

Drop in the number of adults supporting restrictions on advertising to children

Power of the playground still as influential

12 November 2002

Despite the UK coming under increasing pressure from the EU to regulate advertising to children, the number of adult consumers who think that advertising aimed at children should be restricted has dropped by just over eleven per cent, compared to survey results of two years ago. The number of adult consumers who think it should be banned completely remains the same.

Even though seventy five percent of those taking part in the survey feel that children see too much advertising, this figure has fallen by five per cent compared to two years ago.

These are the key findings of a recent consumer survey conducted by The Chartered Institute of Marketing into consumer attitudes to advertising aimed at children. The survey repeated identical questions asked of consumers two years ago.

"The research seems to indicate a disconnect. If parents are indifferent to the influence of advertising on their children the question is: Is that OK? Or, should the marketing profession take the lead in being more informative to society, parents and consumers about the influence of advertising and by way of a code of practice for marketing," says Linda Bishop chair of CIM's Ethics and Sustainability Canon of Knowledge and founder of the Citizen Brand Company.

When asked if laws governing advertising and targeting children should be strengthened, the majority (73%) of those questioned agree that they should. This is only a reduction of two per cent when compared to survey results two

years ago. Only eighteen per cent of adult consumers thought that laws should not be strengthened (two per cent less than the twenty per cent reported two years ago).

"Clearly adults do not wholeheartedly agree that advertisements to children should be banned but do appear to think that companies should act more responsibly and recognise the pressures they put parents under and that perhaps consumer education is the answer. This is now possible as part of 'Citizenship' a recent inclusion to the National Curriculum Key Stages 1 and 2," says Paul Cowell, Director, Centre for Children, Business and Society, School of Management, The University of Salford.

Seventy-three per cent of consumers say that they think advertising makes children want the things they see promoted. This is a drop of seven per cent and a small percentage reduction was recorded amongst those who think advertising changes the way children think, now 29%.

However, some things don't change. Once again, friends and advertising have a greater influence than parents do on children's purchasing aspirations. Thirty-four per cent of adult consumers in the United Kingdom believe that friends are the biggest influence on children and thirty-nine per cent believe advertising to be the most influential factor. Only fourteen per cent believe parents to have the strongest influence, and a mere eight per cent believe school to be the most effectual factor. Equally, the majority of those questioned once again think that a five year old is old enough to be influenced by advertising although only twenty-nine per cent believe that advertising influences the way children think.

"As the voice for marketing, we are currently updating our position in light of this and other research we are undertaking with the marketing profession which is due to be published by the end of the year to support our marketing to children campaign. A CIM Policy Unit will be launched in the spring 2003

and will look to evolve our policy in this area further," says Mike Johnston, International Chairman of The Chartered Institute of Marketing.

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Notes to editors

The survey was conducted by Capibus between 4 and 10 November. 973 adults aged 15 and over were questioned.

Those taking part in the survey were asked if they believed advertising to children should be banned, and if laws governing advertising to children should be strengthened. They were also asked if advertising influenced children, and how old they believed a person needs to be before they are likely to be swayed by advertising. They were questioned on what factors - including parental pressure, peer pressure and advertising - were important in influencing what children want. Finally they were asked their opinion on the amount of advertising children see.

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Notes to Editors:

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