

The Perception of Ethics Related To The Marketing Targeted to Children in Romania

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJAREMS/v4-i1/1605> DOI:10.6007/IJAREMS/v4-i1/1605

Published Online: 09 January 2015

Abstract

The responsibility of a company in relation with the consumers translates primarily by addressing and treating them ethically, respecting the rules and principles of moral, legal and deontological. The situation is more delicate when the targeted consumers are children.

This paper proposes, starting from the author's constant concern about the problematic of the children as target market, to investigate how the marketing practices in Romania are seen as ethical in relation to the consumer as child. For this purpose, 24 interviews were conducted with parent dyads from diverse urban environments, of medium and large size (Bucharest, Iasi, Constanta, Cluj, Brasov, Bacau, Timisoara, Craiova), having various income levels, between 850-1500 lei per capita, average education level and above average, eight couples for each significant age groups (3-6 years, 7-12 years, 13-16 years).

The main goals of the present research were to identify the perception of the ethics in the marketing efforts, to identify the level of ethics perceived related to the marketing efforts targeted to the children in Romania, to reveal those marketing practices perceived to be ethical/fair, to emphasize the marketing elements considered to be appropriate in strict relation to the children segment in Romania

Keywords: Responsibility related to consumers, marketing to children, qualitative research, marketing ethics.

Introduction

The problematic related to marketing ethics is an always open issue, any marketing efforts of an organization can be placed under scrutiny. By their very nature, they try to change the behavior of the target market in the direction desired by the issuing organization. Once again, this aspect of ethics occurs in the situation in which the target market is a category whose power of judgment, evaluation, in a word the discernment is reduced by its very nature.

There are at least three main reasons which guarantee a high level of attention over the role of the child in the market:

1. The children's market has a fast growth
2. The children clearly influence the family's purchase decision.
3. The parents' consuming behavior influences the children's consuming behavior

In these circumstances, it is easy to understand why in the last years, the efforts and marketing budgets allocated to the children's market have experienced a significant increase (Hoorgan, 2005; Calvert, 2008).

In the current socio-economic development context, the practical support for the theoretical approaches is more tenuous than ever. All the members of the society, especially the youngest, are influenced by the emphasized industrialization and the access to a varied and overwhelming amount of information (Aldea & Brandabur, 2012).

Concepts and Related Topics

The notion of the child-consumer as a target market is not a novelty anymore, being a part of the natural state of the developed societies in which the children come, directly through parents or affiliated groups, in contact with a multitude of products and the information about various products can reach the children through different available marketing channels. Based on the child's developmental stages identified by Piaget, the concept of socialization of the child as the premise of the child consumer has been crystallized (Ekstrom, 2007). The consumer socialization process was first mentioned by Scott Ward (1974) and defined it as *"the process by which young people acquire skills, knowledge, and attitudes relevant to their functioning as consumers in the marketplace"* (Ward, 1974). Other authors have defined this term as being *"the ways in which individuals learn skills, knowledge, values, motives and roles appropriate to their positions in a group or a society"* (Bush & Simmons, 1981) or *"a developmental process that proceeds through a series of stages as children mature into adult consumers"* (John, 1999), or *"the process in which the individual constantly harmonizes himself or herself with the environment by learning or changing new attitudes, values, and current norms"* (Hayti, 2008).

McNeal (1993) organized child development as a consumer in five stages:

- I. *The observation stage* - the first stage in the child's development as a consumer. It often happens that the parents take their children since they are very young - starting even from two months when they are involved in doing different shopping, initiating them in the stores environment. (McNeal & Yeah, 1993)
- II. *The stage of requests formulation* - is that stage in which, in most of the times, once arrived in stores they aggressively requesting for a product, appealing to different tactics to get what they want (crave, gestures or even start to cry (Clark & Delia, 1976; John, 1999). These requests together with the development of various preferences for sounds or colors were observed after 18 or 24 months (Thomas, 2007; Cole & Cole, 2001; Flavell, 1999; Gray, 2006).
- III. *The selection stage* - is identified around the age of 3-4 years, when the child is already raised up, walking and moving himself to the shelf from where they can take the products that have attracted his attention and put them together with the parents' items in the shopping cart (Metcalf & Mischel, 1999).
- IV. *The assisted purchase stage* - a stage identified by the age of 7-8 years. It is the stage in which children have their own money being able to buy a number of desired products. It is the stage in which they basically realize that money can be used in exchange with the desired products (McNeal, 1993).
- V. *The independent purchase stage* - in this stage, around 11-16 years, it was noticed that they begin to obtain themselves the products, while the needs and preferences are no longer met by parents (Gunta & Furnham, 1998; McNeal, 1992). It was emphasized a certain

shopping independence level in regards with their parents, which is the last stage in shaping the child as consumer.

In another approach, Deborah Roedder John (1999) in a comprehensive study, summarizes the five stages proposed by McNeal (1993) synthesizing them into three main groups (Table no. 1.), as follows:

Table 1

The Stages of Consumer Socialization

Characteristics	Perceptual stage, 3–7 years	Analytical stage, 7–11 years	Reflective stage, 11–16 years
KNOWLEDGE STRUCTURES:			
<i>Orientation</i>	concrete	abstract	abstract
<i>Focus</i>	perceptual features	functional/underlying features	functional/underlying features
<i>Complexity</i>	unidimensional simple	two or more dimensions contingent (“if–then”)	multidimensional contingent (“if–then”)
<i>Perspective</i>	egocentric (own perspective)	dual perspectives (own + others)	dual perspectives in social context
DECISION-MAKING AND INFLUENCE STRATEGIES:			
<i>Orientation</i>	expedient	thoughtful	strategic
<i>Focus</i>	perceptual features salient features	functional/underlying features relevant features	functional/underlying features relevant features
<i>Complexity</i>	single attributes limited repertoire of strategies	two or more attributes expanded repertoire of strategies	multiple attributes complete repertoire of strategies
<i>Additivity</i>	emerging	moderate	fully developed
<i>Perspective</i>	egocentric	dual perspectives	dual perspective in social context

Source: John (1999)

Table No. 1. refers to the child-consumer evolution, from the first moment when the child interferes in the buying decisions occurred within the family, later accumulating knowledge and operational skills as they grow up, evolving to the first opportunity to make his own purchasing decisions, independent of his parents.

Beyond this problematic of the child transformed in consumer, as a result of the natural evolution of the human being, correlated with economic dynamism and social environment in which it develops, the concept of responsibility remains in question for all categories

involved in this approach (Bergadaà, 2007; Crane & Kazmi, 2010; Preston, 2005, Horgan, 2005).

Issues regarding the ethics of marketing activities, particularly for the promotional activity targeted to children have been addressed in a variety of specialty papers (Bergadaà, 2007; Kaur & Medury, 2011; Horgan, 2005; Preston 2004; Brown, 2002; Bhattacharyya & Kohli, 2007).

The concern regarding the impact of marketing approaches, more or less ethical, has been translated into practice through a multitude of studies performed at international level (Preston, 2004; 2005; Calvert, 2008; Atkin, 1981; Galst & White 1976; Goldberg, 1990; Goldberg & Gorn, 1974; Goldberg, Gorn, & Gibson 1978; Gorn and Goldberg, 1982; Roedder, Sternthal, & Calder, 1983; Robertson & Rossiter 1974; Clark & Michael, 2003; Verharen, 1991; Pine & Nash, 2002; Blatt et al., 1972; Ward et al., 1972; Palmer & McDowell 1979, Bever et al., 1975, Oates et al., 2003; John, 1999; Moore & Lutz, 2000, Kunkel et. al., 2004; Collins, 1990; Macklin, 1987; Gunter et al., 2005).

Most of these researches have focused on how children receive the commercial information and the way in which they mental processes and assimilate them.

Thus, for the TV broadcasts, these studies have revealed that, although they are aware that they watch something else then the ordinary TV shows, the children up to 8 years old aren't able to distinguish their persuasive character, and also they do not have the capacity to defend against them. Only starting with the age of 9 years they begin to correctly decode the nature of these messages, but they do not have enough abilities and knowledge about their commercial nature in order to correctly decipher and understand them. Starting with the age of 12 years they begin to decode their commercial character and to have discernment about the received commercial information, developing the necessary skepticism for getting them (Boush, Friestad, & Rose, 1994). Also, regardless of their age, the children do not understand the marketing tactics (e.g. price, packaging, exposure) which makes more difficult the processing of the information having an emphasized persuasive commercial character.

On the other hand, beyond of the classical promotional messages, the children are under the influence of other marketing stimuli (packaging, distribution, tasting) together with the normative influence of the social groups, which make extremely difficult to measure the real effect of the commercial communication over them.

Through the years, all these conclusion have been crystallized in some local, national or international normatives, related to the advertising activity targeted to the children (Law 148/26.06.2000, The ethical code for the commercials targeted to children related to alimentary goods, Children's Advertising Review Unit 1999)

In Romania, the problematic of this kind was tangential approached by Popescu (2013) which concluded the through a TV campaign targeted to children, one can obtain effects in the way of recognizing and remembering of the brand.

Qualitative Research

Aspects related to the influence of marketing approaches and media on children as consumers were occasionally reached, in Romania, by various authors in previously published studies (Aldea & Brandabur, 2012; Brandabur & Aldea, 2013) focused on the influence of the children over the parents' purchasing decisions. The research was performed over two groups of children of 3-6 years and 7-12 years old. We are not aware of the existence of other published studies of this kind.

Research Methodology

In order to achieve the study one has used the qualitative research method. There have been a number of qualitative interviews with 24 parent dyads in the largest cities of Romania (cities with over 250,000 inhabitants). The chosen cities were: Bucharest (4), Iasi (4), Constanta (2), Bacau (2), Timisoara (3), Cluj (4), Craiova (3) Brasov (2). Selected income interval were between 850-1500 lei per capita, average education level and above average, 8 couples for each significant age groups (3-6 years, 7-12 years, 13-16 years)

The large urban environment was selected because the exposure of the children to marketing practices and media influence are significantly higher than in rural areas, so their reactions and parents' perceptions related to this subject are clearly visible. Also the income level and parents education is higher than in urban than in rural areas (NIS, 2012) which has a direct connection with the level at which the children may be accessed through various marketing practices and by default on the level in which children can be influenced by them.

The interviews were conducted in locations chosen by the parents, in person or online at different hours and different days depending on their schedule, during May-June 2013. Each interview lasted 45-60 minutes, each depending on the time available and the parents' level of cooperation

Context and Marketing Goals

At the international level a series of studies have been carried out in relation to ethics of marketing targeted to children (see section "Concepts and related topics").

The studies performed in Romania (Brandabur & Aldea, 2013) have identified tangential aspects of how marketing actions affect children, without trying to identify the ethical attributes. Thus, in the age group of 3-6 years and 7-12 years, where one can talk about the child's exposure to various media channels, something that generates, in association with the parents' backgrounds (urban vs. rural) offered also by the socio-economic environment (generated by training level and parents' income) different reactions translated by attempting to influence the parents' purchasing decisions for certain categories of products including food, toys, school supplies, clothes, shoes and products personal hygiene of children.

Another aspect revealed in this study (Brandabur & Aldea, 2013) is the marketing pressure exerted on children living in big cities, translated through suitable degree of commercial network development, the social environment in which the child grows up and evolves - made of reference groups consisting of: parents, created around educational institutions or leisure, groups generating a normative pressure; possibilities for accessing the goods - purchasing power is different in big cities compared to the rest of inhabited areas, all of them generating greater opportunities to express opinions relating on goods and services for the children living in urban areas.

This study aims to investigate the perception of marketing ethics against the children who live in large Romanian cities, on all 3 levels of age identified in the literature: 3-6 years, 7-12 years and 13-16 years. The main goals of the present study were:

- identify the perception of ethics in marketing efforts,
- identify the level of ethics in which marketing efforts targeted for Romanian children are perceived
- identify those marketing practices perceived to be ethical
- identify the marketing elements considered to be appropriate in relation to children segment in Romania

Secondary, the research aimed to identify:

- the perception of marketing activities in general;
- the types of media able to influence the children by ability to form opinions on acquisitions
- differences between children's level of influence over the purchase decision at different age intervals.
- the level of trust in the national institutes of consumer protection, particularly related to the products intended for children.

The topic of the interviews was decided by the enumerated aims of the study. They have shaped the questions and the order they were addressed and also have guided the final analysis indicating the adequate direction of investigation.

Main Conclusions

In the Romanian urban environment, the parents are currently accompanied by children when doing shopping activities, due to their very demand. The children require it in order to be able to choose specific products or to access special playgrounds located inside the commercial spaces.

Different level of access to categories and brands, dictated by their actual existence in the proximity commercial network together with the family purchasing power (INS, 2012), the socialization level of children and parents, the family structure, in particular the existence of extended family, differences in interests and access to the media of rural residents, according to a study by the School of Journalism and Communication (FSJC, 2009) and particularly on the Internet - 33% of rural population (GFK Romania, 2013) are leading to certain discrepancies between urban and rural areas.

In the urban environment, the purchases are made weekly or twice a month from supermarkets and hypermarkets, the selection criteria being in terms of proximity and attractiveness of adjacent commercial galleries, the commodity consumption purchases (bread, fresh milk, fruit, meat, etc.) being performed at stores or from the market. Purchases relating to food specific for children and personal care products are performed together with the products dedicated for adults, from the same source or, where appropriate, in dedicated stores (e.g. stores selling organic products, pharmacies), while the toys, books and clothing / shoes are purchased from any store if the offer is considered attractive (online, supermarkets, dedicated shops).

Parents take into account the children's opinions for certain categories of products, such as food products (sweets, sausages, milk, soft drinks) toiletries (toothpaste, soap, shampoo), games, books and toys, clothing or footwear (young ages, especially when they have not been associated with characters from cartoons or animated stories) gadgets (mobile phones, desks and laptops iPads), IT school supplies primarily for personal use. Some situations were also referred by parents when, accompanied by their children when doing shopping, they were asked to purchase products that are not currently part of their area of interest, but they have developed preferences for them over time (e.g. the smell of laundry detergent, color soap, toilet paper), or objects for which they felt a spontaneous affinity related to color, shape or texture (e.g. table napkins, utensils) even for categories or brands that are the subject of advertising campaign (e.g. mineral water, dishwasher detergent).

The marketing activities developed by organizations were predictably perceived by the surveyed parents through the promoting actions organized by companies, for the aspects pertaining to other elements of the marketing mix: product, price, distribution or staff involved, receiving secondary attention, the researchers had to insist in particular by probing techniques. The marketing and its related practices are perceived, in fact, as a concrete way

to sell or influence the purchase of a product. For marketing techniques called "good sale / sell well a product" parent dyads showed *"all the activities like this presentation, TV commercials, tasting, advertising leaflets, banners that draw attention about commercial products."*

Although the parental dyads on which the scientific investigation was conducted were rated above the average level of education, we found that the notions of marketing ethics in general, were highly restricted, most tilting toward expression of truth value product attributes touted by various organizations, *"we think of an eastern approach about the truth told related to the sold products", "nobody wants to buy anything but was presented in advertising"*.

The discussion focused on the ethics of marketing targeted to children has revealed a more nuanced approach about the aspects of marketing, thus indicating an increased concern for parents about products that children come in contact with, they are willing to purchase them for the children or conversely, trying to keep their kids as far as possible from them.

Major differences were found in relation to the assessment of marketing ethics and age groups. Because, as mentioned above, not all activities related to this marketing mix have been reported and evaluated properly. For this purpose it was used the probing technique, namely the discussion was orientated to the issues we were specifically interested in (product, price, distribution and personnel engaged in sales / support, post-sale service). Thus, parents of young children (3-6 years) or older (13-16 years) appreciated as unethical a series of activities undertaken by companies, while the parents of children in the age group (7-12 years old) considered the same activities as a serious violation of ethics principles. Additional discussions generated in this direction by the researchers, once noticed, have unveiled that the main explanation is because, in these age groups, the degree of control that parents have over children is differently, as follows:

In the age group 3-6 years - the possibility that the children understand rational explanations like *"it is a good product / it is a poor quality product", "not suitable for your age," "I have no money / time to buy it", "you didn't behave", "it is not / it does not do what you know from the TV advertisement "* is low. On the other hand, the researchers have found that the parenting style focused mainly on providing rational arguments to the children when they request the acquisition of a good / service, invariably leads to child-parent conflicts.

Also it was noticed the absence of other arguments of emotional type in favor of the parental opinions, the decisions are often summarized as *"I do not buy you because I do not want / it is no good / I cannot"* which cause frustration to both parties, the parents: *"then (or later) I was sorry I have not got the item / service and I will reward myself buying something next time, letting him look more at the cartoons / going to McDonalds ..."* and the children: *"I see he's upset / cry / protest / no talking with me."*

Basically the parent can get the desired result (non-acquisition of the product) using the force, something that generates, by the accumulated frustrations, an even higher level of marketing elements evaluation to be unethical. In this category are placed the extremely tempting and colorful packaging of exposed products, the placement of the products inside the stores, the existence of areas that contain a series of products (e.g. clothing, accessories, school supplies) of a specific brand (e.g. Barbie, Spiderman, Hello Kitty, Ben Ten), the placement of stores containing products or services for children in commercial areas (e.g. in the malls, in bus stations, near kindergartens, playgrounds), organizing of tasting sessions inside the stores, the existence of numerous dedicated children magazines or containing generous spaces dedicated to loved brands (e.g. Scooby Doo, Mia, Cars), TV ads targeted to different stores or

brands (e.g. Noriel, Monster High, My Little Pony, Beyblade), Disney characters present at various events / in different places (e.g. product launches , corporate anniversaries) - all of them being classified as having a less pronounced or non-ethical character in relation to children: *"what are they doing (the companies) is outrageous or inappropriate according to the ethical rules, a model for lack of responsibility "* , *"I cannot explain to a child so small that I have no money / it is not possible / it is not good for him"* , *"simply I cannot lie/ entice / confuse children about some products which are not suitable for them"* , *"how to explain to the child that the toy he has seen in a television commercial is not actually what it was shown there?"*

In the age group of 7-12 years - the communication in rational terms is improved so that the children in this age group are apparently receptive to the rational arguments of their parents regarding the futility of product, its inefficiencies (ratio between the price and benefit), lack of money for acquisition or any argument of this kind. On the other hand, in this age group, although frustrations occur, they may be verbalized and a status which both sides agree can be reached, at least apparently: *"I easily deal with him at this age, now he understands when I tell him something"* , *"...and if he does not like it, I explain and knows that next time I make it and I take what he wants,"* , *" I can promise her what she wants as gift for her birthday or Christmas."* In this situation, although they do not agree the methods used by companies to sell their products, the parents know they can obtain in rational terms the desired response from their children: *"I know he is tempted by all offers seen"* , *" they do not realize that in fact that discount is not big thing"* , *" it is a trend in its class (e.g. Lego Nintendo), and he also wants it"* , *" It seems not normal to me to muddle them with so many commercials, but I know that I can deal with him"* , *"today even the books, uniforms, school supplies or competitions are subject to various interests (marketing) "* , so they consider that being partially unethical or even unethical the corporate actions, but also knowing that they can counteract them to some extent they tolerate them, appreciating them as relatively natural in relation to their existence on the market;

- in the age group of 13-16 years - the communication in rational terms is considered to be adequate but one can remark the absence or the reduced opportunity to try an emotional approach *"even when I try to rely on his sensitive part, he does not listen to me"* , it highlights the role that social groups have on the adolescents *"it is more important what his friends say about the product or topic"* , *"it is good kid but he wants to be in line with his buddies"* and the degree of parental control is quite low: *"in some way he must do as he wants even if for the time being he agrees with us"* , *"we do not quite understand only by calmly talking"* , *"if he gives up now, I know that'll cost me later."* The frustration level as a result of the inability to control children preferences is increased, this leading to the feeling that the marketing practices and even the blamed media are considered inappropriate: *"He does not seems too smart and everything he sees on TV, magazines, Internet or at his friends he find it very interesting and he wants it"* , *"it's hard to convince a nowadays teenager it's a silly what he asks when all his friends have, the companies are to blame for trying to sell them all kinds of crap"* , *"this stupid trends are to blame, it's always something else in trends - the trends were also on our time, but weren't concerned only with that"* , *"these kids live only on the Internet, all they see there is good and interesting by default"* , *"they (manufacturing companies) do anything to sell them and they fill their heads with nonsense"* , *"children are lured to throw money through various practices"*.

The methods of persuasion or negotiation used by the children play also an important role. The methods are often varied and sometimes difficult to be "countered" by the parents who are required to buy various goods and services, as follows:

- the age group of 3-6 years - children cry, wallow, screaming, trying to negotiate by making various promises;
- in the age group of 7-12 years - pre-teens try shyly negotiations and bring various arguments, try different forms of emotional blackmail (e.g., cry, be sulk, become ingratiating);
- in the age group of 13-16 years - teens trying to negotiate rational from equal positions with adults, they try to get good in return for other services or promises, do rebelliousness (e.g. quit dialog and performs shopping independent to the possible extent).

In any of the age groups they threaten and try to form alliances with other members of the family to obtain the desired good. Depending on the success of the parental negotiations, the marketing practices of the companies are again positively or negatively valued by the parents involved.

Since the same marketing practices are perceived as more or less appropriate, ethical, moral, justified, depending on the context in which parents were at the time the goods were requested, it is difficult to clearly conclude that the marketing practices are considered unethical. All that put them in an inconsistent state with personal their values (e.g. food, way of dressing) or the available budget was automatically classified as non-ethical practices coming from companies.

In terms of what has been considered ethical, it was a consensus to require submission of the actual quality of the products without inducing to children, whose power of judgment is low, a distorted image of the product.

At the borderline of the ethics they stood the products exploiting the current trend or fashion regardless of the age groups we mean. The parents find it natural that children are trying to identify with their favorite heroes. They do not consider to be adequate the abundance of products used for this purpose (games or toys, clothes, shoes, IT gadgets, scholar supplies) released based on TV series promoted by dedicated televisions and being present on any other media channel (radio, Internet, direct promotional events) available in all forms and at various retail sale prices (due to cheap copies made in China and Turkey).

Regarding the institution that should protect the children's rights as consumers, the parents did specifications about the existence of NAPC (National Authority of Consumer Protection), CNA (National Council Audiovisual) and Agency of Media Monitoring, indicated as responsible for protecting their children against the inappropriate quality of products and information. At the same time they stated that although they were not satisfied with the marketing practices, they have not notified the relevant authorities.

Conclusions

The whole processes of socialization along with the factors that compose it take part in the child modeling as a consumer. From the first contact with the external environment and to the cultural environment in which the child was raised, he is influenced to manifest in a certain way in the buying and consuming process of the desired products. The consumer socialization is not just about the acquisition of knowledge in terms of consumption; it also involves the motivation of the purchasing and consumption activities.

Previous research (Brandabur & Aldea, 2013) revealed the fact that the social influence is felt even from the prenatal period when the future parents, especially those in urban areas tend to pay special attention to the entourage that has children, to prepare especially the child's

first years of life, according to their own beliefs and standards. This approach is further reflected in how they dress, eat, or build the child's entourage, being concerned about the adherence to compliance with certain reference groups.

All these social, media and financial aspects are transformed into a number and a variety of products and services for children: food, personal hygiene products, furniture, toys, clothing and shoes, books, IT gadgets, services, educational and leisure that urban parents buy and delivering them to their children. This behavior gives rise to stimulate the involvement and concern of the children living in urban areas, even at young ages such as studied period (3-6 years), in the decision related to the purchase of goods and services, while children living in rural areas are less involved in this process.

Hood and McGuiggan (2006) argue that the media is considered by the critics of advertising as the *"influence of primary socialization for young people"*, which means from their point of view a *"so strong influence that it can be considered as disloyal/unfair"* (taking advantages from the small children's low level of development) and *"undesirable"* (leading to a consumption based on irrational reasons) (John, 1999; Moschis, 1978).

The influence that advertising exerts on children is best outlined in the child's desire for having the products featured in the commercials he has already seen. As also results from the existing literature (Robertson, 1979), the conflicts between children and parents arise when the buying of the indicated product is refused - for example, refusing to buy the desired grain has led to disappointment and anger from the child.

In the literature *"some parents believe advertising to be a bad influence and others believe it helps them make decisions"* (Horgan, 2005), the fact that not all the parents consider marketing practices as being unethical for certain age groups being revealed also from the result of researches. Between the ages of 2 to 7 years old, the child is focused on product appearance without actually understanding the intent of an advertisement. The child between 7 and 11 years old becomes more aware of the intentions of the advertising, namely to sell the product. After age of 12 years old, the children perceive with greater accuracy why the advertising exists, going up to understand even the questionable morality of advertisements (Calvert, 2008).

The marketing practices have taken the parents opportunity to control the choices made by children, so the *"parents feel their role as 'gatekeeper' for their children is undermined by companies"* (Horgan, 2005).

At international level, the parents have knowledge about the existence of specialized institutions regulating the marketing industry - e.g. Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) (Horgan, 2005) and in the same way, the Romanian parents are aware about their existence, but they do not use them when they encounter a problem.

All the above issues are closely related to how parents exercise their authority in the family. The exercise of authority directly influences the perception about the current marketing practices to children, considering them more or less ethical in relation to parents' ability to negotiate, explain, and decide about the products, brands in terms of spatial temporal acquisition or non-acquisition.

There were no objections related to the ethical marketing practices in the situations in which both parents are willing to focus their financial efforts primarily to their children, the desire to ensure a higher than average standard of living. This parent category encourages and listens sometimes in irrational terms, children's wishes on various products.

In terms of what one consider ethical as marketing practice, there was a consensus in the requirement of the submission of the actual quality of the products without inducing children, whose judgment power is reduced, a distorted image of the product.

Limits and Perspectives of Study

The main limitations of the study are the general limits of qualitative studies. Qualitative research is a subjective research discipline, designed to look beyond presents, to gain an understanding of subjective investigated perceptions, attitudes, feelings, impressions and views.

The research is part of a series of studies on the influence of children on buying behavior of their families in Romania in 2012 and 2013. We intend to continue this study by interviewing different age groups correlated the area of origin, education level and income per capita, in order to identify new patterns of influence.

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