

Advertising to Tomorrow's Teens: The Construction and Significance of the Tweenage Market in Australia

By

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Certificate of original authorship

I, Nipa Saha, declare that this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise reference or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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List of abbreviations

AANA	Australian Association of National Advertisers
AASAA	Australian Advertising Standards Advisory Authority
ABA	Australian Broadcasting Authority
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ABT	Australian Broadcasting Tribunal
ACA	Australian Communication Authority
ACB	Advertising Claims Board
ACCC	Australian Consumer Complaints Commission
ACL	Australian Consumer Law
ACMA	Australian Communications and Media Authority
AFA	Advertising Federation of Australia
AFC	Australian Food Council
AFGC	Australian Food and Grocery Council
ALRC	Australian Law Reform Commission
ASB	Advertising Standards Bureau
ASC	Advertising Standards Council
AWARD	Australasian Writers and Art Directors Association
BHF	British Heart Foundation
BUGA-UP	Billboard Utilising Graffitists Against Unhealthy Promotions
CCSI	Contemporary Community Safeguards Inquiry
CSR	Corporate Social responsibility
CTS	Children's Television Standards
DCITA	Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts
FMCG	Fast-Moving Consumer Goods
FSANZ	Food Standards Australia and New Zealand
HACCP	Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point
MCA	Media Council of Australia
NGO	Non-government organisation
OPC	Obesity Policy Coalition
PHT	Preventative Health Taskforce
QSRI	Quick Service Restaurant Industry
RCMI	Responsible Marketing to Children Initiative

SNS	Social networking sites
TPC	Trade Practices Commission
WHO	World Health Organization

Abstract

Since the 1990s, the issue of advertising to children, especially the role of food advertising and childhood obesity, has been the subject of much debate. Advertising to tweens in the US has been well studied; however, research into Australian food marketing has yet to examine its significance for the vulnerable tweenage viewer. The Australian ‘tweenage’ market (children aged 6 to 12) consists of \$10 billion in spending each year in the Australian economy, yet very little is known about the Australian tweenage market. To examine the techniques and tactics advertisers use to market food products to tweens through Australian free-to air television, branded websites and Facebook pages, a mixed-methods approach was employed, combining content analysis, semiotic analysis and narrative literature review.

Building on the work of Williamson (1978a), semiotic analysis was used to investigate the advertisements’ ideological underpinnings. Chapters 4 to 7 demonstrate that food advertisements broadcast during C-classified time describe the taste of the advertised food products in terms of freshness; they promote the advertised products as healthy on the basis of their weight management, energy giving and mood-enhancement properties; they use humour-, fantasy- and happiness-related themes to bestow a particular brand identity, image or personality on the products; and they employed humour and fantasy as vehicles for evoking happiness.

Content analysis of the selected internet pages revealed that food company websites and Facebook pages promoted during children’s television programming contain advertisements, contests, social networking activities and membership benefits but, in order to engage in such activities, children have to register online as members by entering their names, addresses, ages, email addresses and other personal information into the companies’ online data gathering processes.

The research uses narrative literature review to examine the responses of the industry’s self-regulation system to the changing media environment. This study found that the government, public health organisations and the food industry responded to rapid changes within the advertising, marketing and media industries by formulating, evaluating and

amending advertising codes. This analysis concluded by demonstrating that the industry self-regulatory system has been unsuccessful in protecting children from exposure to unhealthy food advertising. Drawing upon the discoveries made during these investigations, conclusions and recommendations are presented, highlighting the need for a fresh approach to regulation and enforcement to protect tweens from the likely impacts of food and beverage advertising.

