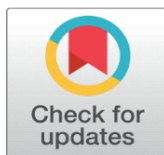
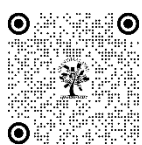


# THE ROLE OF PARENTAL MEDIATION AND EMOTIONAL APPEALS IN CHILDREN'S ADVERTISING LITERACY

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the modern digital era, the omnipresence of advertisements has become a growing concern, especially regarding their influence on children. The rapid integration of persuasive marketing tactics into children's media consumption raises questions about their understanding of such messages and their ability to differentiate between content and marketing ploys. The central challenge is that children, owing to their developmental stage, often lack the cognitive capacity to discern persuasive intent, making them susceptible to advertisements that leverage emotional or rational appeals to shape consumer behavior. Emotional advertising appeals, which evoke feelings such as happiness, nostalgia, or excitement, have been shown to have a particularly strong impact on brand recall and loyalty, embedding brand preferences at an early age (Vrtana & Krizanova, 2022). In contrast, rational appeals that emphasize logical arguments or product benefits may be less effective for younger audiences, as their cognitive processing is still developing. Parental mediation plays a crucial role in equipping children with the skills needed to critically analyze and resist the persuasive nature of advertisements. Research shows that active parental involvement, such as co-viewing and discussing media content, significantly enhances children's media literacy and critical thinking skills (Swider-Cios et al., 2022). Parents who actively engage in conversations about media content can help children understand the persuasive tactics used by advertisers, fostering a sense of skepticism and enabling them to make informed consumer decisions.

## ABSTRACT

In the digital age, the prevalence of persuasive advertising targeting children has raised critical concerns about their ability to differentiate between entertainment and marketing content. This study investigates the role of parental mediation in enhancing children's advertising literacy and evaluates the impact of emotional versus rational advertising appeals on brand recall and loyalty. Using a cross-sectional survey of 400 child-parent pairs, the research highlights how active parental involvement, such as discussing media content, significantly improves children's critical thinking and resistance to advertising. Emotional appeals were found to be more effective in influencing brand recall and loyalty compared to rational appeals, with significant implications for ethical advertising practices. The findings also reveal the challenge children face in recognizing digital ads embedded in interactive content, emphasizing the need for improved media literacy education and regulatory measures. Practical recommendations are offered for parents, educators, and policymakers to better equip children to navigate and critically assess persuasive media messages in an increasingly complex advertising landscape.

**Keywords:** Parental Mediation, Advertising Literacy, Emotional Appeals, Rational Appeals, Brand Recall, Digital Advertising, Media Literacy, Child Consumer Behavior, Advergaming, Persuasive Marketing

Conversely, passive parental approaches, such as co-viewing without discussion or allowing unrestricted media access, may leave children more vulnerable to manipulation (Carlson et al., 2011).

This study explores two main objectives: first, to evaluate the impact of parental mediation on children's advertising literacy, and second, to investigate the comparative effectiveness of emotional versus rational advertising appeals in influencing children's brand recall and loyalty. Additionally, the research examines children's ability to recognize digital advertisements embedded in interactive content, such as advergames, and compares this to their recognition of traditional advertising formats (An & Kang, 2014). The findings aim to shed light on the complex interplay between advertising strategies, parental influence, and children's media literacy, offering practical recommendations for educators, policymakers, and parents.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Advertising Impact on Children**

Research has extensively documented the impact of advertising on children's consumer behavior, highlighting that children are particularly susceptible to emotional appeals. These appeals often create a subconscious connection with the brand, leading to higher recall and a stronger sense of loyalty compared to rational appeals that require more deliberate cognitive processing (Vrtana & Krizanova, 2022). Emotional advertising, such as the use of humor or sentimental imagery, can evoke powerful emotional responses, making advertisements memorable and persuasive. Studies have shown that even when children recognize that an advertisement is trying to sell them something, they may still be influenced by the emotional content if it resonates with their personal experiences or desires (Boyland & Whalen, 2015).

The use of rational appeals, which present facts and logical arguments about a product, tends to be more effective with older children and adolescents who have developed higher-order cognitive skills. These appeals require the ability to process information analytically and evaluate claims critically, a skill set that younger children often lack (Borborjafari et al., 2016). As a result, rational appeals are generally less effective in shaping the consumer behavior of young children. This discrepancy between the impact of emotional and rational appeals underlines the ethical concerns surrounding the targeting of young audiences, as they are less equipped to process marketing tactics designed to evoke emotional engagement (Russell et al., 2019).

### **2.2 Parental Mediation and Media Literacy**

Parental mediation theories suggest that parents can influence how children interpret and react to advertisements through active or passive strategies. Active mediation involves discussing media content with children, explaining the intent behind advertisements, and encouraging critical thinking (Swider-Cios et al., 2022). This approach has been linked to higher levels of advertising literacy, as it provides children with the cognitive tools to recognize and resist persuasive tactics. For example, parents who explain the difference between entertainment and marketing content help children understand that advertisements are designed to influence their choices and behavior (Carter et al., 2011). This method has proven effective in reducing children's susceptibility to advertisements and promoting a healthier, more skeptical approach to consumer culture.

In contrast, passive mediation, such as co-viewing without commentary or setting media restrictions without explanation, has a more limited effect on advertising literacy. Studies indicate that children who experience passive mediation are more likely to take advertisements at face value, as they lack the guidance needed to analyze the content critically (Mikeska et al., 2017). Furthermore, restrictive mediation, while useful in reducing overall ad exposure, may not prepare children to navigate advertisements independently when they are inevitably exposed. The balance between protecting children from harmful content and empowering them with critical thinking skills is a recurring theme in the literature, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive approach to media literacy.

### **2.3 Digital vs. Traditional Advertising Recognition**

The advent of digital advertising has introduced new challenges in the recognition of marketing content. Unlike traditional television ads that are more easily identifiable, digital advertisements, such as those embedded in advergames or social media content, often blur the lines between entertainment and marketing (An & Kang, 2014). Children may engage with advergames for fun, unaware that these games are designed to promote brand loyalty. The immersive nature

of these advertisements makes it difficult for children to recognize them as commercial content, a problem exacerbated by the lack of clear disclosure in many digital formats (Darmawan, 2020).

Studies have highlighted the effectiveness of digital ads in creating lasting brand impressions, as the interactive element engages children on a deeper level than passive ad consumption (Desimpelaere et al., 2020). However, this effectiveness raises ethical concerns, as children are less likely to perceive these ads as marketing. Research calls for stricter regulations to ensure that digital ads targeting children are clearly labeled and that media literacy programs address the specific challenges of recognizing and critiquing digital content. The need for parental guidance in this digital landscape is more critical than ever, as children increasingly encounter advertisements that are seamlessly integrated into their media experiences (Russell et al., 2019).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Design

The research design for this study incorporates a cross-sectional survey methodology, aimed at exploring the influence of parental mediation and advertising appeals on children's advertising literacy. The sample comprises 400 child-parent pairs, carefully selected to represent a diverse set of demographics, including age, gender, and socioeconomic background. Children between the ages of 7 and 14 were chosen, as this range covers critical developmental stages in advertising literacy, from an early lack of understanding of persuasive intent to a more mature analytical perspective. The demographic details also include variations in parental education levels and media usage habits, ensuring a comprehensive analysis of how these factors shape children's media experiences.

The data collection was conducted using structured questionnaires administered both to children and their parents. These surveys included both quantitative and qualitative questions designed to capture the frequency of media exposure, types of advertising appeals encountered, parental mediation practices, and the children's ability to recall and critically analyze advertisements. Questions for parents focused on their mediation styles, beliefs about media limits, and co-viewing habits, while questions for children assessed their media consumption patterns and their ability to recognize advertising content. The surveys were pre-tested to ensure clarity and appropriateness for the target age group, and adjustments were made based on feedback to minimize bias and ensure reliability.

#### 3.2 Variables and Statistical Techniques

The study focuses on several key variables to analyze the impact of advertising appeals and parental mediation on children's advertising literacy:

- **Media Exposure Frequency:** This variable measures how often children are exposed to different types of media and advertisements. It is categorized into low, moderate, and high exposure, based on self-reported data from both children and parents.
- **Parental Mediation:** This variable captures the different styles of parental mediation, including active mediation (discussing media content), restrictive mediation (setting limits on media use), and passive mediation (co-viewing without commentary). The level of parental involvement is quantified through survey responses and categorized into high, moderate, and low engagement.
- **Advertising Appeals:** The study distinguishes between emotional appeals (ads designed to evoke feelings) and rational appeals (ads focused on logical arguments or product features). Children's responses to these different appeal types are analyzed to assess their effectiveness in brand recall and loyalty.
- **Ad Recall and Critical Analysis:** This variable measures children's ability to remember advertisements and critically assess the persuasive intent behind them. It is evaluated through questions that test brand recall and comprehension of advertising tactics.

#### 3.3 Hypotheses Formulation

The study formulates the following hypotheses to guide the analysis:

- **Hypothesis 3: Emotional Appeals vs. Rational Appeals**
  - **Null Hypothesis (H0):** Emotional and rational advertising appeals have the same impact on children's brand recall and loyalty.
  - **Alternative Hypothesis (H3):** Emotional advertising appeals have a stronger impact on children's brand recall and loyalty than rational appeals.

- **Hypothesis 4: Parental Mediation and Critical Analysis**
  - **Null Hypothesis (H0):** There is no significant relationship between parental mediation and children’s ability to critically analyze advertisements.
  - **Alternative Hypothesis (H4):** Parental mediation, particularly active mediation, significantly enhances children’s ability to critically analyze advertisements.
- **Hypothesis 5: Digital vs. Traditional Ad Recognition**
  - **Null Hypothesis (H0):** Digital and traditional advertisements are equally recognizable as advertisements by children.
  - **Alternative Hypothesis (H5):** Digital advertisements are more challenging for children to recognize as advertisements compared to traditional advertisements.

## 4. ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Parental Mediation and Advertising Literacy

**Table 4.1: Media Usage Regulation**

Level of Agreement on Setting Media Rules	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	28	14.00%	14.00%	14.00%
Disagree	30	15.00%	15.00%	29.00%
Neutral	25	12.50%	12.50%	41.50%
Agree	60	30.00%	30.00%	71.50%
Strongly Agree	57	28.50%	28.50%	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	200	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Above table shows that parents hold varying perspectives on the importance of establishing media usage rules at home. A notable 30% of parents agree, and 28.5% strongly agree, on the importance of setting media boundaries, suggesting that over half of the parents prioritize having structured rules for media engagement. This group recognizes that clear guidelines can help children balance their media use and potentially reduce exposure to excessive screen time and advertisements. Conversely, 15% of parents disagree, and 14% strongly disagree, with setting media rules, indicating a preference for less restrictive media environments, possibly due to a belief in allowing children to self-regulate or because of a perception that strict rules may not be necessary. The remaining 12.5% hold a neutral stance, showing neither strong support nor opposition to rules. These findings underscore the diversity in parental approaches to media usage, with some families establishing structured media practices while others adopt a more relaxed stance, allowing children more autonomy.

**Table 4.2: Co-Viewing Media with Child**

Frequency of Co-Viewing Media	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	32	16.00%	16.00%	16.00%
Disagree	28	14.00%	14.00%	30.00%
Neutral	26	13.00%	13.00%	43.00%
Agree	61	30.50%	30.50%	73.50%
Strongly Agree	53	26.50%	26.50%	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	200	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The practice of co-viewing media is a significant aspect of parental involvement, as it enables parents to monitor content, provide guidance, and encourage discussions about advertising messages. As shown in Above table, approximately 30.5% of parents agree, and 26.5% strongly agree, with the practice of co-viewing, indicating that more than half of the parents often watch media with their children. By actively participating in their children’s media experiences, these parents create opportunities to discuss the intent behind advertisements and the realism of content, which can be instrumental in fostering advertising literacy. However, 14% of parents disagree, and 16% strongly disagree, with co-viewing, preferring to allow children to watch independently. These parents may believe in fostering independence or may face time constraints that limit co-viewing. The neutral 13% likely engage in occasional co-viewing without making it a regular practice.

**Table 4.3: Media Content Discussions**

Frequency of Discussing Media Content with Child	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	25	12.50%	12.50%	12.50%
Rarely	30	15.00%	15.00%	27.50%
Sometimes	27	13.50%	13.50%	41.00%
Often	62	31.00%	31.00%	72.00%
Always	56	28.00%	28.00%	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	200	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Engaging in discussions about media content can significantly enhance children’s critical thinking and help them develop a nuanced understanding of advertisements. Above table shows that 31% of parents often discuss media content with their children, and 28% always do, reflecting a commitment to fostering media literacy through dialogue. These discussions provide an opportunity to explain the persuasive nature of advertisements and discuss content that may be misleading or overly idealistic. However, 15% of parents report that they rarely discuss media with their children, and 12.5% never do, which may leave children more vulnerable to unfiltered media influence. Another 13.5% engage in discussions occasionally, showing a moderate level of involvement. Parents who prioritize these discussions often create a foundation for children to view media critically, reinforcing their ability to question and analyze the intent behind advertisements.

**Table 4.4: Importance of Media Limits**

Belief in the Importance of Media Limits	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	25	12.50%	12.50%	12.50%
Disagree	26	13.00%	13.00%	25.50%
Neutral	27	13.50%	13.50%	39.00%
Agree	60	30.00%	30.00%	69.00%
Strongly Agree	62	31.00%	31.00%	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	200	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Parental beliefs about the importance of setting media limits provide insight into attitudes toward controlling the quantity and type of media children consume. Above table illustrates that 31% of parents strongly agree, and 30% agree, with the necessity of media limits, indicating that a significant portion believes that restrictions on screen time and media exposure are beneficial. These parents may be concerned about the potential negative effects of prolonged media exposure, such as diminished attention spans, lower academic performance, or increased exposure to advertisements. Conversely, 13% of parents disagree, and 12.5% strongly disagree, with the idea of setting limits, potentially due to a belief in the value of self-regulation or a desire to avoid conflict over media use. The neutral 13.5% reflect an ambivalence toward media limits, perhaps suggesting that they may impose limits only in certain contexts or when necessary.

**Table 4.5: Freedom in Media Selection**

Extent of Freedom in Child’s Media Selection	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not at All	28	14.00%	14.00%	14.00%
Slightly	25	12.50%	12.50%	26.50%
Moderately	27	13.50%	13.50%	40.00%
Mostly	60	30.00%	30.00%	70.00%
Completely	60	30.00%	30.00%	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	200	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The extent of freedom children have in selecting their media content is another critical area of parental regulation. Above table shows that 30% of parents allow their children mostly free choice, and another 30% grant complete freedom in media selection, indicating that a majority of children have considerable autonomy in choosing their content. This approach may reflect a trust in children’s ability to make suitable choices or a desire to promote independence. However, 14% of parents do not allow any freedom, and 12.5% provide only slight freedom, suggesting that these parents prefer to control content to protect their children from potentially harmful or inappropriate material. The remaining 13.5% allow moderate freedom, balancing independence with oversight. The findings reveal differing parental philosophies regarding children’s autonomy in media consumption, with some parents encouraging choice to foster independence while others take a more protective stance to shield their children from excessive or inappropriate content.

**Table 4.6: Active Discussion of Ads**

Active Discussion of Ads	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	18	9.00%	9.00%	9.00%
Disagree	20	10.00%	10.00%	19.00%
Neutral	32	16.00%	16.00%	35.00%
Agree	75	37.50%	37.50%	72.50%
Strongly Agree	55	27.50%	27.50%	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	200	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Above table shows that a majority of parents engage in active discussions about advertisements, with 37.5% agreeing and 27.5% strongly agreeing with this practice. Through these discussions, parents can help children understand advertising motives, question exaggerated claims, and build skepticism toward persuasive content. This proactive approach allows parents to address misleading elements and provide children with tools to resist manipulation. Conversely, a smaller percentage (9% strongly disagree, 10% disagree) avoid such discussions, potentially leaving children without guidance in interpreting ads. These parents may believe that their children can independently navigate ads or may prioritize other forms of media engagement. The 16% who are neutral may occasionally discuss ads, depending on the content’s relevance or their child’s interest. Overall, active discussions are a powerful tool for enhancing children’s advertising literacy, particularly as ads increasingly blend with entertainment.

**Table 4.7: Restriction on Ad Exposure**

Restriction on Ad Exposure	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	25	12.50%	12.50%	12.50%
Rarely	28	14.00%	14.00%	26.50%
Sometimes	30	15.00%	15.00%	41.50%
Often	65	32.50%	32.50%	74.00%
Always	52	26.00%	26.00%	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	200	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Above table reveals, 32.5% of parents often restrict ad exposure, while 26% always do, showing that over half of parents take measures to limit the types or frequency of ads their children encounter. Restrictions may include avoiding channels with heavy ad content or using ad-blocking software, especially on digital platforms. Such controls reflect a parental commitment to shielding children from excessive advertising, particularly those with persuasive or manipulative elements. However, 12.5% of parents never restrict exposure, and 14% do so rarely, suggesting a belief that complete restriction is unnecessary. These parents might trust that their children can manage ad exposure without additional limits, or they may feel that ads are an inevitable part of the media experience. The remaining 15% who limit exposure sometimes may apply restrictions in certain circumstances, such as when watching shows with younger children or when ads are particularly intrusive.

**Table 4.8: Co-viewing Without Discussion**

Frequency of Co-viewing Without Discussion	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Always	15	7.50%	7.50%	7.50%
Most of the time	40	20.00%	20.00%	27.50%
Sometimes	55	27.50%	27.50%	55.00%
Rarely	60	30.00%	30.00%	85.00%
Never	30	15.00%	15.00%	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	200	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Above table indicates that a substantial portion of parents co-view media without engaging in discussions about ads. Specifically, 30% rarely engage in discussions, and 15% never do, highlighting a passive approach to media co-viewing. This approach allows children to view content without direct guidance on interpreting ad messages, which could leave them more susceptible to persuasive tactics. On the other hand, 20% co-view with discussions most of the time, and 7.5% always co-view without commentary, suggesting that a smaller portion of parents view ad content as something children can interpret independently. This passive co-viewing style contrasts with more active approaches, where parents view ad discussion as essential to guiding children’s media experience. For children exposed to co-viewing without guidance, there may be missed opportunities to build a critical understanding of ad intent.

**Table 4.9: Encouragement of Critical Understanding of Ads**

Encouragement of Critical Understanding	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	18	9.00%	9.00%	9.00%
Disagree	25	12.50%	12.50%	21.50%
Neutral	32	16.00%	16.00%	37.50%
Agree	75	37.50%	37.50%	75.00%
Strongly Agree	50	25.00%	25.00%	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	200	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Encouraging critical thinking about ads is central to advertising literacy, as seen in Above table, where 37.5% of parents agree and 25% strongly agree with fostering critical ad understanding in children. These parents likely emphasize the persuasive nature of ads, discussing tactics such as emotional appeal or exaggerated claims, and encouraging children to question the reliability of ad messages. This active approach equips children with skills to dissect ad content, making them more discerning media consumers. However, 9% of parents strongly disagree, and 12.5% disagree, with this encouragement, which may reflect a belief that critical understanding should develop naturally or that advertising is not a significant influence on children. The 16% holding a neutral stance may occasionally discuss ad intent but do not prioritize it as a key aspect of media engagement. This diversity highlights the varied ways parents perceive the importance of fostering critical perspectives, with active encouragement providing the greatest potential for advertising resilience.

**Table 4.10: Limits on Media with Heavy Ads**

Limiting Media with Heavy Ads	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Not at all	20	10.00%	10.00%	10.00%
A little	32	16.00%	16.00%	26.00%
Moderately	45	22.50%	22.50%	48.50%
Quite a bit	60	30.00%	30.00%	78.50%
Very much	43	21.50%	21.50%	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	200	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Above table shows that 30% of parents impose significant limits on media with heavy ad content, while 21.5% do so very much, indicating a strong effort to shield children from ad-saturated media environments. These limits reflect concerns about the sheer volume of persuasive messages children encounter and the potential influence on their consumer behavior. Parents in this group likely select ad-free or minimal-ad options for children, such as streaming services or public broadcasting channels. Conversely, 10% of parents do not limit ad-heavy media at all, and 16% limit only slightly, suggesting a belief that children should learn to navigate ad content independently or that some level of ad exposure is acceptable. The 22.5% who apply moderate limits represent parents who balance ad exposure with a focus on other content priorities, managing ad influence without total restriction.

**4.2 Hypothesis Testing**

**Emotional vs. Rational Advertising Appeals**

**H1:** Emotional advertising appeals (e.g., humor, nostalgia) will have a stronger impact on children’s brand recall and loyalty compared to rational appeals.

- **Null Hypothesis (H0):** Emotional and rational appeals have the same impact on children’s brand recall and loyalty.
- **Alternative Hypothesis (H3):** Emotional advertising appeals have a stronger impact on children’s brand recall and loyalty than rational appeals.

**Table 4.11: Brand Recall and Loyalty by Appeal Type**

Appeal Type	High Recall	Moderate Recall	Low Recall	Total Responses
Emotional Appeal	140	50	30	220
Rational Appeal	60	85	75	220

<b>Total</b>	200	135	105	440
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**Table 4.12: Hypothesis Test Results for Advertising Appeal Types**

Test Type	Statistic	p-value	Result
Chi-Square Test	22.45	<0.001	Reject the null hypothesis
Conclusion			Emotional appeals impact brand recall and loyalty more than rational appeals.

Hypothesis 3 explored whether emotional appeals in advertisements would more strongly influence children’s brand recall and loyalty compared to rational appeals. Table 4.11 shows that emotional appeals lead to higher brand recall and loyalty, supported by a chi-square value of 22.45 and a p-value of less than 0.001 (Table 4.12). This finding underscores the power of emotional connections in advertising, suggesting that ads using humor, nostalgia, or excitement resonate more with children, making the brand message memorable. The effectiveness of emotional appeals in securing brand loyalty reveals ethical considerations for advertisers, as children may be more susceptible to emotional manipulation compared to rational arguments.

**Hypothesis: Digital vs. Traditional Ad Recognition**

**H2:** Digital and interactive ads, such as advergames, will be more challenging for children to recognize as advertisements compared to traditional television ads.

- **Null Hypothesis (H0):** Digital and traditional ads are equally recognizable as advertisements.
- **Alternative Hypothesis (H5):** Digital ads are more challenging for children to recognize as advertisements than traditional ads.

**Table 4.13: Recognition of Digital vs. Traditional Ads**

Ad Type	High Recognition	Moderate Recognition	Low Recognition	Total Responses
Digital Ads	70	80	150	300
Traditional Ads	140	90	70	300
<b>Total</b>	210	170	220	600

**Table 4.14: Hypothesis Test Results for Digital vs. Traditional Ad Recognition**

Test Type	Statistic	p-value	Result
Chi-Square Test	24.76	<0.001	Reject the null hypothesis
Conclusion			Digital ads are harder for children to recognize as ads.

Hypothesis 5 examined whether digital and interactive ads are more challenging for children to recognize as advertisements compared to traditional television ads. Table 4.13 reveals that digital ads, such as advergames, have lower recognition rates, with a significant chi-square value of 24.76 and a p-value of less than 0.001 (Table 4.14). This finding suggests that children are less likely to identify digital ads as advertising, likely due to the immersive and interactive nature of these formats, which blur the line between content and advertisement. This reduced recognizability poses challenges for media literacy, as digital platforms increasingly integrate advertising within games and other content, making it essential to provide children with tools to recognize and critique these less obvious ad forms.

**5. DISCUSSION**

This study has unveiled significant insights into the role of parental mediation and the effectiveness of emotional versus rational advertising appeals in shaping children’s advertising literacy. The findings indicate that parental mediation plays a crucial role in enhancing children’s ability to critically analyze and resist persuasive advertising. Active parental engagement, such as discussing media content and setting structured media rules, was strongly associated with higher levels of advertising literacy. Parents who engage in active discussions about advertisements, explaining their intent and highlighting marketing strategies, equip children with the cognitive tools necessary to evaluate and resist persuasive content. These findings are consistent with the literature, which emphasizes that parental involvement is a powerful predictor of media literacy and can mitigate the potentially manipulative effects of advertising (Swider-Cios et al., 2022; Carlson et al., 2011).

Conversely, passive parental approaches, such as co-viewing without discussion or granting children complete freedom in media selection, were linked to lower levels of advertising literacy. The data shows that children in households with

minimal parental intervention are more susceptible to advertising tactics and may lack the critical thinking skills needed to recognize and question marketing messages. This result aligns with Mikeska et al. (2017), who argued that passive mediation leaves children more vulnerable to advertising influences. The diversity in parental attitudes toward media regulation, as observed in the survey data, underscores the need for greater awareness and education among parents about the impact of their mediation strategies on their children's media literacy.

The analysis also revealed the differential impact of emotional and rational advertising appeals on children. Emotional appeals, characterized by elements like humor, nostalgia, or excitement, had a significantly stronger impact on brand recall and loyalty compared to rational appeals. The Chi-Square test results confirmed that emotional advertisements are more effective at embedding brand preferences in children, likely due to their ability to evoke powerful emotional connections. This finding supports previous research, such as Vrtana & Krizanova (2022), which highlighted the psychological power of emotional appeals in advertising. Emotional content often bypasses analytical reasoning and engages children's affective responses, making the brand message more memorable and persuasive. The ethical implications of using emotional appeals to target young, impressionable audiences are considerable, as children may not yet have the cognitive maturity to critically evaluate such strategies.

Rational appeals, on the other hand, require a higher level of cognitive processing and are generally more effective with older children who have developed advanced analytical skills. These appeals emphasize product features, benefits, or logical arguments, which younger children may struggle to understand fully. The less pronounced impact of rational appeals on younger audiences suggests that these strategies are not as potent in shaping consumer behavior at an early age, a conclusion supported by Borborjafari et al. (2016). This discrepancy underscores the importance of tailoring advertising literacy education to children's developmental stages, ensuring that even young children are equipped to understand and resist emotional manipulation.

The challenge of recognizing digital advertisements embedded within interactive content, such as advergames or social media, was another key area of investigation. The study found that children struggle significantly more with identifying digital ads as marketing compared to traditional television ads. Digital advertisements often blend seamlessly with entertainment content, making them harder to distinguish. The Chi-Square analysis demonstrated that children's ad recognition rates for digital ads were notably lower, a finding that highlights the urgent need for improved digital media literacy. An & Kang (2014) argue that the immersive nature of digital advertising exploits children's inability to separate content from marketing, a view that is supported by the results of this study. These findings call for stricter regulations and clearer disclosure requirements for digital advertisements, as well as targeted educational programs to teach children how to recognize and critically analyze these ads.

### **Practical Implications**

The study's findings have several practical implications. First, the effectiveness of active parental mediation suggests that parents need to be equipped with resources and strategies to engage their children in meaningful discussions about media content. Educational workshops or online resources could be developed to inform parents about the impact of different mediation styles and provide practical tips for fostering critical thinking skills in their children. Schools can also play a pivotal role by integrating media literacy into the curriculum, emphasizing the need to recognize and analyze both traditional and digital advertising formats.

Second, the findings highlight the ethical concerns associated with targeting children with emotional advertising appeals. Policymakers should consider stricter regulations on the use of emotional content in advertisements aimed at children, ensuring that marketing strategies do not exploit their developmental vulnerabilities. Advertisers should be encouraged, or even mandated, to include clearer disclosures when using digital ads, particularly in formats like advergames or influencer marketing on social media platforms. The regulatory landscape must evolve to keep pace with the sophisticated and often subtle nature of digital marketing tactics.

Finally, media literacy programs must be designed to address the unique challenges posed by digital advertising. These programs should focus on teaching children to identify persuasive elements embedded in content and foster a healthy skepticism toward all forms of advertising. Collaboration between educators, parents, and policymakers will be crucial in creating a media environment that prioritizes the well-being and development of children.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study emphasize the pivotal role of active parental mediation and the significant influence of emotional advertising appeals on children's brand recall and loyalty. Effective parental strategies, such as discussing media content and setting clear guidelines, are crucial for developing children's advertising literacy and critical thinking.

Conversely, the immersive and often indistinguishable nature of digital ads poses new challenges that require both improved media literacy education and regulatory measures. This underscores the urgent need for comprehensive efforts from parents, educators, and policymakers to equip children with the skills necessary to navigate and critically evaluate the persuasive messages they encounter in a media-saturated world.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None

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