

Attitudes of Children Related to Brands' Promotions

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Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the susceptibility of children to promotional techniques. For this we used a scale designed by Muratore (1999a; 1999b) who studies: sensitivity to giveaways / gifts, sensitivity to games / contests, sensitivity to "offer more product" and sensitivity to price reduction. The questionnaire was administered to a sample of 100 Portuguese children from 8 to 15 years in the Oporto City - Portugal. The scale showed good internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.932$) and factorial composition revealed five factors that explain 79.46% of the total variance. However, the findings were opposite to those presented in the Muratore's study.

Key words: Children, brands, promotion, attitudes

1. Introduction

Children are exposed daily to numerous advertising stimuli that familiar with brands and products, in order to induce his trial, or purchase requests to parents. Traditionally, techniques for measuring sensitivity to advertising began to be made with adults and resorted to attitudes to brand as predictors of consumption behavior (MacKenzie et al, 1986; MacInnis et Jaworski, 1989).

The child of the end of the 20th century and the 21st century is confronted from birth, with different advertising techniques and in different formats (Brée, 1995), is exposed daily to numerous advertising stimuli that accustomed them to the brands and products, with the aim of inducing their experimentation, to purchase or request parents (Carl, 2010, p. 39).

More than any other previous generation, these "power kids" know what they like, know what they want and know how to get it (Sutherland & Thompson, 2003). Therefore, they are known as the KAGOY generation (Kids are Getting Older Young) because of their fast process of "adultification" (Sutherland et Thompson, 2003; Quart, 2003; Lindstrom et Seybold, 2003). Their involvement in sport, their access to the "mass media" (access to information), their handling of new technologies (Internet, DVD, videogames, etc.), their multicultural (different races and cultures) contacts, the trips they make (at school and with their parents) and their precocious puberty (faster physical and cognitive development) contribute to all this.

In an attempt to attract the children's segment, the marketing plays with emotions and explores the motivations of children to provoke a favorable attitude towards its products and brands (Muratore, 1999b; Muratore, 1999c).

Promotions aimed at children have acquired more importance in the mid-80s, associated with clubs (McNeal, 1992, p. 159). D'Erceville (1991, cit in Brée, 1995) states that the sales promotions aimed at children are seen as a "good fairy" that distributes gifts. According to the children's age the sales promotions and promotional techniques are seen differently (McNeal, 1992). There are huge promotional techniques covered by different authors and that children take into account, as for example: the freebies and prizes; the contests and sweepstakes; the collections; the games; the clubs; among others.

Children's products must be updated frequently, reflecting the latest themes or characters, in order to draw attention (Bridges, 2006, p. 158). The child as a consumerist has requirements and specificities that researchers, marketers and organizations should take into consideration (Cardoso, 2010, p. 39).

The general objective of this work is to evaluate the sensitivity of children to promotional techniques. For this we used a scale developed by Muratore (1999b) that studies: sensitivity to offers of freebies /gifts, the sensitivity to games/contests, the sensitivity to "offer more products" and the sensitivity to price reduction. For such a quantitative study it was used the method of questionnaire which was administered to a sample of 100 children in the northern region of Portugal between the ages of 8 and 15 years.

2. Literature review

2.1. Children and promotions

To Guzmán (1995, p. 561) sales promotions are of great importance in developed economies, given the interest that consumers themselves (citizens) attach to the playful aspect or element of the game as " sales promotion displays the product associated with a imaginary world (offers, free gifts, trips, contests) that arouse interest, curiosity and enliven cause adhesion of the consumer to the product and brand that allows you to enter the game in which they get satisfaction and psychic.

Consumers should realize the company's offer as an advantage (gain) and opportunity (Blattberg et Neslin, 1990; Brito, 1997). Adherence consumer promotions depends on the size of the benefit (eg , value of the offer / freebie) and longevity of the action until new initiatives (Kahneman et Tversky, 1979). Consumers get social benefits, symbolic, economic and quality for their money, creating positive feelings held by the choice (Lichtenstein et al, 1990; 1995, 1997). The general attitude towards the promotional offer is explained by his "perceived value" and comprises two dimensions: a utilitarian value and a hedonic value (Chandon, 1997), positively influenced by the monetary value of the offer. The communication of supply influences the perceived sincerity and assumed as a necessary condition in the formation of a generally positive attitude.

According Muratore (1999a), the child likes to be treated as an adult costumer and uses the promotion as a criterion that allows making a choice between different products in the same range. The child appears to be particularly sensitive to promotions and the animations (Brée, 1995, p. 262). It is a form of action in which the child feels integrated and has the feeling of playing a role.

The marketing should be able to explore the motivations of children to acquire a particular product or service. These motives fall on the child's sensitivity to sales promotions and advertising (Cardoso et al, 2010).

When adults are asked what kids like more, for the most part, the answer is invariably presents. It seems that many traders believe that the promise of a gift or a premium is likely to produce better marketing results between the youngest (Tali TE' ENI-Harari, 2008). The sales promotions aimed at children justify the costs and help companies increase profits (McNeal, 1992).

In this sense as Bridges and Briech refer (2006, p. 158) children's products must be updated frequently, reflecting the latest themes or characters to draw attention. For Brée (1995, p. 262) the child is particularly sensitive to promotions and animations. This sensitivity change according the age group of the children and along their lives, and a prior brand usage and promotion has effects on consumer promotion response (Bridges et al, 2006). They are a form of action in which the child feels and has the feeling of playing a role. Promotions for children are seen as an event, they are extremely sensitive.

Acuff (1997, p. 178-187) segments children according to age, showing 4 points to promotional level: (1) From birth to 2 years of age the promotions made for this age have a relevant impact; (2) 3 to 7 years kids are very open to offers, they want to receive gifts, the amount is much better than the quality; (3) From 12 years to 8 and 13 to 15 years are good ages to establish strong ties with the promotions, once they are at the stage where increasingly they are breaking ties with the family to get to know the outside world. They are interested in technologies, in computers and the Internet; (4) From 16 to 19 years the promotions for these ages come close to the promotions for adult consumers, because they themselves are nearly adults.

According to Pechmann *et al* (2005, p. 202) teens tend to be more impulsive and self-aware as adults, this is the neurobiological changes that occur during this critical period of development. Thus, the teens can be especially attracted by "risky" branded products which, in his opinion, provide instant gratification, emotions and/or social status.

Karsaklian (2000) focuses on the risk that the promotions have for children. This risk is represented by the possibility that exists for children to participate in a contest or sweepstake and not winning, or in offering a freebie and this does not please them, and thus getting so disappointed that as Brée refers (1995, p. 263) the link with the product/brand can break up dramatically, so it is preferable to offer consolation gifts for everyone. In this sense the awards can have either a positive or negative effect on the equity of the brand. So, it is very important for companies to examine closely the chosen prize and their potential influence on the target group (Tali TE' ENI-Harari, 2008).

2.2. Promotional techniques Targeting children

To Tali TE'ENI-Harari (2008) prizes are a versatile promotional tool, possessing the ability to generate trial of the brand, encouraging repurchase (the consumer returns to the store again to buy the same and / or other products), and enhance brand images.

According to McNeal (1992, p.160) the term promotion covers a wide range of marketing activities that include coupons, contests, sweepstakes, prizes, samples and some telephone services. Promotions help children keep their minds on the identity and brand image.

However, children do not perceive homogeneously different promotional techniques (Muratore, 1999a). They distinguish promotions in four major categories of promotional offer, not distinguishing them by the technique, but rather through what the promotion might offer or what they and their parents will get (Muratore, 2002; 2003).

The author presents 4 big promotional techniques (Muratore, 1999a; 1999b; 2002; 2003): (1) Those that allow you to pay less for the product-it is "sales with price reduction" which can include discount coupons or price advantage (price reduction), being associated with "gains", "offers" and "less expensive" in the language of children; (2) Those which offer more product-offering samples, "more product" and actions such as "take 3 pay 2"; (3) Those which offer a gift with the purchase of product- gifts offer; (4) Those who propose to participate in a contest or a game (raffles, lotteries) that is recognized by children as "win this one" or ability to play.

According Muratore (1999a), children distinguish different categories of sales promotion and promotion their sensitivity varies with promotional offers (table 1). Those which propose the participation in a contest or a game (sweepstakes, games, contests) that is recognized by the children as "win a gift" or ability to play. It is possible to think, according to the author, that children distinguish different categories of sales promotion and that its promotion sensitivity varies depending on the promotional offers.

Table 1: The categories of promotional techniques distinguished by children

The category of promotional techniques	Vocabulary used in marketing	Vocabulary used by children
Sales with price reduction	Release price - trial	Less expensive, gain, offer
	Special offer	Less expensive, offer
	"X" euros or - "X"%	Less expensive, offer
	Repayment offer	Less expensive, offer
Paired or linked sales	Paired or linked sales	More product, offer
Sales with a prize	Mor amount of product	More product
	"take 3 pay 2"	A free product, gift
	Small objects	Gifts
	Package with a prize	Reusable package
Experimentation and offering samples	Prize - samples	More product, gift, offert
Sweepstakes	Sweepstakes	Games, win a gift
	Games	Games, win a gift
Games and contests	Games and contests	Games, win a gift

Source: Muratore, 1999a Children tend to influence parents not only in promotions where there is an offer of a gift or a game with the product, but also in promotions such as price reduction or offer more product (Muratore, 1999a). The promotion is regarded by the child as an object that she can get for free with the product purchased; knowing that getting the promotion is subject to the purchase of this product.

The child likes to be treated like an adult and uses consumer promotion as a criterion that allows her to make a choice between different products in the same range (Muratore, 1999a).

For Kapferer (sd, p.149) children are sensitive to giveaways and prizes, whether it's a purchase or a contest and the child loves gifts, especially if they are a surprise. A study carried out in France on the type of sales promotion that children prefer showed that: "The gift that comes in the package is a favorite of children, lying at a great distance from competitions, from the price, from discount or from collection points "(Kapferer, nd, p.151). When the child receives a gift of a superhero in a McDonald's Happy Meal, causes a good thought about the brand and consequently strengthen loyalty to the brand and create an excitement environment around the product (Guber et Berry, 1993, p. 165).

According to Lauper's (cit in Guber et Berry, 1993: 171) "Kids want to have fun." Children love to play and have fun, and sales promotions encourage fun by offering freebies. According to the authors, a promotion may offer the opportunity to the marketing professional to educate children, through association with humanitarian and ecological causes.

Another technique focused by Guber et Berry (1993, p. 179) is the collecting, "Kids are natural-born collectors." The collecting helps children organize themselves, giving them power and opens their doors to new worlds.

In literature the term of sensitivity arises as a psychological promotion construction preceding the behavior before the purchase. According to Webster (1965) sensitivity to promotion is the tendency of the consumer to buy a type of product depending on the promotion. In this sense, for Froloff (1993) the sensitivity results from the attitude to promoting and promotional stimuli as a result of the meeting "individual-promotion." While the attitude towards promotion translates a stable state ("I like promotions"), the sensitivity expresses an act ("I seek promotions"). Indeed, the sensitivity to promotion is an attitude that was stimulated (Muratore, 1999b).

3. Methodology

The overall objective of this work is to understand the impact (sensitivity) of sales promotions in the choice of children from 8 to 15 years old. These ages were chosen because from 8 to 12 years old children establish strong ties with the promotions, they are at a stage where they are increasingly breaking their ties with the family. They are interested in technology and the internet. From 13 to 15 years, children believe that promotions aimed at their age are not for them but for children, they consider themselves adults and want to be treated as such (Acuff, 1997).

For the study we used the scale Muratore (1999b), that was developed in France and aims to assess the sensitivity of children to different promotional techniques: (1) Sensitivity to gifts / presents, that consists of the "ludic" (4 items) and "attraction" dimensions (3 items); (2) Sensitivity to games and contests, that consists of the "ludic" (3 items) and "attraction" dimensions (2 items); (3) Sensitivity to the offer of more product with two-dimensions "playful" (3 items) and "social desirability" (5 items); (4) Sensitivity to price reduction in two dimensions "playful" (3 items) and "social desirability" (3 items).

The questionnaire was designed according to the characteristics of children in relation to language, design and the scales used (Benson et Hocevar, 1985; De Leeuw et Otter, 1995; Borgers et al., 2000; Todd, 2001; Cardoso et al, 2008). The procedure used for the administration of the questionnaire was self-administration (the researcher himself reads the questions and the children write the answers). The characteristics of this research justify the choice of this procedure, as it was necessary to get around children's cognitive limitations. After receiving general instructions about the research, and specific instructions about the questions and scales (YES=yes-no-NO and the "Smile Faces"), children answered 5 questions (test) about the scales (Harrigan, 1991; Childers et Rao, 1992; Bachmann, John et Rao, 1993; Cardoso et al, 2008)

To get around children's cognitive boundaries, the questions were read slowly and aloud while children followed it through silently (Childers et Rao, 1992). The remaining questions were not read until all the children had concluded the previous ones (Bachmann, John et Rao, 1993). Visual stimuli and answer flashcards were also used (Macklin et Machleit, 1990, p. 253-265 – each face of the scale was set up on large cards of 14" x 5.5") to make it more interesting, more specific and more motivating for children to answer (Borgers et al., 2000; Cardoso et al, 2008).

After having performed a pre-test among some children, it was necessary to adjust the scale. In the questionnaire were introduced two additional issues. Namely, "In general I prefer to buy products that are on promotion" and "What product category do you like to look for promotions: cereal, chocolate, fast food, soft drinks, other. What?"

We used a convenience sample, leaving it to the schools, specifically to teachers and educators the choice of which class would be applied the questionnaire. Data collection occurred in schools in Vila Nova de Gaia. Thus 100 children participated in the investigation, 50 boys and 50 girls, aged between 8 and 15 years old. Survey respondents were asked to indicate the degree of agreement on a number of prepositions applied to the four promotional techniques developed by Muratore (1999a, b).

4. Results

We created a data file on the computer using the software SPSS for Windows, version 18, where all the data was introduced and coded.

The average age of respondents was 11.14 (M = 11.14, SD = 2.850), consisting of 50% of males and 50% females.





In descriptive terms (table 2), items with higher averages were as follows: "...it annoys me to look for products that offer a gift / freebie" (reverse coded item - M = 3.10, SD = 0.814); "... it's fun to look for products that offer a gift / present" (M = 2.18, SD = 0.691); "... it amuses me to look for products that offer a gift / freebie" (M = 2.18, SD = 0.691) and "... it is pleasing to look for products that offer a gift / freebie" (M = 2.18, SD = 0.691).

In turn, items with lowest averages were as follows: "...I observe the products that offer more products" (M = 1.34, SD = 0.479); "... I am interested in the products that offer more amount of product "(M = 1.30, SD = 0.463) and" ... I am interested in the products that offer price reduction "(M = 1.22, SD = 0.418).

For the two questions that have been added to the original questionnaire of Muratore, we obtained the following results: "...I generally prefer to buy products that are on promotion" (M = 1.38, SD = 0.490, 62% that totally agree). The second question: "What product category do you like to look for promotions?", children responded: 46% with fast food, 28% with soft drinks, 24% with cereal and 2% with chocolate.

In general children present levels of agreement with prepositions presented (Table 2)

Table 2: Descriptive analysis of the data

Dimension - Item		I totally agree YES 		I agree Yes 		I disagree No 		I totally disagree NO 		M	SD
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Sensitivity scale to offering freebie/present	...I am attracted to products that offer a gift/freebie.	38	38,0	34	34,0	28	28,0	0	0	1,90	0,814
	... I wish products that offer a gift / freebie.	44	44,0	28	28,0	28	28,0	0	0	1,84	0,842
	... I want products that offer a gift/freebie.	52	52,0	20	20,0	28	29,0	0	0	1,76	0,870
	... It amuses me to look for products that offer a gift / freebie.	14	14,0	56	56,0	28	28,0	2	2,0	2,18	0,691
	...It's fun to look for products that offer a gift/ freebie.	14	14,0	56	56,0	28	28,0	2	2,0	2,18	0,691
	... It is pleasing to look for products that offer a gift / freebie.	14	14,0	56	56,0	28	28,0	2	2,0	2,18	0,691
	...It annoys me to look for products that offer a	0	0	28	28,0	34	34,0	38	38,0	3,10	0,814

	gift/freebie										
Sensitivity scale to games and contests	...I wish products that offer a game or a contest.	46	46,0	40	40,0	14	14,0	0	0	1,68	0,713
	...I want products that offer a game or a contest.	60	60,0	26	26,0	14	14,0	0	0	1,54	0,734
	...It's fun to look for products that offer a game or a contest.	32	32,0	40	40,0	28	28,0	0	0	1,96	0,781
	... It amuses me to find products that offer a game or a contest.	32	32,0	40	40,0	28	28,0	0	0	1,96	0,781
	...It is pleasing to look for products that offer a game or a contest.	32	32,0	40	40,0	28	28,0	0	0	1,96	0,781
Sensitivity scale to offer "more product"	... It is fun to find products that offer more products.	18	18,0	70	70,0	12	12,0	0	0	1,94	0,550
	... It amuses me to find products that offer more products.	18	18,0	76	76,0	6	6,0	0	0	1,88	0,480
	... It pleases me to find products that offer more products.	22	22,0	74	74,0	4	4,0	0	0	1,82	0,482
	... I am interested in the products that offer more amount of product.	70	70,0	30	30,0	0	0	0	0	1,30	0,463
	...I observe the products that offer more products.	66	66,0	34	34,0	0	0	0	0	1,34	0,479
	... I trust products that offer more products.	52	52,0	48	48,0	0	0	0	0	1,48	0,505
Sensitivity scale to price reduction	... It's fun to look for products that offer a price reduction.	16	16,0	82	82,0	2	2,0	0	0	1,86	0,405
	...It amuses me to find products that offer a price reduction.	12	12,0	82	82,0	6	6,0	0	0	1,94	0,424
	... It pleases me to find products that offer a price reduction.	26	26,0	68	68,0	6	6,0	0	0	1,80	0,535
	... I am interested in the products that offer price reduction.	78	78,0	22	22,0	0	0	0	0	1,22	0,418
	... I trust products that offer a price reduction.	8	8,0	90	90,0	2	2,0	0	0	1,94	0,314

Obs.: All the items start with the sentence "When I go with my parents/ when I go shopping..."

Thus the highest levels of agreement were: "...It amuses me to find products that offer more products" (76%), "... it's fun to look for products that offer more products" (70%); "it's fun to look for products that offer a gift / freebie "(56%);" ...It amuses me to look for products that offer a gift / freebie "(56%) and " ...it's nice to look for products that offer a gift / freebie "(56%).

In contrast, lower levels of agreement are: "... I am attracted to products that offer a gift / freebie" (34%), "I wish products that offer a gift / freebie" (28%) , "...it annoys me to look for products that offer a gift / freebie" (reverse coded item - 28%) and "... I want the product that offers a gift/freebie" (20%).

We also sought to accomplish a comparison related to gender and age. Regarding the first, there were no major differences, thus revealing quite homogeneous. It is, however, in what concerns the age that there are more differences: the older children (13 -15 years of age) had higher values in almost all items, except those below: "... in general I prefer to buy the products that are on promotion (M = 1.43, SD = 0.507), "... I observe the products that offer more products" (M = 1.43, SD = 0.507), "... I trust in products that offer more products" (M = 1.38, SD = 0.498), "... I am interested in products that offer much more products "(M = 1.33, SD = 0.483) and" ... I am interested in products that offer a price reduction "(M = 0.463). Thus children revealed a greater sensitivity to promotional techniques.

With the aim of determining the scale factor component, we used the method of Principal Components Analysis (PCA) following the Direct oblimin rotation, as assumed, theoretically, the existence of an association between input. The global PCA revealed the existence of five factors explaining 79.46% of the total variance with the first factor explaining 46.42%, the second 11.80%, 11.23% the third, 5.26% the fourth and 4.75% the fifth (Table 3).

Table 3: Alignment after Direct Oblimin rotation

		Component				
		1	2	3	4	5
V11	It amuses me to find products that offer a game or a contest.	,909				
V10	It is fun to find products that offer a game or a contest.	,909				
V5	It amuses me to find products that offer a gift/freebie.	,887				
V6	It's pleasing to look for products that offer a product/freebie.	,887				
V7 (*)	I get bored to look for products that offer a gift/freebie.	,880				
V12	It amuses me to look for products that offer a game or a contest	,877				
V4	It is pleasing to look for products that offer a gift/freebie.	,875				
V2	I wish products that offer a gift / freebie.	,862				
V3	I want products that offer a gift/freebie.	,860				
V1	I am attracted to products that offer a gift/freebie.	,854				
V9	I want products that offer a game or contest.	,813				
V8	I wish products that offer a game or a contest.	,786				
V13	It is fun to find products that offer more products.	,711				
V14	It amuses me to find products that offer more products.	,569			-,542	
V16	I am interested in the products that offer more amount of product.		,771			
V15	It pleases me to find products that offer more products.		,678			
V18	I trust products that offer more products.		,656			
V17	I observe the products that offer more products.		,638			
V20	It amuses me to find products that offer a price reduction.			,676		
V21	It pleases me to find products that offer a price reduction.			,670		
V19	It's fun to look for products that offer a price reduction.			,667		
V22	I am interested in the products that offer price reduction.				,549	
V23	I trust products that offer a price reduction.					,567
	% Variance by factor	46,42%	11,80%	11,23%	5,26%	4,75%
	Eigenvalues	10,68	2,71	2,58	1,21	1,09
	% Total variance	79,46%				

(*) item reverse coded

Table 3 presents the solution after the rotation of factors. It appears that the first component includes items V1 to V14, originally belonging to the scales "sensitivity offer a game / contest "and "sensitivity to offering freebie / gift", assuming a single component. The second component includes items V15 to V18 concerning the "sensitivity scale to offer more product," and that the item V15 matches the playful dimension and the rest correspond to social desirability. The third component is integrated items V19 to V21, which concern the playful dimension of the "scale of sensitivity to price reduction." The fourth component includes items V14 respect to the playful dimension of "sensitivity scale to offer more product" and V22 with respect to the dimension of social desirability on the "sensitivity scale to price reduction". Finally, the fifth component includes the item that corresponds to the dimension V23 social desirability of the "sensitivity scale to price reduction ".

To determine the internal consistency of the questionnaire, we calculated the Cronbach's alpha for all the items that compose the scale, resulting in a score of 0.932.

As in the study by Cardoso *et al* (2010), this study also did not replied to the original scale factor structure, ie the so-called bi-dimensionality of each of the four sub-scales/factors comprising the scale of Muratore. However, here too it is possible to conclude that children do not distinguish the four promotional techniques, as envisaged in the original scale.

5. Conclusion

Children are exposed daily to numerous advertising stimuli that accustomed them to brands and products, in order to induce its trial, purchase or solicitation to parents (Cardoso, 2010, p.39).

This article was intended not only to apply but also to validate the scale of Muratore on the sensitivity of children to promotional techniques. Thus the factor analysis carried out on all 23 items of the scale reveals that added five components of the original scales' sensitivity to offer a freebie / present" and "sensitivity to the offer of a game / contest "in a single component, which may mean that children do not distinguish these two promotional techniques, thus proving the theory Tali TE'ENI-Harari, (2008) that the promise of a gift or an award is likely to produce better marketing results.

Moreover, the original scale of "sensitivity to price reduction" was split into two components: one integrated items relative to the dimension "playful" and another integrated the dimension "social desirability", demonstrating the importance of these two dimensions to the sensitivity of price reduction.

Thus, given the above, these results are in the study by Cardoso *et al* (2010) and also demonstrate that children do not differentiate the four promotional techniques, thus contradicting the study presented by Muratore.

This discrepancy in results may be due to the fact of having made a single questionnaire that gathered the four scales of sensitivity to promotional techniques, to avoid acquiescence; it was decided to introduce only one item with reverse ("it annoys me to look for products that offer a freebie "). Besides the distribution of promotional techniques may have caused fatigue and monotony in children's responses, due to the semantic proximity between items presented.

Like all studies, this study also has some limitations. In particular, the questionnaire was developed for products / brands overall, it could have been directed at a brand or specific product. Despite having used a methodology and design appropriated to the state of children's cognitive development it is possible that scales used may have been interpreted differently by children, and have tired them, as the same questionnaire included four promotional techniques.

The size of the scale presented was very small, so the conclusions are limited to the opinion of the children questioned.

In this regard, future studies are needed before we can understand the appropriateness of items and the dimensions of the scale sensitivity of children to promotional techniques and eliminate or reword the worst items in order to refine the scale for the Portuguese context.

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