

Give an account of your research methods, and examples, used to investigate the main arguments about the relationship between children and television

My chosen topic was to research into children in television. I focused specifically on how far UK advertising influences children's lifestyle decisions and behavior.

An extensive part of my research was obtained by searching the internet for information, however due to it being so vast one problem to tackle was being able to get only the information that was necessary to my research. I found that using broader search queries such as "Children in Television" produced thousands of results on big search engines but only a small section was actually relevant to me. By going through these sites finding links and using a more specific search criteria such as "UK advertising + children" improved the quality of research.

One page which I found extremely helpful was a sub-branch off the ITC web site, the Independent Television Commission (http://www.itc.org.uk/itc_publications). This commission details all the legal boundaries broadcasters face when showing adults, especially those which are targeted at children. The Advertising Standards Agency web site (<http://www.asa.org.uk/issues>) actually listed detailed examples of where broadcasters had broken the rules set by the ITC, so these two resources together gave me a good idea of how well these rules were adhered to.

Internet research also led me to find articles from news archives, for example on the Guardian's web site (www.newsunlimited.co.uk) one article summarizes the research of US psychologist Professor Adrian Furnham. He concluded that children at the age of 7 can determine that ads can be misleading, which directly contradicts claims made by other organisations such as the ITC.

The amount of information obtainable from the internet is vast to say the least, however, I found it very important to be aware of the original source of the data, because it will have a heavy impact on the bias of the information. One good example of this is the web site http://www.mcspotlight.org/media/press/food_jan97.html which gave me an excellent article on the extent of advertising in the UK aimed at children which encourage purchasing fast food. However, on further investigation regarding who owned the site I found that it was an Anti-McDonalds organisation which is obviously going to be extremely biased information.

David Buckingham is one of the big names in children and television research, so I visited the college library and found two of his books. "Children's Television in Britain" had some good sections on advertising, and similarly "Children Talking Television". The latter book was good for gaining secondary interview results, as there is a large section where various young

children have been questioned. Specifically, one 8 year old gives a quote detailing how aware she is that adverts lie to people, therefore backing up previously mentioned internet research from the US psychologist Professor Adrian Furnham. However interesting points are made by David Buckingham regarding how different children's thoughts and answers are different in normal every-day life conditions compared to being interviewed in a more educational environment by an adult. This is something that was well worth bearing in mind for my own primary research questionnaires.

For my primary research I took a lengthy amount of time to draft and re-draft a questionnaire that would make use of the children I questioned as much as possible. This involved making sure the questions were open ended, and also that the questions were written as unbiased as possible in order to get the most accurate results. I also produced a recording of a series of adverts that would usually surround a childrens TV program, asking the childrens questions about what part of the advert appealed to them. 10 children at Fowlmere Primary School in Hertfordshire were questioned. I taped the interview and also made notes on things the tape couldn't pick up on such as body language etc.

I wanted to make sure that the questionnaire didn't limit the children to what they wanted to talk about so I planned a "free-for-all" at the end of the interview where I didn't stick to such a rigid question structure. Because David Buckingham had suggested that the conditions of the interview may effect the results, I found that this enabled children to put less thought into what they said, which is good in research terms because this more subliminal information is probably the most accurate and true to life. After finishing the interview I then re-listened, transcribed and analysed the tapes. I found the tape to be extremely useful as there were many points that I simply missed when first listening to by the children.

One article I found mainly by sheer luck when reading the paper was very useful, entitled "Could Boobahs grab the £1bn children's TV crown?". The article was about the new TV show that was made by Anne Wood, creator of the billion pound TV show, "Teletubbies". This article then lead me to some more primary research which was to record the adverts surrounding big named children's programs such as the new "boobahs" series. I analysed details such as the length, frequency, and content of adverts, and trying to link this to the target audience of the product they were selling. This allowed me to produce some very realistic and up-to-date results and I think was a key part to my research.

Overall I feel that a sufficient range of materials and sources were used which allowed me to produce some fairly stable conclusions from.