged to challenge their children's perception on what is cool, a dialogue could ensue around questions such as; has the child ever felt bad for not owning a toy or any other item. What might be the reason for this bad feeling and from where does it originate? has the child ever had a feeling that people would like her more and

want to be friends with her if she owned a certain toy or item, and what the child believes is the cause of this. Has any of the adverts that are in printed media and also shown in television ever made the child feel like she would like herself more or be more acceptable to others if she owned the item on the advert, has she ever felt that it is her duty to make sure that is appreciated by others and this can only be accomplished by owning certain toy or item. These issues are not only limited to toys but also young age children receive twisted perception of a superficial beauty standard generated by modern society. Children mostly girls, are early targeted for the next consumer phase involving the beauty standards, the media tries to force them to grow up fast. Issues such as, have they ever worried about their looks, have they ever felt that others would like them most if their face, body or hair looked in certain way? has there been an advert that made them feel like the products being marketed would make them be more satisfied with themselves if they changed their appearance using the products in the advert? What the companies are doing is putting a price on the happiness and well-being of young people (Marketing and Consumerism: Dealing with marketing-What can parents do 2009)

Parents should support their children to question the product attributes that might seem “over the top”. A practical way to do this is to have own blind test at home or then simply purchasing the product, analyzing its attributes and comparing it to the claims made in the commercial. Further methods that parents might find helpful is to motivate the entire household to watch non-commercial television broadcasts so that young children would not be exposed to it, and if your family does watch programs aired on commercial channels then it would be good idea to tape the programs so you can fast forward through the commercials. Other slightly more extreme ways of tackling this problem would be to inform the children of the repercussions mass consumption has on our planet and our society, how the diminishing resources are unfairly distributed among the people of the world. Parents can also celebrate the spend nothing day at home and use it as a forum to discuss why people buy things that they do not actually need and try to discuss how the children can become clever consumers and better on saving money rather than spending it. The parents should explain to their children that there are others less fortunate children that do not have as many toys as them. (Marketing and consumerism: Dealing with marketing –What can parents do 2009.)

4.2 Advertising of Junk foods

Junk food refers to any food that is high in calories, fat, salt and sugar which have very little or no nutritional value. This food is often tasty and highly addictive. McDonalds, Hesburger and Coca-cola are good examples of junk foods that are highly advertised to kids. Marketing of junk foods to promotes unhealthy eating habits to children and which are likely to continue into adulthood.

According to report by compass (2010) 70% of three year olds recognize the McDonlads symbol yet only half of them know their own surnames. Some advertisers takes advantage of children fear by implying that the child will become more polular, sporty or happier if they consume those foods. (Sustain 2010.)



Figure 3: *Junk food pictures* (Sustain 2010)

Among other health complications such as lack of energy, heart disease, poor concentration and liver failure. Junk food is the number one cause of obesity in children. World health organizations have often criticized the advertisement of junk food as a way to curb the widespread obesity cases in childrens (WHO 2010).

UK banned adverts of junk food in television programs that are aimed for under 16. This was in response to increased cases of children obesity in UK (BBC News 2008).

4.3 Concerns

The parents of these young children have a huge responsibility and they play a vital role in shielding their children from invasive marketing, and teaching them about the nature of advertising from an early age. Consumer reports magazine (2006.12) states the following “young children have difficulty distinguishing between advertising and reality in adverts, and adverts can distort their view of the world.” Further research revealed that children between the ages of two to five are not able to see the difference between nor-

mal television programming and commercials. Before the age of eight young children do not understand that advertisement does not necessarily reflect reality, therefore they are most vulnerable to misguiding advertisement (Media Awareness Network: Special issues 2009)

The issue that causes the most worries, according to the Canadian Toy Testing Council is that toy advertisements are overstating the facts. Young children are often misled by advertisement to think that a toy can do much more than what it actually can because of the way the toys are presented in magazines and in television commercials. Several authorities have responded to this by banning all advertisement and commercials directed towards children. In Canada the province of Quebec has issued a ban on all magazine, newspaper and broadcast advertisement aimed at children under the age of thirteen. In Sweden advertisement aimed at children under the age of 12 have been banned and the country is trying to lobby other European Union countries to implement the same policies (Media awareness Network: Special issues, 2009)

The marketing of products based on such popular pre-school TV shows like the Teletubbies manifested the start point of recognizing toddlers as a consumer market. The industry magazine Kid screen informed on this new trend: “Agencies are cautiously eyeing the zero- to- three year old demographic- a group that poses tremendous challenges and opportunities, because research has indicated that children are capable of understanding brands at very young ages. “ A working and wholesome society must raise children to be accountable members of the society instead of just consumers. Creating healthy, happy families means spending quality time together instead of spending money on products. (Media Awareness Network: special issues 2009.)

4.4 Findings and Applicability of Theoretical Research

The theoretical portion has covered the cause for today’s children’s consumer market using the United States market as a base for the evolutionary process, consumer behavior was also defined. Method used by marketers were presented and described.

To summarize the theory it can be concluded that the children’s market has up until the past few decades evolved in relation with modern society. Today’s situation is that the

market and the marketing itself is becoming so sophisticated and so refined that society and parents in particular have a hard time keeping up with the pace. Marketers are seen as making a tradeoff between children's well being and increased profit; marketers are also viewed as essentially taking advantage of parents as well as children.

Due to fast paced lifestyle of modern society many parents feel that they are missing out on quality time with their children's, marketers have used this angle of insecurity to solidify a feeling of guilt if the parents does not cater for the child's wants. Due to today's children increased independence they are also more vocal about their wants and the nagging I a common worldwide phenomena.

Ethics in marketing are a set of common rules that are collectively deemed to be the correct way for marketers and businesses to operate by. Parents should take an initiative and become aware of the risks of the marketing towards children in order for them to make an informed decision on what is being marketed towards children. The concerns towards marketing are apparent since the advertising themselves have become more spectacular and they also display a distorted view of the world and send out false messages to the children.

At a younger age children can no longer see the difference between the elaborate advertising campaigns and the children programs, children's should be raised to be future accountable members of the society, but with theses bombardment of advertising and consumption is endangering them.

4.5 Utilization of the theoretical part in the later part of the thesis

The theories present in the secondary research will be the premise and the overall structure for the primary research. The presented theories will be applied in the research in order to determine whether or not the question and concerns raised are applicable in the real life.

5 PRIMARY RESEARCH

In this research based chapter the author presents the method used to gather information for the thesis, the author also presents the circumstances in which the gathering occurred. Furthermore, the research questions and answers will be presented and analyzed as part of this chapter.

5.1 Description of Method

“Marketing research-The function that links the consumer, customer and public to the marketer through information that is used to identify and define marketing opportunities and problems, to generate, refine and evaluated marketing actions, to monitor marketing performance and to improve understanding of the marketing process.” (Kotler 2005 p.344).

The author chose to employ the quantitative survey research method in the form of questionnaire as the primary method for this thesis.”Survey research is the approach best suited for gathering descriptive information.” (Kotler 2005. P.348) the questions presented in the questionnaire were drawn up and restricted to correlate with the problems laid forth by the secondary research portion of the thesis. The method for which the results for the primary research were gathered was done in a face-to-face manner during two different time periods and in different locations. In order to make a reliable quantitative research the author addressed the three following questions.

First who is to be surveyed (what sampling unit)? “(Kotler 2005 p.352)

Since the research is based on academic theory put into use in order to determine applicability in the real world it has top target children’s parents. Fundamentally the parents in question are a sample within themselves since they have to have fairly young children. The children preferably need to be in the age group between 0-12 years old in order for research to be consistent with the theory. The reason behind the choice of said manner to obtain information was selected due to the fact that the research questions are tailor made for certain sample unit.

Second, how many people are to be surveyed (sample size)? (Kotler 2005 p.356)

In order for the research to be valid the sample size should not be small, in this case the author chose 100 parents. The chosen number was considered by the author to be a suffi-

cient number for a reliable and quickly percentage convertible number. the sample size was the authors maximum preference since 100 questionnaire is a relatively minute study each questionnaire contained 21 questions and this translates into 2100 items of raw data.

Third, how are the people to be sampled chosen (what sampling procedure)? (Kotler 2005:9,356)

Being that the sampling unit is very specific led to the author to choose to conduct the research in a face-to-face manner. The face-to-face method of personally handling out the questionnaire is direct and personal approach to conduct research with this subject needed.

5.2 Acquisition of Research Data

The research data was gathered during two separated time periods and the research was conducted in two separated locations. The author chose to conduct the research at the Uhuru Park Nairobi. According to the author the face-to-face method proved to be efficient and productive. On average the estimated rate between response was 1 in 7 and thus the initial sample size was approximately 700 in order to come up with a final sample of 100. The method employed and the subject matter in question also contributed to the fast paced rate of which data was gathered and to the compliance of the respondents.

As an interesting un-documented observation the author noted that during the acquisition of data on the 4th April and 11th April, the majority of respondents were accompanied by their children's when responding to the questionnaire and that the minority was not accompanied by their children. This led to the author to draw a conclusion that the respondents who were not accompanied by their children's mostly failed to answer because of time restraint, indifference ,not having children's or not being aware of issues regarding their children when they are not with the parents.

The data result will be presented in the form of figures either as pie chart or column chart, the research questions will each be presented in their entirety after the caption of each figure. The analysis of the result will be individually presented above each figure. The pie chart figures will be analyzed using binary level of measurement (University of West England 2007) since the pie chat figures corresponds to questions that have only two answer choices. The column figures will be accompanied by a table, the tables indicate by using various scales in which manner the different data categories are divided

into the column charts will employ the likert-style rating scale which is the most frequently used method of determining how strongly the respondents agree or disagree with the presented research questions. The Likert-style rating system most commonly employs a four-five-six- or seven-point rating scale (Saunders 2003.p.296)

5.3 Back ground questions

The first four questions were background questions which aided in laying the base for the research sample, the remaining questions addresses the difference facets of marketing towards children. . Figure 4 shows that the majority of the respondents were females. Judging by this survey, the females are the one who spend much time with children therefore the females make up approximately 64 % of the total sample with the males respondents amounting to 36 % of the total sample

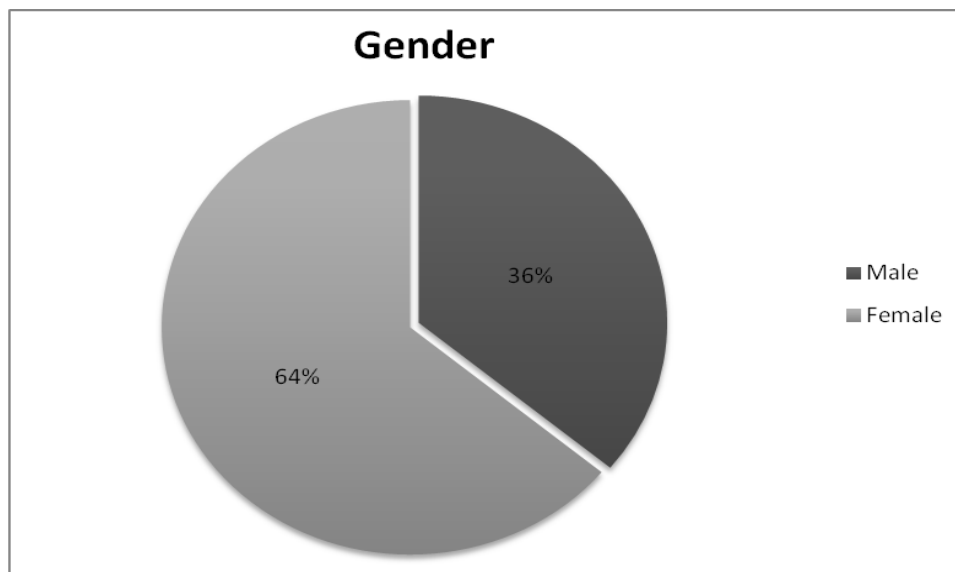


Figure 4 *The gender of the parents.*

As can be seen in figure 5 the majority of the respondents fall into the age category 1 and 2, resulting in that 66 % of the entire sample size is between the ages of 20-40 years old. Nonetheless there is a considerable amount of middle aged parents from 41-60+ years of age among the respondents, these respondents amount to 34% of the entire sample. The conclusion of the result is that the majority of the respondents are younger adults but there is also a fair amount of middle-aged respondents in the sample.

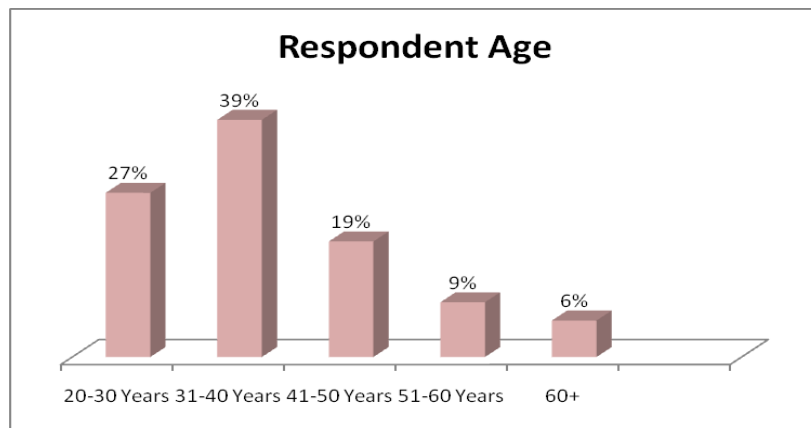


Figure 5 *The age of the parent.*

Figure 6 shows that the majority of respondents, 44 % of the total sample, have two children. Furthermore, among the respondents with three and one child amounted to 23% and 22% of the total sample respectively. The sample shows that totally 8% of the respondents have four children and 3% have five children or more. The majority of two children can be attributed to the fact that the majority of respondents were young adults, the presence of 3 and more children can be attributed to the fact that a 34% of the total sample were between 41 to 60+ years of age

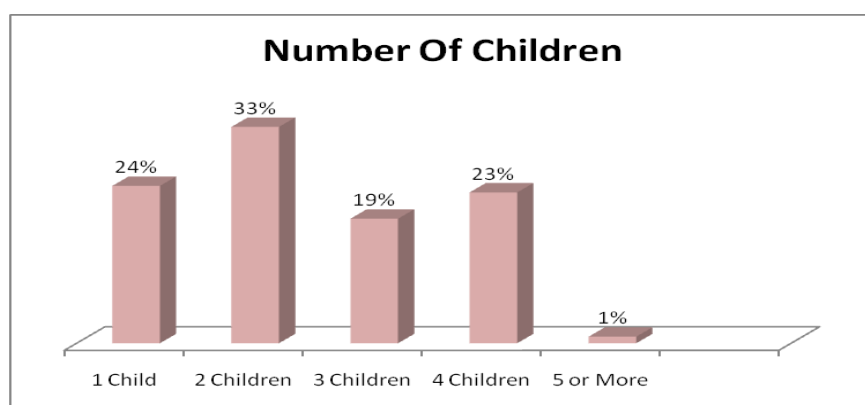


Figure 6: *Number of children.*

AS can be seen in figure 7 the age category was divided into categories using a scale from 1 to 4. Figure 4 shows that the majority of respondents, 33 % of the total sample have children in age category 2 (6-10 years of age). The remaining age categories are fairly evenly dispersed, especially category 4 with 23% of the total sample being 15 years or more. 1 % of the respondents left this question unattended, being fairly small number it does not affect the general outcome.

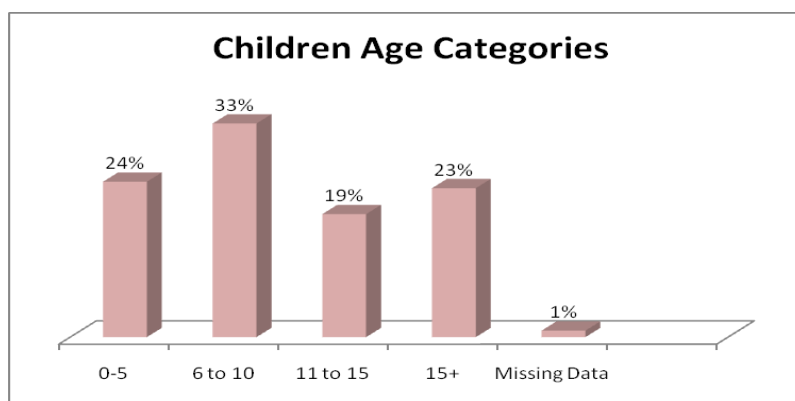


Figure 7. Which age category does your child belong to?.

Figure 8 shows that the vast majority of 59% of the total sample firmly believe that the manner in which products are marketed today has radically changed from the manner in which they were marketed in the past. 29% of the respondents are undecided whether or not the marketing methods have changed during the course of the past 10-20 years. only 9 % of the total sample is of the opinion that the marketing has not changed. Significantly this can be to some degree attributed to the older parents who have older children and therefore might not be as aware of the state of marketing as the parents of younger children. 3% of the respondents left this question un-attended to, however being a fairly small number it does not affect the general out come

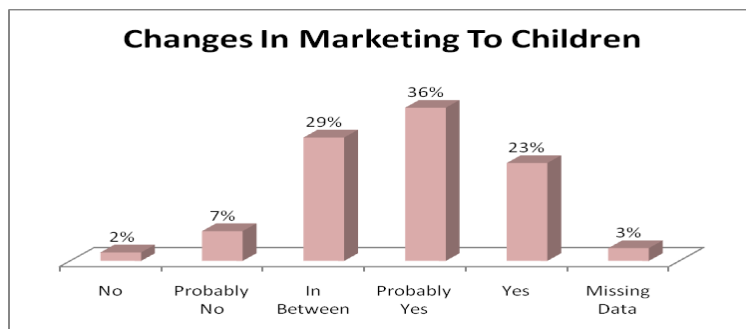


Figure 8. Has the way in which products are marketed changed compared to 10-20 year back?

Figure 9 shows an alarming trend in marketing towards children, 43% of the total sample admits that they are not too aware of what is being marketed towards children. An attributing factor can be that the parents are not aware that marketing towards children is no longer solely restricted to printed and televised mediums but it can reach children via the internet, the mobile phone and video games. In fact all these marketing mediums can even support one another at the same time in order to achieve a common purpose. A large number of respondents, 35% were undecided whether they are or are not informed of what is being marketed to children, this can be attributed to the fact that the question is quiet personal and that the respondents wished not to divulge the information. 17% of the total respondents were well informed of what is being marketed to their children. 1% of the respondents left this question un-answered; being a fairly small number it does not affect the general outcome.

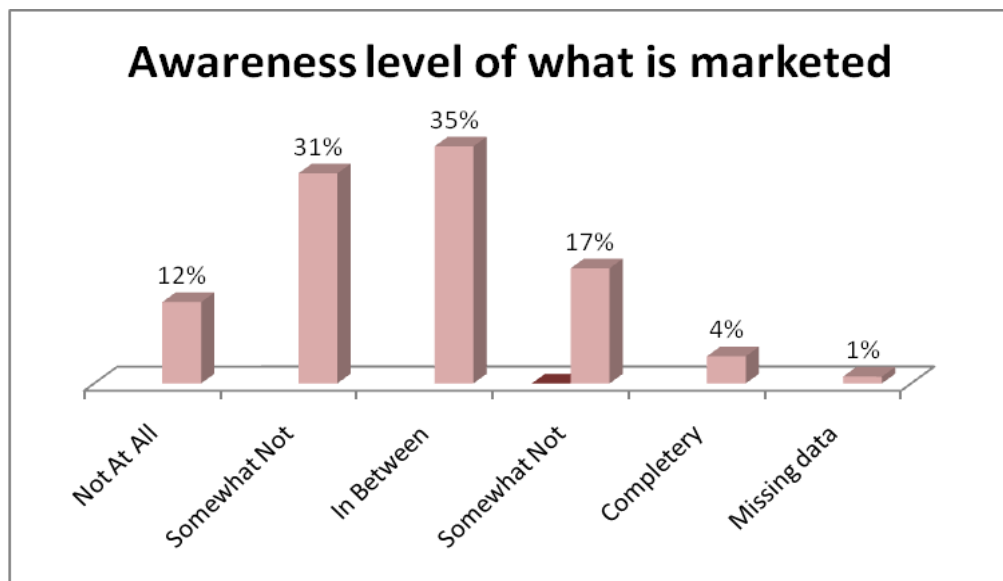


Figure 9. *How informed are you on what is being marketed to your children via TV, Internet, phones, video games and others.*

Figure 10 shows that the marketing methods are more than effective, an astonishing 68% of the total sample agree that when the child nags after a product, they most of the time get what they want. The remaining dispersion between categories can be attributed to different factors such as upbringing and even to lesser shopping visits. The nagging itself is also a wide concept since some respondents might consider simply asking for a product as nagging while others deem temper tantrums as nagging. 23% of the total respondents were un-decided on the question and 9% were of the opinion that the nagging hardly ever occurs.

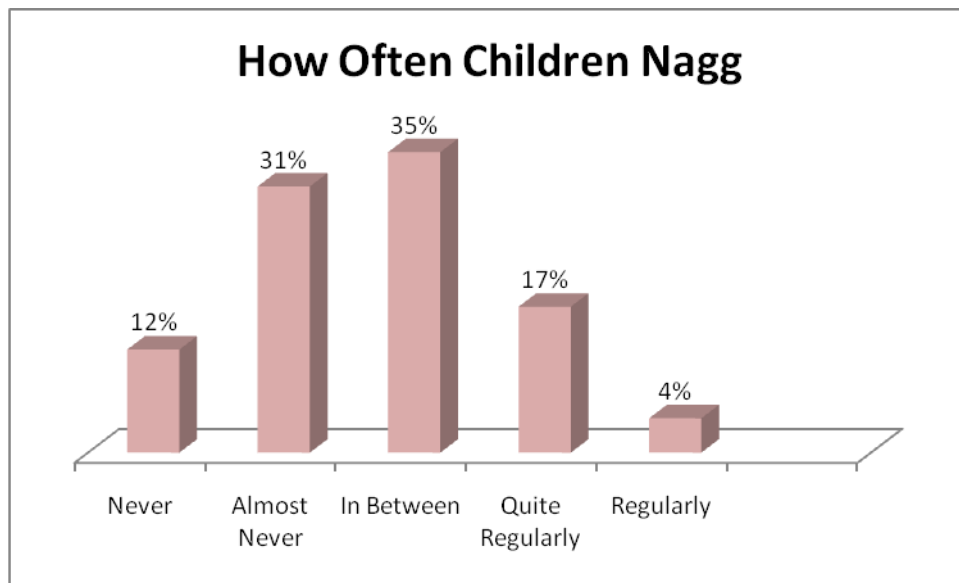


Figure 10. *How often does your child nag after a product?*

According to figure 11 the nagging is not as effective when put into relation with the frequency of the occurrence of the nagging. The nagging is effective and results in a purchase in 52% of the instance, this result dependent on each respondents perception of what nagging is and it need not be the solely the act of nagging that triggers the purchase, factors such as guilt, embarrassment and the natural urge to provide the very best for the child may also be factors which affect the end results. Market regulations on advertisement towards children in a sense fail approximately 50% of the time. 31% a large number of the respondents were undecided on how effective nagging is, this can be due to the fact that some respondents do not want to be judged by this answer despite the answering

being anonymous. 15% of the respondents were of the opinion that the nagging is more than seldom effective. 2% of the respondents left this question unanswered; being a fairly small number it does not affect the overall outcome.

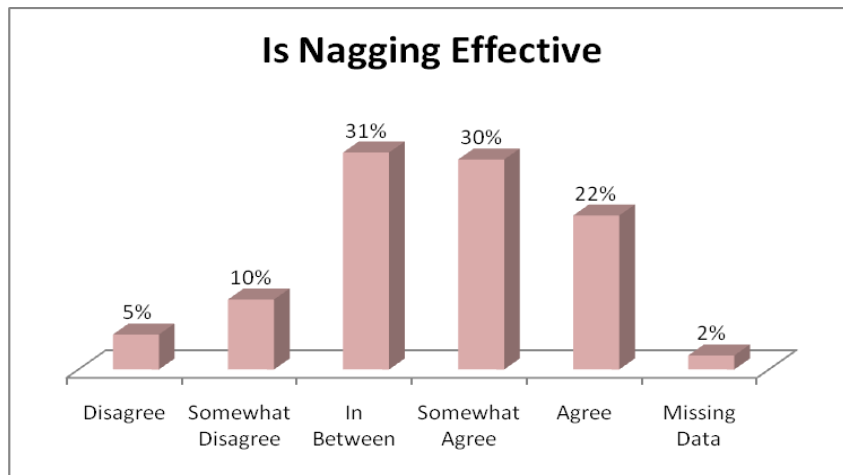


Figure 11. *Is the nagging effective.*

The general consensus, 60% of the total respondents, as shown in figure 12 is that marketers to an extensive degree are manipulating children into expressing wants and needs towards certain products. 2 % of the respondents left this question un-answered being a fairly small number it does not affect the general outcome

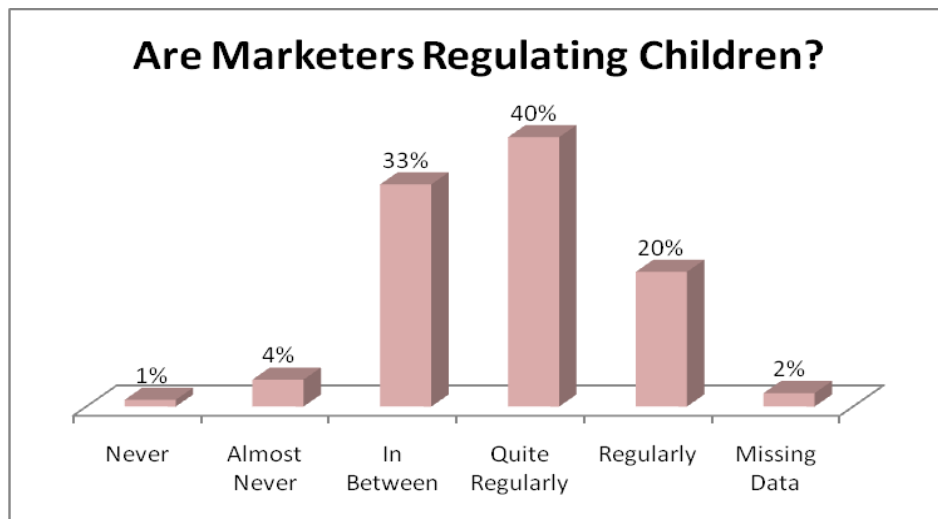


Figure 12. *Are marketers manipulating children?.*

Figure 13 show that the majority in this case 68% of the respondents of the total sample are of the opinion that marketers target increasingly younger children. One concrete example can be the emergence of the tween market catering to younger children than before and such television shows such as teletubbies which is aimed at infants. 23% of the respondents were undecided on the question. 8% somewhat disagreed with the notion that marketers target younger children and 1 % of the respondents left this question unanswered, being a fairly small number it does not affect the general outcome

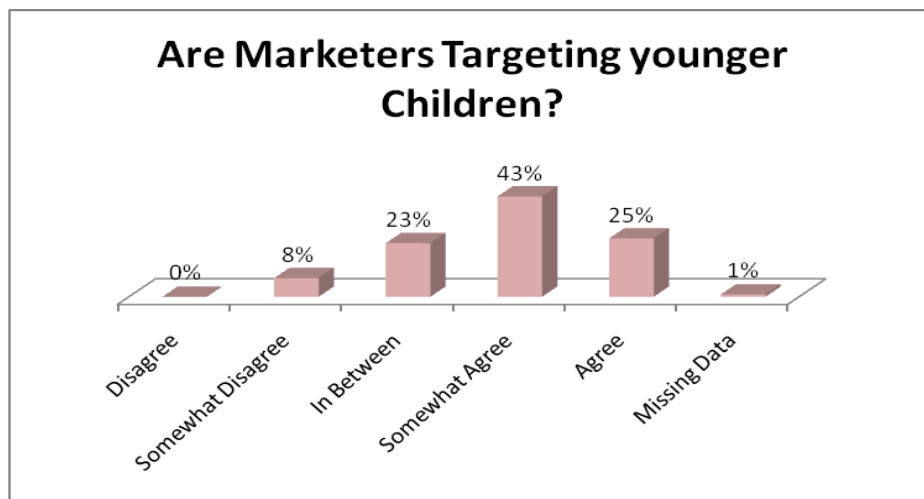


Figure 13. *Are marketers targeting younger children than they have in the past?*

66% of the respondents, as seen in figure 14, are of the opinion that products which are marketed towards children have become more expensive. 21% of the respondents are undecided and 12% of the total respondents somewhat disagree. 1% of the respondents left this question un-answered; being a fairly small number it does not affect the general outcome

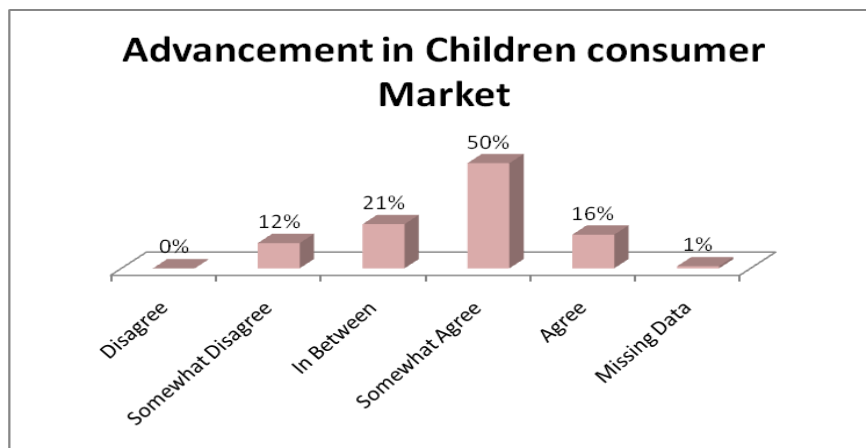


Figure 14. *Has the children's consumer evolved from a cheap market to an upscale one?*

Figure 15 shows the majority of the respondents are of the opinion that the children's consumer market has become more materialistic than what it has been in the past. This is consistent with the notion that marketers have come to terms with the fact of how an lucrative a market children are and the fact that children today have more buying power. 1% of the respondents left this question un-answered; being a fairly small number it does not affect the general outcome

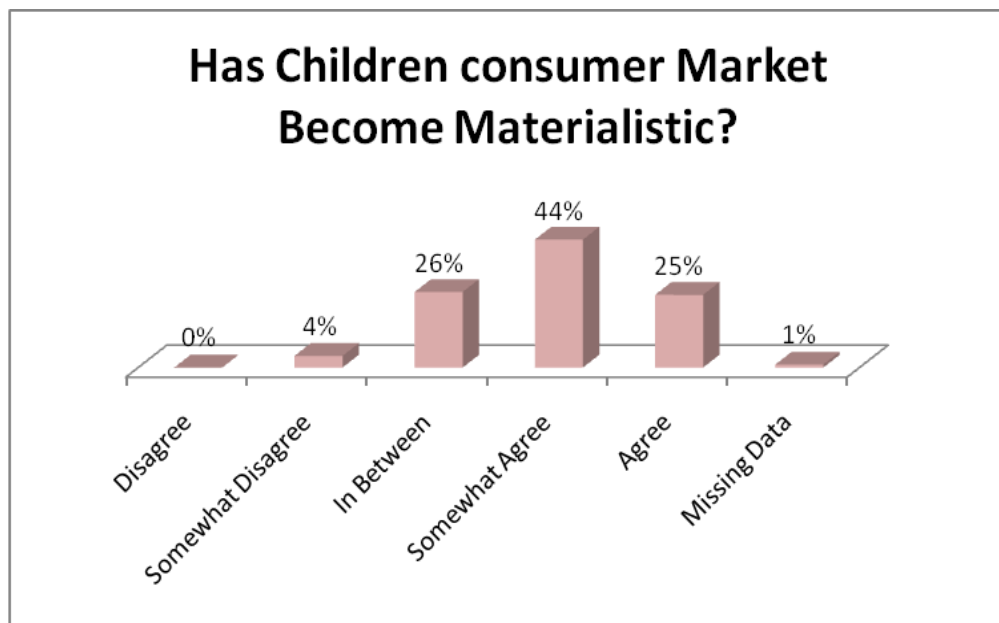


Figure 15. *Has the children's consumer market become more materialistic compared to 20-30 years ago?*

55 of the total respondents were of the opinion that, as seen in figure 16, marketers are indeed promoting values as well as products. 30% of the total respondents were undecided of whether or not the claim was in accordance with their views, perhaps if the concept of values was further elaborated on then it would have yielded more opinion either for or against. 13% of the respondents were of the opinion that values are not being promoted to children via advertising. 2% of the respondents left this question unanswered; being a fairly small number it does not affect the overall outcome

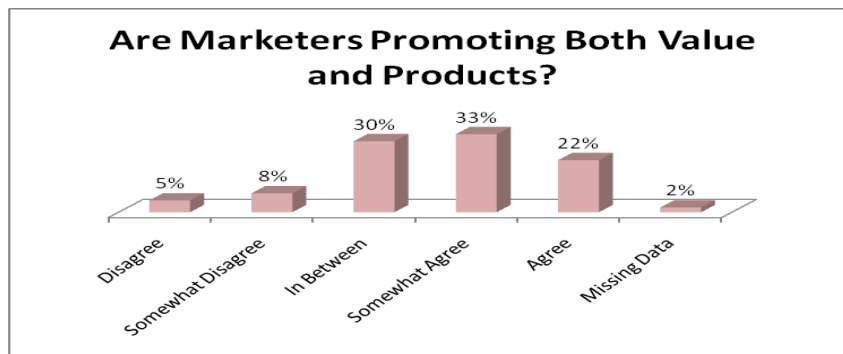


Figure 16. *Are marketers promoting both values and products?*

Figure 17 shows 58% of the respondents are of the opinion that companies who market to children are not upholding acceptable marketing ethics. Up to 34% of the total respondents were undecided on this matter perhaps because it may not be a simple question to answer. 7% of the respondents were of the opinion that marketing towards children can somewhat be within acceptable ethical boundaries, none of the respondent completely accepted marketing towards children as ethical. 1% of the respondents left this question un-answered; being a fairly small number it does not affect the overall outcome

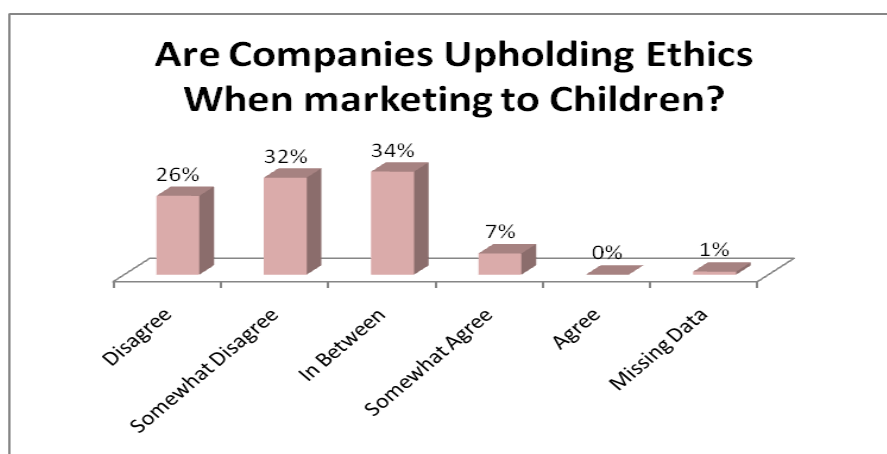


Figure 17. *Are companies upholding good business ethics when marketing towards children?*

As figure 18 shows the answers are quite widespread 55% are of the opinion that the companies need to take some form of responsibility in the children's consumer market whilst up to 29% are undecided in the matter and 16% are of the opinion that little or no responsibility should be taken by the companies in this matter

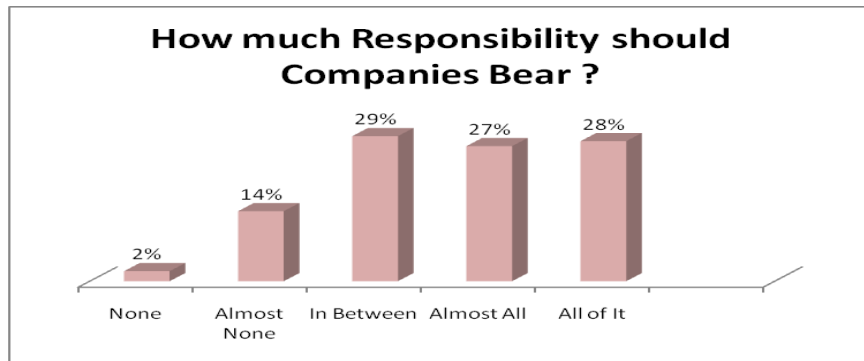


Figure 18. *How much responsibility in the children's consumer market should be placed in the companies?*

As of Figure 19 shows the answers are unanimous 80% of the total respondents felt that parents should take the greatest responsibility when it comes to marketing towards children. 12% were undecided while 7% were of the opinion that parents should take almost no responsibility. 1% of the respondents left this question unanswered; being a fairly small number it does not affect the overall outcome.

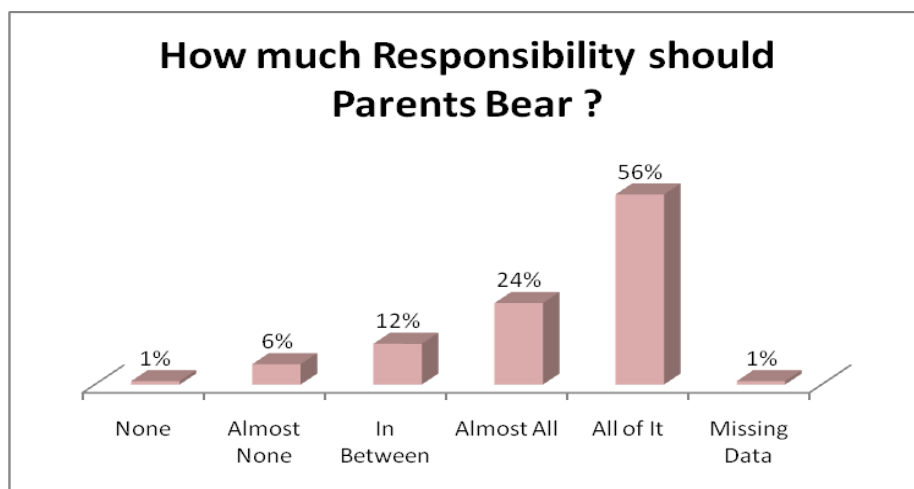


Figure 19. *How much of the responsibility in the children's consumer market should be placed on parents?*

As of figure 20. 56% of the total respondents perceive that children's products have become more mature. 37% of the respondents are un-decided in this matter and 6% perceive that the products marketed today are not more mature than what they have been in the past. 1% of the respondents left this question un-attended; being a fairly small number it does not affect the general outcome

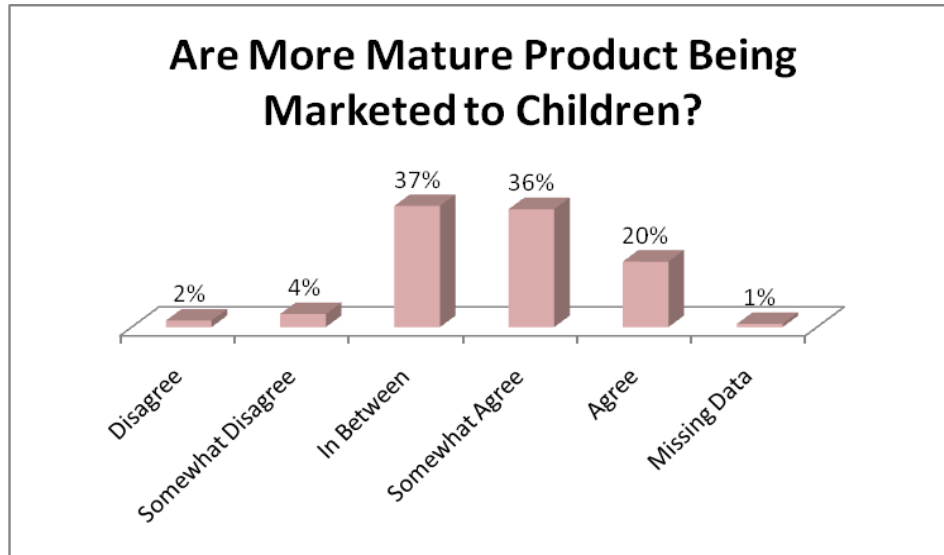


Figure 20. *Are more mature (Expensive) products being marketed towards children?*

Figure 21 shows us that the majority of the respondents 65% are of the opinion that marketing towards children can have negative impact on them. 31% of the respondents were un-decided in the matter and only 3% were of the opinion that the marketing does not cause any concern for children wellbeing. 1% of the respondents left this question un-answered; being a fairly small number it does not affect the general outcome.

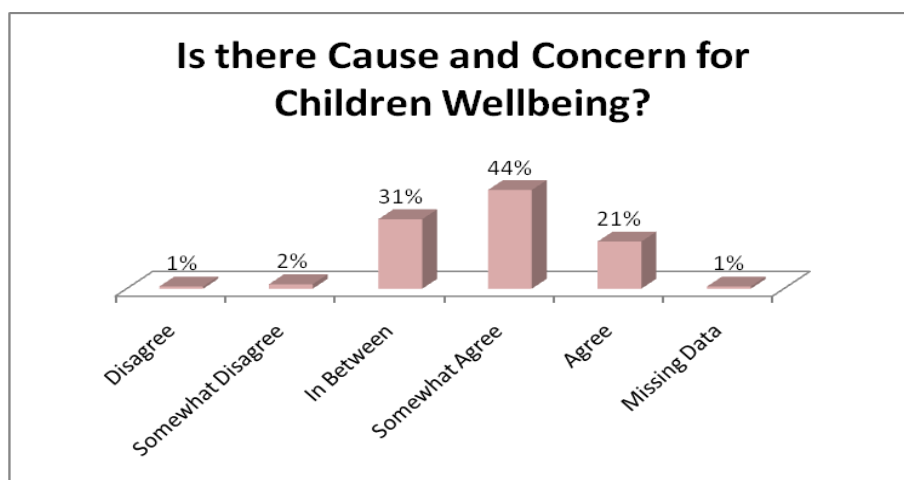


Figure 21. *Is there cause for concern regarding children's wellbeing as a result of them being treated as consumer and collectors?*

The overwhelming majority of the respondents, 86% are of the opinion that the children consumer market needs to be regulated whereas 13% do not see regulations as a necessity and only 1% of the respondents left this question un-attended, being a fairly small number it does not affect the general outcome.

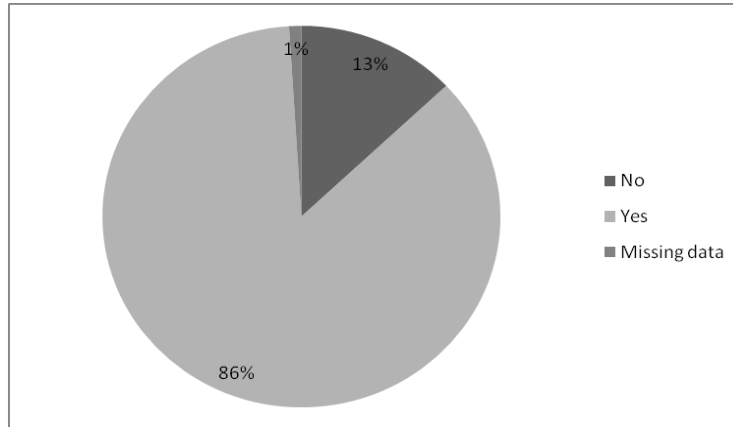


Figure 22. . *Should the children consumer market be regulated?*

In the final question as shown in Figure 23 is seen that 51% of the respondents are of the opinion that the survey has helped them or made them more aware about the marketing towards children issues. 48% of the respondents did not see the survey helpful and 1% of the respondents left the question un-attended, being a fairly small number it does not affect the general outcome.

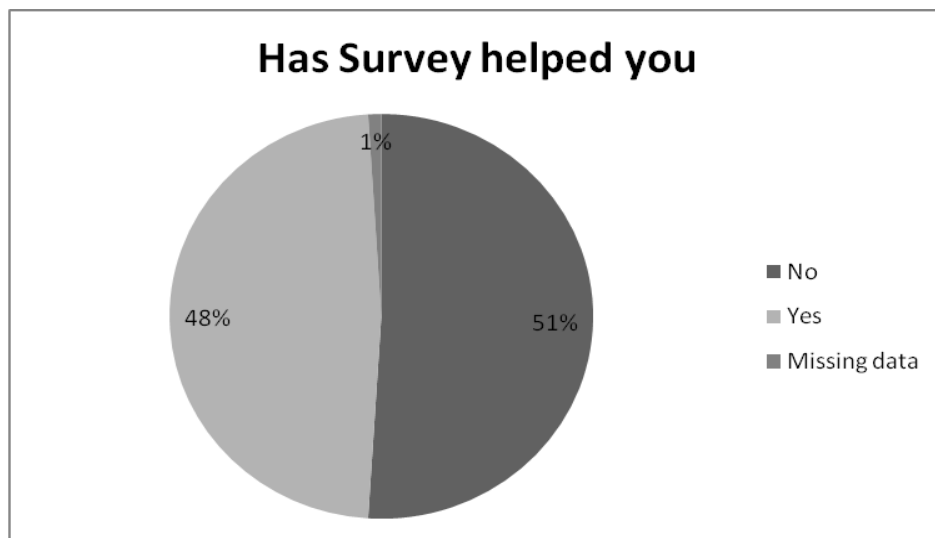


Figure 23. *Has this survey helped you/made you more aware of what is marketed towards children*

6 CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter the results of the research will be discussed. The research validity, reliability and suggestion for further research will be discussed

The results of the research were unanimous for the most part since the results did not show any conflict between the question and the results. In the cases where data was missing it amounted to such a small percentage that it did not affect the outcome of the answers. One reason for this can be that there were no open ended questions in the survey. Summarizing the four background questions the majority of the respondents were female and the majority age ranged from 20-40 years old and had 1-3 children. The age of the children was pleasingly evenly spread out between 1-15+ years of age. The results for the question regarding the marketing are presented below, the results must be analyzed with one key factor in mind: every respondent reacts and observes the occurrences in completely different ways.

In the questionnaire (Attachment 1) the question regarding whether or not boys and girls are treated differently fell beyond the scope of this research and was therefore dropped but the question and the results for the question can be seen in the survey results spreadsheet. The vast majority agreed that the way in which products are marketed towards children has changed during last few decades. This change can be attributed to the evolution of technology since marketing is no longer restrained by televised and printed mediums only but also through internet and mobile phones.

It is not surprising that the majority of the respondents are not fully aware of what is being marketed to their children, in the past when there were few mediums keeping a track of marketing was possible, however with increased reliance on technology it has become harder to avoid marketing messages for example almost every webpage has banner ads. Furthermore, today's mediums support each other for example the television ad promotes the mobile phone which has a direct tie in to a website.

The respondents were of the opinion that young children are more targeted by marketers than in the past, this attributes to the fact that children spend more money which in turn motivates companies to target this group in order to get a share of the profits. The respondents also had the opinion that the children's market is no longer a cheap one, toys have become more elaborate and expensive, what in the past used to be children radio is now an MP3 player. Marketers are taking children's natural urge of growing and market-

ing products that are of a far more mature nature, this is evidenced by the emergence of tween market segment.

The respondents deem that market regulation is needed with ought a shadow of doubts, but the burning question should be what methods or regulatory tools should be employed to counter attack the massive amount of advertisement and harmful content on the internet. Finally the majority of the respondents felt that the research conducted served as a wakeup call for them in that it made them more conscious of the children's consumer market. . During the process of piecing the research together it was interesting to note that parents are very co-operative in taking part in a research regarding their children

6.1 Validity and reliability

Validity refer to the extent to which data collection method or methods accurately measure what they were intended to measure (Saunders 2003, 492).Reliability refers to “the degree to which data collection method or methods will yield consistent findings, similar observations would be made or conclusions reached by other researchers or there is transparency in how sense was made from raw data” (Saunders 2003, 488).

Validity was achieved since the aim of the research was achieved; the questionnaire which was used in data collection was created in order to meet the requirement of the thesis. The reliability was achieved since the respondents filled out the whole questionnaire which were later compiled in Excel and assigned the numerical values; from these numerical values the author finally constructed figures for all questions separately. Absolute reliability is difficult to achieve since the majority of the questions in the questionnaire had in most cases up to five choices between answers and the opinion of the respondent may not reflect their real perception.

6.2 Suggestion for further research

Since this thesis research was concentrated on a general overview i.e. with ought subjecting the various methods to further analysis as this was beyond the scope of the research. For further research this would be the starting point, to make a complete and thorough research it would entail analyzing a certain age group of children.

The aim of the research was not to establish whether or not marketing towards children exists since this is already a proven reality. The aim was to uncover what perceptions parents have on this issue and their attitudes concerning the same. The results were not completely surprising but the author believes that the results gathered can only be used for a short period of time before a new research is warranted, a new research should be conducted in 3.5 years time to see how the market has evolved. The author also feels that marketing via the internet should be taken into a focal point since by conducting the research, the author has concluded that internet has far from peaked.

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APPENDIX 1 ATTACHMENT 1: Survey Questions

The age of the parent

- 1) 20-30 2) 31-40 3) 41-50 4) 51-60 5) 60 and over

The gender of the parent

- 1) Male 2) Female

Number of children

- 1) 1 2) 2 3) 3 4) 4 5) 5 or over

Which age category is closest to your child/children age

- 1) 0-5 2) 6-10 3) 11-15 4) 15+

Has the way in which products are marketed to children changed compared to 10-20 years ago

1	No	
2	Probably not	
3	In between	
4	Probably yes	
5	Yes	

How informed are you of what is being marketed to your children via TV, Internet, mobile phones and so forth

1	Not at all	
2	Somewhat not	
3	In between	
4	somewhat	
5	Completely	

How often does your child nag after a product?

1	Never	
2	Almost never	
3	In between	
4	Quiet regularly	
5	Regularly	

Is the nagging effective

1	Disagree	
2	Somewhat disagree	
3	In between	
4	Somewhat agree	
5	agree	

Are marketers manipulating children?

1	Never	
2	Almost never	
3	In between	
4	Quiet regularly	
5	Regularly	

Are marketers targeting younger children than they have in the past?

1	Disagree	
2	Somewhat disagree	
3	In between	
4	Somewhat agree	
5	agree	

Has the children's consumer evolved from a cheap market to an upscale one?

1	Disagree	
2	Somewhat disagree	
3	In between	
4	Somewhat agree	
5	agree	

Has the children's consumer market become more materialistic than what it was 20-30 years ago?

1	Disagree	
2	Somewhat disagree	
3	In between	
4	Somewhat agree	
5	agree	

Are marketers promoting values to children as well as products?

1	Disagree	
2	Somewhat disagree	
3	In between	
4	Somewhat agree	
5	agree	

Are companies exercising good business ethics when marketing towards children?

1	Disagree	
2	Somewhat disagree	
3	In between	
4	Somewhat agree	
5	agree	

How much responsibility in the children's consumer market should be placed in the companies?

1	None	
2	Almost none	
3	In between	
4	Almost all	
5	All of it	

How much of the responsibility in the children's consumer market should parents take?

1	None	
2	Almost none	
3	In between	
4	Almost all	
5	All of it	

Are more mature products being marketed towards children?

1	Disagree	
2	Somewhat disagree	
3	In between	
4	Somewhat agree	
5	agree	

Is there cause for concern regarding children's wellbeing as a result of them being treated as consumer and collectors?

1	Disagree	
2	Somewhat disagree	
3	In between	
4	Somewhat agree	
5	agree	

Should the children consumer market be regulated?

NO Yes

Has this survey helped you/made you more aware of what is marketed towards children?

No Yes

