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A CONTENT ANALYSIS
OF SATURDAY MORNING NETWORK
TELEVISION COMMERCIALS

presented by

Joseph H. Kuperberg

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Master of Arts degree in Telecommunication

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**A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF SATURDAY
MORNING NETWORK TELEVISION COMMERCIALS**

By

Joseph H. Kuperberg

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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ABSTRACT

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF SATURDAY MORNING NETWORK TELEVISION COMMERCIALS

By

Joseph H. Kuperberg

This study attempted to identify some of the characteristics of Saturday morning network television commercials.

174 commercials were looked at from two Saturdays in October, 1993, and all of the commercials were content analyzed for race and sex characteristics, as well as product type, length of the commercial and number of characters appearing in each commercial.

The study revealed that race levels in the American population are represented on an equal or greater scale in the commercials viewed, but when it comes to the main character in the commercial race representation is not equal to those numbers in the population; more characters appeared in food commercials as opposed to toy commercials; and regardless of type of product advertisers use 30-second commercial spots more than any other kind.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Television is one of the most viable ways for advertisers to reach children. In any given month, 81% of all children in the United States are exposed to commercials on Saturday morning network television (Burke, 1992).

Television commercials are an important part of any time block, and Saturday morning network television is a prime example of commercials being aimed at a certain audience segment. There is no question that continuing research needs to be done on how commercials affect children and buying patterns. The main question that needs to be answered on this topic is whether kids (or their parents) buy products due to advertising, or because their friends have the products.

In my research I have focused on the content of the Saturday morning television commercials. The variables I will be looking at in this study are the length of the commercial, the sex of the dominant character in the commercial (the character most responsible for sending the message about the product), the race of the dominant character in the commercial, and the number of characters present in the commercial.

Throughout history, television has shown women as the subservient, lesser counterparts of men (Media Report to Women, 1993). I will be looking to see if this is also true of commercials aired during Saturday morning network television. Advertising folklore states that both boys and girls react more comfortably to a male than a female protagonist in a commercial (Winick, Williamson, Chuzmir and Pezzella Winick, 1973), and

in this study I will look to see if the males are indeed used more often in a dominant role than women are.

The second thing I will be looking at is race representation in the commercials. Are the percentages of race in the commercials equal to the percentages in the American population? For example, the black race represents 12% of the American population (United States Census Bureau, 1994), but are blacks represented in 12% of the commercials aired during Saturday morning network television programs.

The third variable I will look at are total character number differences in types of commercials. I hypothesize that in food commercials there will be more characters present than in non-food commercials. I am making this hypothesis because the American society frowns on dining alone, thinking those who do are "closet eaters."

The final variable I will be looking at in this study is the length of the commercial. Most commercials are 10-, 15-, 30- and 60-seconds long, with the majority of them being 30-seconds long. It will be interesting to see if there is any correlation between the length of the commercial and the characters in the advertisement, or the type of product being sold.

My sample for this study will be commercials aired during Saturday morning network television for two consecutive weeks. The two networks being used for this study are CBS and ABC. The first week of commercials is from the CBS programming, and the second week is from ABC programming. I did not use NBC because they air a weekend edition of Today on Saturdays, and I chose not to use the Fox Network because they still do not have as many affiliates lined up as the other three networks.

This report will have five chapters: the introduction, the literature review, the methods used, the results, and a closing discussion.

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The research questions being examined are content analyses and are not representative of any causal relationships between children and how they view the world, but past studies have shown that children get many of their worldly views from television and its content (Walling, 1990), and this is solely a study of the content of television commercials.

Based on the conclusions of this report we should have a clearer picture about the content of Saturday morning network television commercials, and we may even uncover some of the reasons why they are that way.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The role television plays in the development of a child has been explored in many books and studies. The following is a summary of some of the more relevant and interesting findings. The Michigan State University Library served as the main basis for this literature review, and the MAGIC computer program in particular was responsible for providing many of the books, studies and journals.

Review of Literature

Schramm, Lyle and Parker (1961) reported that a child's first direct experience with television usually comes at age two. Children are introduced to books before television, but do not conceptualize books for what they are. Children see books as the sound of a parent's voice telling a story, not as printed media, thus they cannot relate the printed word to the spoken. Furthermore, Schram, Lyle and Parker explain that television, more than any other medium, provides a common body of information for the earliest socialization of children.

In her 1989 book, Television is Good for Your Kids, Messenger Davies argues that television serves many purposes for children of all ages. Amongst other things, television informs them, structures their lives, and provides an occasion for family togetherness, discussion and even argument. But when it comes to television commercials Davies warns that children do not like to be conned.

In his 1987 book, Children's Television, Schneider poses the question, "Is it fair to advertise to children?" Schneider explains that because children react favorably to television they may be unable to cope with advertising demands. He believes marketers have to appeal to kids because advertising creates an interaction between parents and children that ultimately affects the buying process.

Children become more aware of the presence of commercials as they grow older, and by the time they are four or five many children are able to differentiate between commercials and programs (Schneider). Even though children are able to distinguish between commercials and programs at this young age, this is also the age at which they most enjoy commercials. As children get older, seven years of age and up, they become increasingly cynical about commercials, and realize that commercials "are trying to make people buy things."

In 1973 Winick, Williamson, Chuzmir and Pezzella studied "Children's Television Commercials." The study looked at the length of commercials during children's programs, and the cast of characters in the advertisement amongst other things.

While 78% of the commercials viewed in the study were 30-seconds long, only 21.2% were 60-seconds long, and less than one percent of the commercials were 10 seconds long. Although the majority of commercials were indeed 30-seconds long, Winick, et al, reported that children appeared to pay maximum attention to 60-second commercials rather than the shorter 30-second ones. This is interesting to note because 30-second commercials clearly outnumber 60-second spots in this study and many others.

30-second commercials also outnumbered other commercial lengths in a comparison study by Hasegawa and Ramaprasad (1992). The researchers in this study were comparing American and Japanese commercials, and they found that 63.3% of the 331 American commercials they looked at were 30-seconds long. 15-second commercials were seen the second most frequently amongst the American commercials, but interestingly this order was reversed for the Japanese commercials.

In the Winick, et al. study 246 commercials were looked at, and the researchers reported that there was a substantial difference in the commercials between the number of male and female children present in the advertisement. Male children were reported in 58.1% of the commercials while female children were only present in 35.6% of all the commercials viewed in the study.

A study by Knill, Pesch, Pursey, Gilpin and Perloff in 1981 looked at sex role portrayals in television advertising. Although the study only looked at commercials aired from one until four in the afternoon, and from eight until eleven in the evening, the results were similar to those reported by researchers looking at children's television commercials.

The study looked at three different components in the commercials: voiceovers, product representatives and consumers. In both afternoon and evening commercials males dominated as the main source of voiceovers. In both the afternoon and prime time messages males accounted for greater than 90% of the voiceovers in the commercials.

Statistics for the product representative category showed differing results. In the afternoon commercials women accounted for 72% of the product representatives, while in the evening women were the product representatives 48% of the time. When compared to the results of Cantor's

study (1972) these numbers are considerably higher than those Cantor reported in 1972.

Of the afternoon commercials women accounted for 73% of all the consumers in the commercials. In the evening spots women were represented most often in home/domestic situations while men were the dominant consumer in business/management advertisements. In the overall synopsis of the evening spots there were no significant reportings except for the situational commercials.

In line with the results of the Knill, et al. study were the results of a content analysis done by Craig in 1992. Craig looked at gender portrayals in television commercials during three different day parts. 2,209 network television commercials were content analyzed in this study. Craig reported that ads in all day parts tended to portray men in roles of authority and dominance.

A content analysis of television advertisements in the United States, Mexico and Australia by Gilly (1988) found that male voices were much more likely than female voices to be used in voiceovers. In addition, Gilly reported that men were more likely to be portrayed in independent roles than women were. Women were often portrayed in roles that were related to others.

Another study that looked at the role of gender in commercials was done by Greco and Swayne in 1987. Greco and Swayne (1987) found that in advertisements in which older persons were portrayed as role advisors of a product or service, the advisor was most likely a male. Further, Greco and Swayne found that elderly women were only used as major advisors in 2.5% of all the commercials they looked at.

Comstock and Cobbey (1979) reported, "The behavioral response of children and adolescents to television portrayals is in part dependent on ethnic minority membership." Comstock and Cobbey go on to say that race portrayals on television appear to be an important reinforcement of behavior amongst both black and white children.

There is plenty of research on the portrayal of blacks, whites and Asians in television commercials, yet there is very little research on the role of Hispanics in television commercials. This may be due to the difficulty of coding Hispanic characters. Valencia and Wilkes (1989) point out different judgments according to ethnicity of coders in studies dealing with Hispanics. In their study the Hispanics coder counted more Hispanics than the other coders, regardless of race. This is attributed to the perceptual cues not available to the other coders, and the Hispanic coder's familiarity with Hispanics and the Hispanic culture. Valencia and Wilkes warn that this lack of Hispanic recognition could hamper future studies regarding race representation.

In Moss's (1981) book review of The Effects of Television Advertising on Children by Adler, Lesser, Meringoff, Rossiter and Ward it is reported that over 60% of all commercials aimed at children promote food products or places to eat them. Moss goes on to report that during the heaviest advertising periods (weekend mornings) children see between four and nine "food messages" every hour, of which two out of every three commercial messages are for sugared cereals, candy and other highly sugared products.

Moss (1981) also suggests that the effects of television advertising on children is greater than many suspect, and goes on to report that research does indeed show that children do "learn" the content of food commercials,

and that they do influence parental buying patterns. It is also interesting to note that Moss found older children continued to express desires for advertised products even after they realized that commercials are persuasive and can not always be trusted.

Atkin (1981) reports that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that television advertising plays a dominant role in shaping children's product preference. Atkin also found that the heaviest viewers of advertising are much more likely to request that parents buy advertised products than are lighter viewers. These findings replicate the findings in The Effects of Television Advertising on Children.

In their 1984 study Rodnight and Williams looked at the implications of children's responses to selected television commercials. The study was conducted on seven to thirteen year olds in the United Kingdom and the results they obtained were rather interesting.

Rodnight and Williams "buried" the educational advertisements in their study amongst spots which were selected for their entertainment value, yet they found that the children being studied were clearly aware of the purpose of these educational commercials. The educational spots were on road safety and cigarette smoking, and the children seeing the spots were stimulated enough to recall and speak about the road safety messages they had seen in the past.

The children did enjoy watching the entertainment commercials, but Rodnight and Williams found that although they enjoyed these messages they did not always remember the product being advertised or necessarily have any interest in the product. This is an interesting finding because it shows that while entertaining commercials do indeed attract a child's attention, they will not necessarily "sell" the product to the child. A

conclusion to be drawn from the Rodnight and Williams study is that to sell a product an advertiser must attract more than a child's attention, they must stimulate the child to act upon viewing the commercial..

Rodnight and Williams study concentrated on commercials, but watching television is an important factor also, because if children did not turn on the television they would not be exposed to the commercials. In his 1987 book, Children as Consumers, McNeal developed a model of children interacting with television advertising.

At the core of McNeal's model is the theory that children alone do not decide what they are going to watch on television. Parents play a very big role in determining what their children watch, and how often they watch. Besides parents, peers can also have a major impact on children's viewing patterns. In homes where there is no parental supervision of television watching peers play an even bigger role. Peers may range from older siblings to friends and other similarly aged children.

Children enjoy getting together to watch television, and often times a dominant child may decide what other children will watch. The end result of a child's decision to watch television, according to McNeal, is a flow of advertising messages. Except for public broadcasting or pay channels McNeal is 100% correct.

McNeal also speaks about the content of the commercials aired during children's television programs in his book. McNeal reports that food and toys are most often advertised to children, and that during the Christmas season toy commercials can account for nearly 50% of all children's television advertising.

Within the food category cereal commercials are aired most often. In a 1985 study of all commercials aired during one Saturday morning in

November there were 15 different cereal brands advertised, as opposed to 13 types of sweets, nine brands of candy, and eight varieties of other foods.

In their 1990 content analysis Faulkner and Story studied food messages in television commercials. They looked at 261 commercials, of which 35% were food-related advertisements. Similar to previous findings, Faulkner and Story reported that the television diet was not a healthy one, and was made up of mostly fast foods, low nutrient foods and snacks.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The major purpose of the present study was to describe the content of commercials aired during Saturday morning network television programs. The research design involved a coding form which was used to code the content of the commercials. The coding form consisted of 14 different statements, the majority of which were closed ended. A copy of the Coding form is listed in Appendix A.

Sample

The sample in this study consisted of the commercials aired between 8:00 A.M. and Noon on CBS and ABC the second and third Saturdays in October, 1993. The sample was chosen from a population representing all of the commercials that may possibly air on Saturday morning network television.

On Saturday, October 9, 1993 84 commercials were aired during the four hours of programming on CBS. The CBS programming schedule for Saturday, October 9, 1993 between 8:00 A.M. and Noon can be found in Appendix B.

The following Saturday, October 16, 1994 90 commercials were aired during the hours of 8:00 A.M. and Noon on ABC network programming. A complete listing of the ABC programming for Saturday, October 16, 1994 is listed in Appendix C.

The 174 commercials were looked at together in this study, and differences in the commercials between the two networks were not looked

at for the purposes of this study. For a complete listing of all the commercials and their running times please see Appendix D.

Data Analysis and Collection

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used in the presentation and analysis of data in this study. Simple descriptive statistics, including means, medians, modes, percentages, percentiles, frequencies and standard deviations were the major statistical tools used in this study.

Each of the fourteen items on the coding sheet were analyzed, and the results of this analysis led to the results of this study. Each of the fourteen items and their possible response choices are listed below.

Coding Question 1: What was the product being advertised?

This question was open ended so that the exact item being advertised could be recorded. It was very important to insure that the item being advertised was listed and spelled correctly, since many of the products being advertised were very similar.

Coding Question 2: What type of product was being advertised?

This was a closed ended question and the choices were: food, toy, entertainment item, automobile, services and public service announcements.

Food messages were usually for fast food restaurants, cereals, candies and other foods young viewers consume, and it was important to distinguish between a food commercial and a toy commercial when a fast food restaurant or a brand of cereal was giving away a toy with the item

being advertised. In all of these situations the commercial was listed as a food commercial.

There was one situation where a fast food restaurateur was actually marketing a toy and in this situation the product was listed as a toy. The item was commercial number thirteen, the McDonalds Happy Meal Snack Maker Set.

Coding Question 3: How many characters were present in the commercial?

In determining the number of characters present in the commercial limitations had to be drawn on which characters to include, and which not to include. Any characters with a speaking part, or that appeared in the commercial for more than five seconds were considered a character in the commercial for this study.

The actual number of characters present in the commercial was recorded between zero and nine characters. If there were ten characters or more present in the commercial it was recorded as ten plus.

Coding Question 4: Was there a black male present in the commercial?

Coding Question 5: Was there a black female present in the commercial?

Coding Question 6: Was there a white male present in the commercial?

Coding Question 7: Was there a white female present in the commercial?

Coding Question 8: Was there an Asian male present in the commercial?

Coding Question 9: Was there an Asian female present in the commercial?

Each of the above questions, four through nine, were answered with a yes or a no, and for each of these items the same limitations that applied to item three applied. The character had to appear for at least five seconds or speak in order to be counted as having been present.

Coding Question 10: Was there an other male present in the commercial?

Coding Question 11: Was there an other female present in the commercial?

Coding Question 12: Was there an other present in the commercial?

Coding questions ten through twelve were answered with a positive or negative response, and as in the previous questions the character must have had a speaking part in the commercial, or must have appeared for five seconds or more in order to qualify as being present. Characters included in items ten through twelve were animals, animated characters and characters in costumes (humans in a costume).

Animated characters and characters in costumes were not considered to have race characteristics. If the animated character had clear sexual characteristics then the character was coded as an other male or an other female, conversely If the animated character had no clear sexual characteristics they were coded in question 12, other.

Design Limitations

The use of Saturday morning commercials on ABC and CBS during the first two Saturdays of October may not be representative of all commercials aired during Saturday morning children's television. Since the sample only contained commercials from these two Saturdays, the results cannot be generalized to include all Saturday morning network television commercials aimed at children. In particular, the proportion of toy advertising fluctuates according to season, and is likely to be lower in the first three quarters of the year.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the content of commercials aired during Saturday morning children's programming, and see how that content compares to the real world. The research, in addition to looking at the length of the commercials, the product being advertised and the characters in the commercials, was to look at race representation in the commercials, sex representation in the commercials, and the number of characters present in food versus non-food commercials.

In total 174 commercials were viewed in the study. Advertisements for toys represented the highest amount of commercials in the study. Toys represented 49%, or 86 of the commercials. Food commercials were the second most common type of commercial, and they represented 40%, or 69 of the commercials. The third most common type of commercial aired was for entertainment products, and these commercials accounted for 5% of the total amount of commercials.

Directly behind entertainment commercials was public service type messages. Public service type messages made up 4% of the sample. Commercials for services and automobiles were tied with two commercials each, and each represented 1% of the total level of commercials. Table 4.1 contains an exact listing of the percentages and frequencies of the type of product advertised in the commercials.

Table 4.1 Type of product advertised in the television commercials.

Type of Commercial	Frequency	Percent	Cum Percent
Food	69	39.7%	39.7%
Toys	86	49.4%	89.1%
Entertainment	9	5.2%	94.3%
Automobiles	2	1.1%	95.4%
Services	2	1.1%	96.6%
Public Service	6	3.4%	100.0 %

In the length of commercial category, 30-second spots dominated by representing 167, or 96% of the spots. 15-second spots were seen the second most often, four times accounting for 2% of the commercials. Commercials lasting one minute were next, and they represented two of the commercials. Finally, one commercial lasted only ten seconds. Due to past research a slot was available on the coding sheets for 45-second spots, but there were none in this study. Table 4.2 contains an exact listing of the commercial lengths and their frequencies.

Table 4.2 Length of commercials appearing in the study.

Length of Commercial	Frequency	Percent	Cum Percent
10 seconds	1	.6%	.6%
15 seconds	4	2.3%	2.9%
30 seconds	167	96.0%	98.9%
60 seconds	2	1.1%	100.0%

In the number of characters category all responses, zero through nine and ten plus were used. The most common amount of characters in a commercial in this study was two. Commercials with two characters represented 50 or 29% of the commercials. Following closely behind commercials with two characters were commercials with three characters, and they represented 31 or 18% of the commercial messages. Next were commercials with one and four characters, each of these represented 12% of the total sample.

Following these commercials were commercials with nine, five and ten plus characters. Commercials with six characters followed next representing seven commercials from the total sample. There were four commercials with zero and eight characters, and commercials with seven characters were the least represented with only three. Table 4.3 contains a listing of the number of characters in the commercials with exact and cum percentages also listed.

Table 4.3 Number of characters present in the commercial.

Number of Characters in Commercial	Frequency	Percent	Cum Percent
Zero	4	2.3%	2.3%
One	21	12.1%	14.4%
Two	50	28.7%	43.1%
Three	31	17.8%	60.9%
Four	21	12.1%	73.0%
Five	10	5.7%	78.7%
Six	7	4.0%	82.8%
Seven	3	1.7%	84.5%
Eight	4	2.3%	86.8%
Nine	13	7.5%	94.3%
Ten Plus	10	5.7%	100.0%

The next item on the coding sheet looked at the presence of black characters in the commercials. Black males appeared in 36 of the 174 commercials while black females were present in 30 of the commercials. Tables 4.4 and 4.5 show the frequencies and percentages of black male and females in the commercials.

Table 4.4 Presence of black male characters in the commercials.

Black Male Present	Frequency	Percent	Cum Percent
Yes	36	20.7%	20.7%
No	138	79.3%	100.0%

Table 4.5 Presence of black female characters in the commercials.

Black Female Present	Frequency	Percent	Cum percent
Yes	30	17.2%	17.2%
No	144	82.8%	100.0%

White characters were the most represented of any race in the study, and amongst whites females were seen more often than male characters. White females were present in 110 of the advertisements while white males were present in 104 of the advertisements. Tables 4.6 and 4.7 contain the percentages and frequencies of white males and females in the commercials.

Table 4.6 Presence of white male characters in the commercials.

White Male Present	Frequency	Percent	Cum Percent
Yes	104	59.8%	59.8%
No	70	40.2%	100.0%

Table 4.7 Presence of white female characters in the commercials.

White Female Present	Frequency	Percent	Cum Percent
Yes	110	63.2%	63.2%
No	64	36.8%	100.0%

Of all the races represented in the commercials, Asians were represented the least. Asian females appeared in thirteen of the commercials, while Asian males appeared in only three of the advertisements. Listed in tables 4.8 and 4.9 are the percentages and frequencies of Asian characters in the commercials in this study.

Table 4.8 Presence of Asian male characters in the commercials.

Asian Male Present	Frequency	Percent	Cum Percent
Yes	3	1.7%	1.7%
No	171	98.3%	100.0%

Table 4.9 Presence of Asian female characters in the commercials.

Asian Female Present	Frequency	Percent	Cum Percent
Yes	13	7.5%	7.5%
No	161	92.5%	100.0%

Other males appeared much more frequently than other females in the advertisements in this study. Other males appeared in 31 of the commercials, while other females were present in only 12 of the advertisements. Tables 4.10 and 4.11 show the percentages regarding the appearance of other males and females in the commercials.

Table 4.10 Presence of other male characters in the commercials.

Other Male Present	Frequency	Percent	Cum Percent
Yes	31	17.8%	17.8%
No	143	82.2%	100.0%

Table 4.11 Presence of other female characters in the commercials.

Other Female Present	Frequency	Percent	Cum Percent
Yes	12	6.9%	6.9%
No	162	93.1%	100.0%

Others were present in 31 of the commercials, the same as other males. Listed below in table 4.12 are the percentages and frequencies for others in the commercials in this study.

Table 4.12 Presence of other characters in the commercials.

Other Present	Frequency	Percent	Cum Percent
Yes	31	17.8%	17.8%
No	143	82.2%	100.0%

The final item on the coding sheet looked at the race and sex of the main character in each of the commercial messages. Whites were most often the main character, appearing as the dominant character in 131, or 75% of the 174 commercials. Of the 131, 63 of the dominant white characters were females while 68 of them were males. Third in order of appearance as dominant character were other males. Other males appeared as the main character in 24 of the commercials. Other females did not appear as the main character in any of the 174 advertisements.

Black characters were the main character in the messages eleven times. Black males were the dominant character eight times, and black females were the dominant character in three of the advertisements. Asian characters were not viewed as the main character in any of the 174 commercials nor were other females. Others were the main character in four of the commercials, and four of the commercials had no main character present. This finding of four commercials with no main characters coincides with the finding that four of the commercials had no characters present in them at all.

Frequencies and percentages detailing the main character of the commercial can be found below in table 4.13.

Table 4.13 Characteristics of the main character in the commercials.

Main Character	Frequency	Percent	Cum Percent
None	4	2.3%	2.3%
Black Male	8	4.6%	6.9%
Black Female	3	1.7%	8.6%
White Male	63	36.2%	44.8%
White Female	68	39.1%	83.9%
Other Male	24	13.8%	97.7%
Other	4	2.3%	100.0%

When comparing number of characters present in a commercial and type of product being advertised it is quickly noticed that every commercial for food and toys had at least one character in them. Commercials for toys had two characters present in 42 of 86 occurrences. Toy commercials with three characters were the next most frequent with 18 occurrences, and toy advertisements with one character followed closely behind with 13. Toy commercials with four characters were next with six occurrences.

Toy commercials with six, seven or eight characters appeared twice in the study, and those with five characters appeared just once. There were no toy commercials with zero, nine or ten (ten plus) characters present.

Food commercials, like toy commercials, had at least one character present in every commercial in the study, but unlike toy commercials the most common number of characters in food commercials was four. 15

food commercials had four characters in them, and following closely behind with 13 occurrences were food commercials with three characters in them. Food commercials with nine characters in them were next, accounting for 12 of the 69 food commercials.

Five characters appeared in eight of the food commercials, while food commercials with one character followed right behind with seven occurrences. Next were food commercials with two characters, there were six of these, and there were four food messages with six characters. There were two food commercials with eight and ten characters in them, and there were no food advertisements with either zero or seven characters.

Of the nine commercials for entertainment products an astonishing eight of them had more than ten characters present. The remaining entertainment commercial had zero characters present.

Automobile commercials made up two of the 174 commercials in this study, and one of those commercials had zero characters present while the other had six characters present. There were also two commercials for services in this study, and both of those commercials did not have any characters.

The final type of commercial message in this study was of the public service variety, and of the six of these there were two characters present in two of the messages. The remaining four public service messages each had different amounts of characters. One of the commercials had one character, one had five characters, one had seven characters and one had nine characters. For a complete breakdown of the number of characters present in a specific message type please refer to tables 4.14 through 4.19.

Table 4.14 Number of characters present in food commercials.

Number of Characters	Frequency	Percent	Cum Percent
One	7	10.1%	10.1%
Two	6	8.7%	18.8%
Three	13	18.8%	37.6%
Four	15	21.7%	59.3%
Five	8	11.6%	70.9%
Six	4	5.8%	76.7%
Eight	2	2.9%	79.6%
Nine	12	17.4%	97.1%
Ten Plus	2	2.9%	100.0%

Table 4.15 Number of characters present in toy commercials.

Number of Characters	Frequency	Percent	Cum Percent
One	13	15.1%	15.1%
Two	42	48.8%	63.9%
Three	18	20.9%	84.8%
Four	6	7.0%	91.7%
Five	1	1.2%	92.9%
Six	2	2.3%	95.4%
Seven	2	2.3%	97.7%
Eight	2	2.3%	100.0%

Table 4.16 Number of characters present in entertainment commercials.

Number of Characters	Frequency	Percent	Cum Percent
Zero	1	11.1%	11.1%
Ten Plus	8	88.9%	100.0%

Table 4.17 Number of characters present in automobile commercials.

Number of Characters	Frequency	Percent	Cum Percent
Zero	1	50.0%	50.0%
Six	1	50.0%	50.0%

Table 4.18 Number of characters present in service commercials.

Number of Characters	Frequency	Percent	Cum Percent
Zero	2	100.0%	100.0%

Table 4.19 Number of characters present in public service commercials.

Number of Characters	Frequency	Percent	Cum Percent
One	1	16.7%	16.7%
Two	2	33.3%	50.0%
Five	1	16.7%	66.6%
Seven	1	16.7%	83.3%
Nine	1	16.7%	100.0%

All of the percentages in the above tables are rounded to the nearest one-tenth, and some of the cumulative percentages may have been adjusted one-tenth so that the final cumulative percentage is equal to 100%. As stated previously all calculations were done via the SPSS computer program, located in the Michigan State University Computer Center.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The main purpose of this study was to examine the content of commercials aired during Saturday morning network programming. The commercials were looked at in terms of the product being advertised, the length of the commercial, the number of characters in the commercial, and the race and sex of the characters in the commercial.

In total 174 commercials were gathered from two networks on successive Saturday mornings, and those commercials were analyzed for the purposes of this study. There are four research inquiries to be answered based on the findings of this study. The first thing I will look at is if the data supports the claim that Winick, et al. made regarding that both boys and girls respond in a better fashion to male than female protagonists in commercial messages. I will look at this in terms of the sex of dominant character in the commercials.

The second thing I will use the results of this study to look at is the level of race representation in the commercials in comparison to the general population of the United States. Whites (including Hispanics) currently make up 84% of the American population, while blacks make up 12%, and Asians make up 3% (United States Census Bureau, 1994). The data from this study will be used to see if the figures in the commercials are in order with the figures in the population.

The third item to be tested is my hypothesis that in food commercials there are more characters present than in non-food commercials, based on the rational that we are a society that frowns on

dining alone, fearing that we tend to eat more, and less healthily when we eat alone.

Finally, the data in this study will be used to see if there is a link between the length of the commercials, and any characteristics of such commercials.

All findings of this study should be viewed with certain limitations. There are limitations inherent in a subjective content analysis like this one. Because of this, findings can not be generalized to populations beyond the sample used in this study.

Summary of Findings

Of the 174 commercials, 166 had a main character that were either a male or female. The remaining eight commercials either featured no main character or a non-sexual main character. Of the 166 commercials, 95 or 57% of the advertisements featured a male as the dominant character. This number of 57% includes males from the "other male" category, but when this category is dropped from the findings males and females were represented evenly as the main character of the commercial. It is rather interesting to note that other males were the main character in 24 of the spots, while other females were not the main character even once.

White characters appeared the most of any of the three races being compared in this study, and they were in 154, or 88% of the commercials. Black characters appeared the second most often of the three races, and they were in 55, or 32% of all the advertisements. Asians appeared the least frequent of the three groups, appearing in only 15, or 9% of the commercial messages.

When looking at appearance as the dominant character whites were again the leaders having appeared as the dominant character in 131, or 75% of the commercials. Black characters appeared as the dominant character in 11, or 6% of the advertisements. While Asians appeared in 15 of the messages, they did not appear once as the dominant character.

Food commercials had an average number of 5.3 characters per commercial while toy commercials averaged 2.6 characters per advertisement. Commercials for entertainment products had a study high total of 8.9 characters per message, while commercials for services averaged a study low total of zero characters per commercial.

Advertisements for automobiles had an average of three people per commercial and public service messages had a mean of 4.3 characters per message.

When looking at the average number of characters per message it is important to remember the number of commercials that we are dealing with in each category. In the food and toy categories we are dealing with 69 and 86 commercials respectively, but in the other categories we are dealing with less than ten commercials in each of them. Because the number of commercials in the final four categories is so low it is more important to look at the averages for the food and toy messages.

When looking at the comparison between product type and length of commercial it is quickly noticed that 96% of the sample in this study were commercials that lasted 30 seconds. Of the six product types, five of them had commercials lasting 30 seconds. Service type commercials were the only message variety that did not have any 30 second commercials, but service commercials accounted for less than 2% of the messages in this study.

All of the toy, entertainment and automobile commercials lasted 30 seconds while 67 of the 69 food commercials also lasted 30 seconds. The remaining two food commercials lasted one minute, and while both one minute messages were different they were both for McDonalds.

Conclusions

The following conclusions are based on the findings of this study. It is important to remember when looking at these conclusions that they are for the commercials viewed in this study alone. They are not conclusions related to, or applicable to all commercials aired on Saturday morning network television.

1. Apparently sponsors do not differentiate between using male or female characters when choosing who to use as the dominant character in a Saturday morning commercial when the character is a human being. When it comes to deciding on a non-human character advertisers seem to prefer the use of a male non-human more than a female non-human.
2. Advertisers appear to make an effort to have race levels in Saturday morning children's television commercials equal to or greater than those levels in the population at large. Possibly fearing a loss of market share, it appears that advertisers stop short of equal or greater representation when it comes to characters serving as the main or dominant character.
3. Advertisers use more characters per food commercial than they do per toy commercial, perhaps furthering the conception that it okay to play alone, but it is not okay to eat alone.
4. Regardless of the type of product being advertised, Saturday morning advertisers use 30-second commercials more often than any other timed lengths in their attempt to reach viewers.

Recommendations

As with many studies, research often generates more questions than it answers. This research was done to examine the content of commercials aired during Saturday morning network television aimed at children, and based upon the conclusions of this study recommendations are offered for additional research. These recommendations focus on children and their viewing habits, commercials aired during other times of the day and other related areas of mass media and telecommunication.

This study was a content analysis of children's Saturday morning network television commercials, and while it provided information regarding the make up of the commercials it did not look at the programs or the actual time children spent paying attention to the programs or commercials.

More research on television commercials needs to be done in different time periods before we can generalize the results of this study for all commercials aired on television. Commercials aired during prime time and late night, for example, have much different audiences and may have totally different types of commercials with different characters in them. It would also be interesting for future researchers to compare commercials aired during children's Saturday morning network television, and those aired during other programs directed towards children.

Television is slowly becoming a niche media, and each niche serves a different segment of the population. Twenty years ago Saturday morning television was the best way for advertisers to reach a younger market, but with the advent of cable television this whole philosophy is changing. Nickelodeon now caters to children and young adults the same way ESPN

caters to a men and sports fans, and future studies may want to look at the impact of these niche stations and the advertising that is on them.

Overall Recommendations

Television is one of the most powerful sources of information exchange that is in existence today. The power of television, and the commercial messages contained in television programs is stronger than anyone of us realize. If we respect television's power we may have a better chance of understanding it and its effects, and that may be a better approach than the one many of television's detractors take.

APPENDIX A

COMMERCIAL CODING SHEET

1. Product being advertised: _____

2. Type of product is being advertised:
Food Toy Entertainment Product Automobile
Other: _____

3. Length of commercial:
10 seconds 15 seconds 30 seconds 45 seconds 1 minute
other: _____

4. Characters present in the commercial:
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10+

5. Was there a black male present in the commercial? yes no

6. Was there a black female present in the commercial? yes no

7. Was there a white male present in the commercial? yes no

8. Was there a white female present in the commercial? yes no

9. Was there an Asian male present in the commercial? yes no

10. Was there an Asian Female present in the commercial? yes no
11. Was there an other male present in the commercial? yes no
12. Was there an other female present in the commercial? yes no
13. Was there an other present in the commercial? yes no
14. The main character in the commercial was a:
black male black female white male white female
Asian male Asian female Other male Other female other

APPENDIX B

PROGRAMMING SCHEDULE FOR CBS ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 9, 1993 BETWEEN 8:00 A.M. AND NOON

8:00 A.M.	Marsupilami (cartoon)
8:30 A.M.	Little Mermaid (cartoon)
9:00 A.M.	Garfield (cartoon)
10:00 A.M.	New Dennis The Menace (cartoon)
10:30 A.M.	Ninja Turtles (cartoon)
11:30 A.M.	Cadillacs And Dinosaurs (cartoon)

APPENDIX C

PROGRAMMING SCHEDULE FOR ABC ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 16, 1993 BETWEEN 8:00 A.M. AND NOON

8:00 A.M.	Dog City (cartoon)
8:30 A.M.	Bobby's World (cartoon)
9:00 A.M.	Sonic The Hedgehog (cartoon)
9:30 A.M.	Eek The Cat (cartoon)
10:00 A.M.	Cryptkeeper (cartoon)
10:30 A.M.	Bugs Bunny & Tweety (cartoon)
11:30 A.M.	City Kids (teenagers)

APPENDIX D

COMPLETE LISTING OF ALL COMMERCIALS, WITH RUNNING TIME AND PRODUCT TYPE IN THIS STUDY

1. Cabbage Patch Kid's Magic Meadow Pony (30 seconds, toy)
2. Little Caesars Pizza with Nerf Offer (30 seconds, food)
3. Krystal Princess Dolls (30 seconds, toy)
4. Made By Me-Fantastic Roses (30 seconds, toy)
5. Kellogg's Rice Krispie Treats Cereal (30 seconds, food)
6. Cabbage Patch Kid's Baby Cries So Real (30 seconds, toy)
7. Baby giggles 'n Go (30 seconds, toy)
8. McDonalds Halloween McNuggets Buddies Happy Meal (30 seconds, toy)
9. Lil Miss Candy Stripes (30 seconds, toy)
10. Chuck E. Cheese (30 seconds, food)
11. Hollywood Hair Barbie (30 seconds, toy)
12. Kellogg's Pop Tarts (30 seconds, food)
13. McDonalds Happy Meal Snack Maker Set (30 seconds, toy)
14. Stretch Armstrong (30 seconds, toy)
15. Pizza Hut (30 seconds, food)
16. Newborn Baby Alive (30 seconds, toy)
17. Baby Giggles 'n Go (30 seconds, toy)
18. Toby Terrier (30 seconds, toy)
19. Lego Dragon Masters (30 seconds, toy)
20. Lil Miss Candy Stripes (30 seconds, toy)

21. **Chuck E. Cheese (30 seconds, toy)**
22. **Magic Feeding Baby (30 seconds, toy)**
23. **Pizza Hut (30 seconds, toy)**
24. **Toby Terrier (30 seconds, toy)**
25. **Big Frank (30 seconds, toy)**
26. **Fruity Pebbles (30 seconds, food)**
27. **McDonalds Halloween McNugget Buddies Happy Meal (30 seconds, food)**
28. **Party 'n Play Stacie (30 seconds, toy)**
29. **Kellogg's (30 seconds, food)**
30. **Fruity pebbles (30 seconds, toy)**
31. **Planters P.B. Crisps (30 seconds, toy)**
32. **Polly Pocket (30 seconds, toy)**
33. **Toby Terrier (30 seconds, toy)**
34. **Pizza Hut Aladdin Offer (30 seconds, food)**
35. **Twix (30 seconds, food)**
36. **Cabbage Patch Kid's Baby Cries So Real (30 seconds, toy)**
37. **Newborn Baby Alive (30 seconds, toy)**
38. **Fisher Price Tournament Table (30 seconds, toy)**
39. **Kellogg's Pop Tarts (30 seconds, toy)**
40. **McDonalds "What's On Your Plate" (60 seconds, food)**
41. **McDonalds (60 seconds, food)**
42. **M-78 Body Shop (30 seconds, automobiles)**
43. **Lego Pirates (30 seconds, toy)**
44. **Burger King Kid's Club (30 seconds, food)**
45. **Cabbage Patch Kid's Baby Cries So Real (30 seconds, toy)**
46. **McDonalds Happy Meal Snack Maker Set (30 seconds, toy)**

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47. Aladdin on video (30 seconds, entertainment)
48. Toby Terrier (30 seconds, toy)
49. Fisher Price Tournament Table (30 seconds, toy)
50. McDonalds Halloween McNugget Buddies Happy Meal (30 seconds, food)
51. Post Golden Crisp (30 seconds, food)
52. Baby Giggles 'n Go (30 seconds, toy)
53. Fruity Pebbles (30 seconds, food)
54. Cabbage Patch Kid's Magic Meadow Pony (30 seconds, toy)
55. Pizza Hut Aladdin Offer (30 seconds, food)
56. Fashion Plates (30 seconds, toy)
57. 2 Sided magna Doodle (30 seconds, toy)
58. Kellogg's Pop Tarts (30 seconds, food)
59. Tim Burton's "The Nightmare Before Christmas" (30 seconds, ent.)
60. Lil Miss Candi Stripes (30 seconds, toy)
61. McDonalds Halloween McNugget Buddies Happy Meal (30 seconds, food)
62. Jurassic Park Hand Held Game (30 seconds, toy)
63. Taco Bell Demolition Man Meal (30 seconds, food)
64. Fisher Price Tournament Table (30 seconds, toy)
65. McDonalds Happy Meal Snack Maker Set (30 seconds, toy)
66. Baby Giggles 'n Go (30 seconds, toy)
67. Burger King Kid's Club (30 seconds, food)
68. 2 Sided Magna Doodle (30 seconds, toy)
69. Fashion Plates (30 seconds, toy)
70. Little Caesars Nerf Offer (30 seconds, food)
71. Aladdin on Video (30 seconds, entertainment)

72. Life Savers (30 seconds, food)
73. EZ 2 Do (30 seconds, toy)
74. Taco Bell Demolition Man Meal (30 seconds, food)
75. Playskool Dollhouse (30 seconds, toy)
76. Rice Krispies Treats Cereal (30 seconds, food)
77. ALIENS (30 seconds, toy)
78. Magic Feeding Baby (30 seconds, toy)
79. McDonalds Halloween McNugget Buddies Happy Meal (30 seconds, food)
80. 2 Sided Magna Doodle (30 seconds, toy)
81. Fisher Price Tournament Table (30 seconds, toy)
82. Planters P.B. Crisps (30 seconds, toy)
83. EZ 2 Do (30 seconds, toy)
84. Taco Bell Demolition Man Meal (30 seconds, food)
85. Fuss 'n Giggle Triplets (30 seconds, toy)
86. Milk, it does a body good (30 seconds, food)
87. Pizza Hut Aladdin Offer (30 seconds, food)
88. TV Teddy (30 seconds, toy)
89. 2-XL (30 seconds, toy)
90. Baby Get Well (30 seconds, toy)
91. Turbo Shot (30 seconds, toy)
92. Kellogg's Frosted Mini Wheats (30 seconds, food)
93. Pony Surprise (30 seconds, toy)
94. Chuck E. Cheese (30 seconds, food)
95. Toby Terrier (30 seconds, toy)
96. Kellogg's (30 seconds, food)
97. Baby Get Well (30 seconds, toy)

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- 98. Turbo Shot (30 seconds, toy)
- 99. Apple Jacks (30 seconds, food)
- 100. Teddy Ruxpin (30 seconds, toy)
- 101. Milk, it does a body good (30 seconds, toy)
- 102. Lego Pirates (30 seconds, toy)
- 103. McDonalds Halloween McNugget Buddies Happy Meal (30 seconds, food)
- 104. Magic Copier (30 seconds, toy)
- 105. Hyacinth House Greenery (15 seconds, service)
- 106. Street Fighter II Hand Held Game (30 seconds, toy)
- 107. Little Caesars Nerf Offer (30 seconds, food)
- 108. 2 Sided Magna Doodle (30 seconds, toy)
- 109. Skittles (30 seconds, food)
- 110. Chefboyardee Sir Chomps-a-lot (30 seconds, food)
- 111. Kellogg's Pop Tarts (30 seconds, food)
- 112. Made By Me Fantastic Roses (30 seconds, toy)
- 113. McDonalds Halloween McNugget Buddies Happy Meal (30 seconds, food)
- 114. American Melanoma Foundation Health Protection (30 seconds, public service)
- 115. Crunch Berries (30 seconds, food)
- 116. TV Teddy (30 seconds, toy)
- 117. Chuck E. Cheese (30 seconds, food)
- 118. Pizza Hut Aladdin Offer (30 seconds, food)
- 119. Baby Giggles 'n Go (30 seconds, toy)
- 120. Jurassic Park Command Compound (30 seconds, toy)
- 121. Tim Burton's "The Nightmare Before Christmas" (30 seconds, ent.)

- 122. Kellogg's Frosted Flakes (30 seconds, food)**
- 123. Skittles (30 seconds, food)**
- 124. Teddy Ruxpin (30 seconds, toy)**
- 125. Mommy's Having A Baby (30 seconds, toy)**
- 126. Kellogg's Pop Tarts (30 seconds, toy)**
- 127. Partnership For A Drug Free America (15 seconds, public service)**
- 128. Potter Park Zoo (30 seconds, entertainment)**
- 129. Fashion Plates (30 seconds, toy)**
- 130. Kellogg's Pop Tarts (30 seconds, food)**
- 131. Tim Burton's "The Nightmare Before Christmas" (30 seconds, ent.)**
- 132. Made By Me Fantastic Roses (30 seconds, toy)**
- 133. Kellogg's Corn Pops (30 seconds, food)**
- 134. Lego Rescue (30 seconds, toy)**
- 135. Pizza Hut Aladdin Offer (30 seconds, food)**
- 136. Cabbage Patch Kid's magic Meadow Pony (30 seconds, toy)**
- 137. Five A Day/Children Our Future (30 seconds, public service)**
- 138. McDonalds Halloween McNugget Buddies Happy Meal (30 seconds, food)**
- 139. Magic Feeding Baby (30 seconds, toy)**
- 140. Chuck E. Cheese (30 seconds, food)**
- 141. Baby Giggles 'n Go (30 seconds, toy)**
- 142. The Beverly Hillbillies Movie (30 seconds, entertainment)**
- 143. My Buddy; Kid Sister (30 seconds, toy)**
- 144. McDonalds Halloween McNugget Buddies Happy Meal (30 seconds, food)**
- 145. Milk, it does a body good (30 seconds, food)**
- 146. Aladdin on Video (30 seconds, entertainment)**

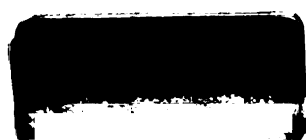
147. Jurassic Park Command Compound (30 seconds, toy)
148. Partnership for a drug free America (10 seconds, public service)
149. Troll Barbie (30 seconds, toy)
150. Chefboyardee Sir Chomps-a-lot (30 seconds, food)
151. Taco Bell Demolition Man Meal (30 seconds, food)
152. Baby Get Well (30 seconds, toy)
153. Lego Dragon Masters (30 seconds, toy)
154. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs Hand Held Game (30 seconds, toy)
155. Kellogg's Frosted Mini Wheats (30 seconds, food)
156. Turbo Shot (30 seconds, toy)
157. Little Caesars Nerf Offer (30 seconds, food)
158. My Buddy; Kid Sister (30 seconds, toy)
159. Jurassic park Command Compound (30 seconds, toy)
160. Kellogg's Corn Flakes with Phone Offer (30 seconds, food)
161. McDonalds McWorld (30 seconds, food)
162. Hyacinth House Greenery (15 seconds, service)
163. Cabbage Patch Kid's Baby Cries So Real (30 seconds, toy)
164. Kellogg's Pop Tarts (30 seconds, food)
165. Western Stampin' Barbie and Friends (30 seconds, toy)
166. Little Caesars Nerf offer (30 seconds, toy)
167. Aladdin on Video (30 seconds, entertainment)
168. Milk, it does a body good (30 seconds, food)
169. Puppy Surprise (30 seconds, toy)
170. Quiz Whiz (30 seconds, toy)
171. Magic Feeding Baby (30 seconds, toy)
172. Partnership for a drug free America (15 seconds, public service)

- 173. Delta Plan of Michigan (30 seconds, public service)
- 174. Regency GM Trucks (30 seconds, automobile)

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