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The roles portrayed by children in South African magazine advertising: a longitudinal study

ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes the findings of four studies executed from 1983 to 2003 to determine how marketers in South Africa portray children in magazine advertisements. This longitudinal study reports on aspects such as the incidence of child models in the advertisements, the roles they depict and whether there are differences as to the way in which marketers use children from different races in the same advertisements. A conceptual framework or marketing communications model is presented to illustrate how marketers can use the child as a substitute communicator in various roles to convey the firm's advertising message. The relevance of the findings for South African marketers is highlighted and suggestions for further research are proposed.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The use of children in advertising has attracted the attention of local and international marketers and communication specialists for many years. Marketers believe that their marketing messages can be conveyed effectively to the target market when children of the right age, gender and race are depicted in the advertisement. Child models in advertising are a very popular method that advertisers apply to communicate with parents and other children. Browne (1998) report that children, animals and humour are “Loerie Favourites” and among the winning themes at the annual Loerie awards. Marketers use child actors in advertisements as substitute communicators to convey the advertising message to potential consumers. In many instances, children figure as symbols in the advertisement to attract the attention of both adults and other children, to lend a specific meaning to the advertising message, and to create a certain mood in the advertisement. According to Kinsey (1987), children are particularly useful as a ‘vehicle’ to create both rational and emotional appeals for different target audiences. They are generally more credible because of their innocence, and when depicted in the right setting, arouse in mothers feelings of fear, love and joy. Kinsey (1987:170) further states that the use of children in advertising can be a “useful ‘vehicle’ to sell a product to other children since they can identify with the communicator”. At societal level, they can be used to transmit positive values from one generation to another. It can be expected that a child will identify more easily with a child model depicted in a social situation than with an adult. The aim of this article is to provide an overview of children and advertising, referring to global research studies done in this regard, and specifically how marketers in South Africa have depicted children in various roles in magazine advertisements over the past 20 years. A conceptual marketing communications framework or model, including the roles child actors perform in magazine advertisements, will also be presented.

2. PROBLEMSTATEMENT

Although marketing to children and the use of children in advertising is a very popular and effective communications tool, marketers are faced with many potential pitfalls and regulations that must be adhered to. Deciding to depict a child model in a magazine advertisement is the easy first step. Serious questions to be answered and aspects to consider in this regard, are inter alia, the following: the age of the model; and should children from both genders be depicted in the advertisement; to what extent should marketers use children from different cultural backgrounds in the illustration; should the child model act as a consumer of the advertised product or what specific role should the child perform in the advertisement? It is suspected that in many instances children who appear in magazine advertisements are selected randomly. This could impact

negatively on the effectiveness of the message conveyed to the target audience. Trying to find answers to the abovementioned and other questions was the impetus to this study.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Children in advertising: a controversial issue

Advertising has become an institutionalised part of our economic and social system. Because marketing is a very visible activity, affecting not only the profits of businesses, but also the lives of individuals, most people will agree that some marketing practices, such as advertising, are sometimes controversial (Kinsey, 1987; Hawkins et al., 2001; Du Plessis, 2003; Duncan, 2002). For example, the Calvin Klein advertising campaign that appeared in magazines, billboards and on television ignited a storm of controversy and criticism in the United States. Concerned parties were upset by the “kiddie porn” campaign featuring teenage models in provocative poses, and according to Miller (1996:1,2), in some cases, making suggestive comments (Hawkins et al., 2001). Advertising and children, it seems, has become a major focus of public debate and concern in many countries over the years. In this regard Kinsey (1987) states, “...the use of children is one of these hotbeds...”. Solomon (1996) views the topic of advertising to children as an 'ethical minefield'. Judin (1997:15), for example, refers to the increasingly popular trend of featuring children in commercials that advertise products primarily for an adult market. Marketers who consider using children in advertisements must take note of the problems and challenges in this regard, in particular, the societal, cultural and ethical aspects involved.

Marketers and communication managers face a dilemma when advertising to children. On the one hand, they must be sensitive to ethical issues, but on the other hand, they must make full use of the opportunity to create powerful messages that will attract the attention of potential customers and this includes the very lucrative youth market. How marketers in a few major countries address this issue is worth noting (North, 1998:363-364).

Young people in *China* have money to spend and are very brand conscious. According to Johnstone (1996), advertisers are increasingly looking to sway the minds of children in China. At Saatchi and Saatchi, plans were under way in 1996 to set up a unit in its Shanghai office aimed at developing a better understanding of how children in China respond to advertising. All advertisements in China are censored before they are aired or printed. The guidelines advocate respect for authority and filial piety, which correspond in some sense to the African concept of Ubuntu. Almost universally, advertising in China

shows visions of a healthy, happy family life, says Johnstone. A section of the new advertising law in China applies particular restrictions to children's products. Those producing pharmaceutical products cannot show children in a commercial, even if the product is for children. Products such as Tylenol cough medicine must be advertised by showing an adult recommending the product to a parent for his or her child.

In the *United Kingdom* the use of children in advertising is a touchy subject for politicians and the public. According to Bainbridge (1996), the controversy surrounding this topic was boosted when an advertisement appeared in which a child was used to put across adult ideas. In a campaign for a sweet product, the agency came up with a unique idea to excite children. The new sweet commercial was set in a child's brain (Green, 1996).

One of the more than 216 ready-to-eat cereal brands in the *United States of America* was in danger of losing market share. A campaign called the "Taste You Can See" portrayed children as being "in the know" - able to see what adults cannot. In the spots according to Wells et al. (1995), children reversed roles with stereotypical adult authority figures and taught the adults why they preferred this specific brand. A study by Viser (1997) focused on the images of children in American magazine advertising between 1940 and 1950. Because of the changing economic conditions and socio-cultural perceptions of children in the post-World War 2 United States, one of the hypotheses stated that measures of general emotions would indicate a happier, more excited child model in the advertisement in the post-war period compared to the pre-war period. The results largely confirmed this hypothesis (North, 1998).

In modern times, the populations of countries as a whole (including children as consumers) have become more educated about marketing and communication strategies and practices. It is not a surprise, therefore, that informed consumers will voice their opinions and criticize marketing and advertising practices when they are convinced that it is not to the benefit of the community. Duncan (2002:673) provides a lengthy discussion on the controversial advertising campaign in the USA by the JR Reynolds' cartoon character, Joe Camel, who allegedly attempted to target children and teenagers and blatantly influenced them favourably towards smoking. The controversy surrounding the issue of children's advertising has not only generated an ongoing stream of research on the effects of children's advertising but has also encouraged the advertising industry to regulate this practice carefully. It is no surprise, therefore, that virtually every advertising practice in the United States comes under the jurisdiction of the Federal Trade Commission (Bové et al., 1995). The next section will provide a summary of how a number of countries deal with regulatory issues, with specific reference to children and advertising.

3.2 Advertising regulation for children

In the *USA*, groups such as ACT (Action for Children's Television) and CARU (Children's Advertising Review Unit) have been particularly active in the field of advertising to children. CARU was established in 1974 by the National Advertising Division of the Council of Better Business Bureaus for the purpose of: (1) monitoring children's advertising for truth and accuracy, (2) evaluating proposed children's advertising, (3) promoting research into children's advertising, and (4) disseminating information to the public (Rajeev, Myers & Aaker, 1996).

The major issues are whether television advertising to children is inherently unfair, whether it causes children to make poor product decisions, whether it increases parent-child conflict, and whether it results in the undesirable socialization of children. The broader issues, particularly associated with toys and games that involve violence, are whether the advertising of such games, or the games themselves, should be disallowed. A related question is whether advertising, even though it does not contain violent material, should be sponsoring television programmes that depict violent scenes that can be seen by children.

CARU revised its written guidelines in 1977 and again in 1983. The following are the five basic principles on which guidelines for advertising directed at children are based (Wells et al., 1995):

- Advertisers should always take into account the level of knowledge, sophistication and maturity of the audience.
- Realizing that children are imaginative and that make-believe play constitutes an important part of the growing up process, advertisers should exercise care not to exploit that imaginative quality of children.
- Recognizing that advertising may play an important part in educating the child, information should be communicated in a truthful and accurate manner with full recognition by the advertiser that the child may learn practices from advertising, which can affect his or her health and well-being.
- Advertisers are urged to capitalize on the potential of advertising to influence social behaviour by developing advertising that, wherever possible, addresses itself to social standards generally regarded as positive and beneficial, such as friendship, kindness, honesty, justice, generosity and respect for others.
- Although many influences affect a child's personal and social development, it remains the prime responsibility of the parents to provide guidance to children. Advertisers should contribute to this parent-child relationship in a constructive manner.

According to Bradley (1995), advertising to children in *Europe* is either hamstrung, as advertisers see it, or regulated, as the governments concerned view it. In *Finland*, Santa's homeland, child actors may not speak or sing the name of a product in commercials. When it comes to advertising sweets, they must not appear on the screen at all; children munching sweets are also out of order in the *Netherlands*. In neighbouring *Sweden*, no child may be depicted playing with 'war toys', and advertisements may not show the price of toys. On *Swedish* TV, all advertisements aimed at 'gaining the attention' - rather a difficult concept to quantify perhaps - of children under the age of 12 are banned.

In *Turkey*, children can only watch television commercials in the presence of an adult. In *France*, anyone under 16 is banned from enunciating a product name in an advertisement; they cannot wear the colours, logo, brand name or initials of any product; and they can only introduce a product in a commercial when 'there exists a direct link between the product and child usage when shown together with adults'. In *Greece*, advertising of all toys was banned from 1987 until earlier this year; that ban continues on television for all toy advertisements before 11 pm. In *Italy*, commercial breaks are prohibited in cartoon programmes 'aimed' at children.

One of many regulations in the *United Kingdom* states that no product or service may be advertised, and no method of advertising may be used, which might result in harm to children (anyone aged 15 or under) physically, mentally or morally, and no method of advertising that takes advantage of the natural credulity and sense of loyalty of children may be employed.

In *South Africa*, the Advertising Standards Authority of South Africa (1996) regulates the control of advertising. The following are some of the regulations relating to advertising and children:

- No advertisement that encourages children to enter strange places or to converse with strangers in an effort to collect coupons, wrappers, labels or the like is allowed.
- No advertisement that leads children to believe that if they do not own the product advertised they would be inferior in some way to other children is allowed.
- To help in the fair portrayal of free gifts for children, television advertisements should, where necessary, make it easy to see the true size of a gift by showing it in relation to some common object against which its scale can be judged.
- While it is recognised that children are not the direct purchasers of many products over which they are naturally allowed to exercise preference, care should be taken that they are not encouraged to make themselves a nuisance to other people in the interests of any particular product or service. In an advertisement offering a free gift, a premium or a competition for children, the main emphasis of the advertisement must be on the product with which the offer is associated.

- With regard to safety, the following regulations inter alia apply:
 - Children should not appear to be unattended in street scenes unless they are obviously old enough to be responsible for their own safety; should not be shown playing in the road unless it is clearly shown to be a play area or other safe area; and should not be shown stepping carelessly off the pavement or crossing the road without due care.
 - Children should not be seen leaning dangerously out of windows or over bridges, or climbing dangerous cliffs.
 - Small children should not be shown climbing up to high shelves or reaching up to take things from a table above their heads.
 - Medicines, disinfectants, antiseptics and caustic substances must not be shown within reach of children without close parental supervision, nor should unsupervised children be shown using these products in any way.

Concerns about social issues and other possible negative effects of advertising on children have not been such a sensitive topic in South Africa compared to other countries, especially the UK and the USA. One issue that causes some debate from time to time is that of tobacco advertising. Van Niekerk (1997) states that tobacco companies' expenditure on advertising is a direct cause of higher cigarette consumption in South Africa. According to research findings of the Medical Research Council of the University of the Witwatersrand, 95 out of 1350 (7%) five-year-olds in Soweto and Johannesburg have already smoked. Almost 20% of these youngsters indicated they would smoke when they were adults.

In conjunction with the ASA Advertising Code of Conduct, the Association of Marketers (ASOM) issued a charter (Code of Conduct for Advertising to Children, 2000) that sets standards of ethical conduct to be followed by all concerned with advertising to or containing children in advertisements. The ASOM charter makes provision for 19 sections that relate to children and advertising, the majority of which is a replication of the guidelines offered by the ASA code of conduct. One of these, however, refers specifically to children appearing in advertising: "Children must not be used to give formalized personal testimony nor may they make significant comments in relation to any product or service on characteristics of which they cannot be expected to have direct knowledge". (ASOM has in the meantime merged with The Institute of Marketing Management to form the Marketing Federation of South Africa – MFSA.)

4. REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES FROM 1983 TO 2000

This section provides information on four research studies that have been done on the use of children in magazine advertising in South Africa over the last 20 years. The first

of these studies was executed in 1983, with replication studies in 1987, 1997 and 2000. The main objective of the first study in 1983 was to explore this field of study and to describe the categories or roles that child actors portray in the advertisements. The specific objectives of the 2000 study, however, differed slightly from the first three studies. The focus of the latter study was to determine if (and to what extent) there are differences in the way marketers portray children of different races in the same advertisements in *Drum* (a weekly publication aimed at mainly black readers), compared to those depicted in *You* (a weekly publication aimed at mainly white readers). The same research design, and methods of data collection, sampling procedure and data analysis were used for the four studies (North, 1998).

4.1 Method and sampling procedure

The nature of the research to be done required that content analysis should be used as the primary method of data collection. The *Audit Bureau of Circulations of South Africa Limited* served as a basis for the sampling procedure. A non-probability sample of consumer magazines with circulation figures of 100 000 or more provided the research instrument for the studies. All the full-page advertisements of nine consumer magazines served as the sample frame for the study. A total of 6 844 advertisements (total number of full-page advertisements in the magazines) were eventually included in the sample. A content analysis of the advertisements in which child actors were portrayed was conducted over 4 three-month periods in 1983, 1987, 1997 and 2000. The 1987 study also included a content analysis of the roles that children depict in television advertisements. The focus of the 2000 study was to compare the portrayal of children in mixed-race advertisements in two magazines that target white and black readers separately. These magazines were also included in the sample for the earlier studies. The same nine magazines were therefore studied in the four surveys. In total, 83 editions of the nine magazines (three weekly, three bi-weekly and three monthly magazines) were used for the purpose of analysis. Four of the magazines cater for the Afrikaans community, three for English-speaking readers and two mainly for the Black community. The magazines used in the study were: *Drum*, *Huisgenoot (You)*, *Bona*, *Fair Lady*, *Living and Loving*, *Rooi Rose*, *Sarie*, *Scope* and *Your Family*.

4.2 Identification of categories and coding of data

Selecting and describing the categories to be used in a content analysis is one of the most important steps in the execution of a study of this nature. Berelson (1971) and Bush et al. (1983) endorse this view by stating that a content analysis is as good as the exact description of the categories. Cooper and Schindler (2001:430) refer to the

categories as keywords and referential units. For this study, the way in which children are portrayed in the magazine advertisements constitute the categories.

According to Millum (1975), the illustration in a magazine advertisement consists of four elements, namely, the *model*, the *product*, the *background* and the *supporting elements*. These elements constituted the criteria according to which the categories (or the roles children portray in the advertisements) could be described. The model is regarded as the most important element in the advertisement to be considered when criteria are determined. In this regard, the following aspects are important:

- The physical actions in which the model is engaged, and specifically the main activity he/she is performing, for example, eating or to running.
- The main focus point on which the model is concentrating at that stage.
- The general appearance of the model; the age, gender, type of clothes he/she is wearing, and facial expressions (smiling, crying, rejoicing, being surprised, etcetera).
- The relation of the model towards him/herself or other models in the advertisement.
- The relation of the model towards the advertised product, the background or supporting elements in the advertisement.

The following is a brief summary of the nature of the categories used in the studies (North, 1987):

- The child acts as a *social being* in the advertisement. The main attention of the model is directed at the other model(s) in the advertisement or at the activity that is performed with the other model(s). These activities include interacting, communicating, playing, being with or just having a good time with members of his/her family or with friends or other people.
- In cases where the child is depicted as a *school pupil* in the advertisement, it is clear that the child's main activity is directed towards an activity associated with schoolwork, for example to learn, do homework, read a textbook, draw pictures, or even think in order to analyse and solve a problem. In these cases, the age of the model and the background (e.g. classroom) or supporting elements (e.g. table) are important indicators to consider when the category or role of the child are determined.
- When the child is participating or wearing suitable sports clothes, he/she is a participant in *sport*. In this case, the model must actively be involved in activities that are associated with a specific, organized sporting event, for example, to kick a ball, hit a tennis ball or swim in a swimming pool. It must be clear that the child is not merely playing with friends or other people in an informal way.

- The child portrays the role of an *animal lover* when an animal appears in the advertisement with the child model. The body language and even the facial expression of the child must indicate that the child is fond of the animal, either by playing with it or caring for it.
- The child is portrayed as a *consumer* of a product when he/she is using or consuming the advertised product. The main focus of the child must be on the product.
- In some cases, the child appears merely as part of the *background* or is used as a *supporting element* in the illustration. Advertisers make use of models in this role to create a certain atmosphere in the advertisement. In these cases, the child model is not socializing with other people, or using the product, and it is not clear what the model is focusing on in the advertisement.
- Finally, children also act as models in *testimonial* advertisements (being very prominent in the illustration, but not consuming the product). In many cases, the advertised product is not even shown, although the consequences of the use or the non-use of the product are clear in the advertisement. For example, a teenaged boy with skin problems appears in an advertisement for skin care products.

The categories described above are all mutually exclusive. The description of the categories explicitly stated that the main activity or the focus of the child in the illustration determined the category, for example, a child at school who is playing soccer with his friends during a lunch break was classified as a social being and not as a school pupil or a sports lover.

To record the data, a *coding sheet* was designed on which all the relevant data was noted under the specific columns. The coding sheet used by the judge(s) contained specific guidelines that provided a detailed and comprehensive examination of the roles children portray in the illustrations. For coding purposes, the age groups of the children were divided into three categories, namely babies and toddlers, young children in primary school and teenagers in secondary school. As a quantitative content analysis was conducted in this study, the results of the survey were recorded in numerical and percentage terms. The information was classified under three main sections, namely: information regarding the *test unit* (full-page advertisements); information regarding the *units of observation* (the illustrations); and information regarding the *coding unit* (the child portrayed in the illustration).

The same coding sheet was used in all the studies. A clear limitation of the study is the fact that the researcher did the coding for the first three periods (1983-1997), whereas two postgraduate Marketing students coded the information for the 2000 analysis.

5. RESULTS

The results of the four studies will be presented under the following headings:

- The frequency of the portrayal of children in the advertisements.
- The various roles children portray in the advertisements.
- The race of the models in the commercials.

5.1 The frequency of the portrayal of children in magazine advertisements

Details of the frequency of the portrayal of children in magazine advertisements for the four studies are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequency of the portrayal of children in magazine advertisements (1983-2000)

	1983	1987	1997	2000
Child models in illustrations	(n= 2163) %	(n= 1622) %	(n=1348) %	(n= 1711) %
Advertisements portraying children in the illustration	11,00	10,60	16,61	12,41
Advertisements without children in the illustration	88,99	89,39	83,38	87,59

n= number of advertisements studied

Table 1 shows that marketers made far more use of children in magazine advertisements in 1997 compared to 1987. It is hypothesized that the inauguration of Nelson Mandela in 1994 and his special interest and concern for children might be a reason for this increase. Marketers probably believe that the portrayal of youthfulness can increase the effectiveness of the advertisement; they also seem to use children in advertising because they can be regarded as consumers in their own right. They have unprecedented purchasing power and exert a great influence on household buying decisions (Ward & Wackman, 1972). In 1998 South Africa had approximately 12,9 million school-going children, 35% of whom were in secondary school and commanded a disposable income of R4 billion/year (Mulrooney, 1999). According to Koenderman (2001), children (of all

ages) spend R4,5 billion/year in South Africa and influence the spending of another R20 billion/year, including the purchases of items such as television sets and cars. It is not clear why there is a decrease from 16,61% in 1997 to 12,41% in 2000.

5.2 Roles portrayed by children

The analysis revealed that child actors portray seven different roles in the advertisements, and that marketers prefer to portray them more frequently in certain roles. Table 2 records this information. (The reader will note that the information in Table 2 only records the roles portrayed by children for the 1983, 1987 and 1997 studies. This is due to the fact that the main aim of the 2000 study was to determine whether differences occur between the use of child models in the advertisements of two selected magazines, namely *You*, which caters mainly for white readers, and *Drum*, which caters mainly for black readers.)

The findings in Table 2 indicate that marketers portrayed child models as *social beings* in most of the cases studied between 1983 and 1997. Child actors appeared mostly with members of the family in the three studies. Although a significant decrease in the role of a social being occurred from 1987 (52%) to 1997 (34%), ($z=3.55$; $p < .001$), acting as social beings is also the role marketers seem to prefer when portraying children of more than one race in the same advertisement (see Table 5).

Acting as *testimonials* in the advertisements is the role in which children are portrayed second most (29%), followed closely by the role as a *consumer* of a product (27%). The results show that children were not portrayed very frequently in the roles of *animal lovers* (2%), *school pupils* (1%) and *sports lovers* (4%). Table 2 indicates that the depiction of children in sporting roles increased from 0.5% in 1987 to 4% in 1997. It must be noted, however, that black children acted as partakers in sport in less than 10% of these cases. It is not clear why marketers of sporting goods and equipment make far more use of black children in these advertisements. Almost all the major sporting bodies in South Africa became professional over the last few years. Much is also being done to promote sport in disadvantaged communities and to encourage young black people to participate in sport. Sponsorships and development programmes for black children are common practice in South Africa nowadays.

Future market research on culture and sport may possibly supply marketers with valuable information to underpin strategies for the marketing of sporting goods to athletes in diverse race and cultural groups (North & Millard, 2003).

Table 2: Roles portrayed by children in magazine advertisements (1983-1997)

Roles portrayed by children	1983 (n=238) %	1987 (n=172) %	1997 (n=224) %
Social context:	43	52	34
(Family)	(35)	(36)	(29)
(Peer group)	(8)	(14)	(5)
(Other)	(0)	(2)	(0)
Scholar	4	0.5	1
Partaker in sport	2	0.5	4
Animal lover	3	1	2
Testimonial	3	19	29
Consumer	34	24	27
Background	11	3	3

n= number of advertisements in each sample

5.3 Race of child models

In the South African context, a limited number of studies investigated the marketing implications of race and/or cultural aspects in advertising. A recent study by Cassim and Monteiro (2001) provides a picture of the image of blacks in television advertising in the mid-1990s. Table 3 provides a summary of the findings of the four studies between 1983 and 2000 in which this issue is addressed.

Table 3: Race of child models in magazine advertisements (1983-2000)

Race of models	1983 (n=238) %	1987 (n=172) %	1997 (n=224) %	2000 (n=212) %
Advertisements depicting children of different races in the illustration	5,04	1,16	10,71	8,20
Advertisements depicting children of one race only in the illustration	94,96	98,84	89,29	91,80

n= number of advertisements portraying children

The results indicate that a noticeable increase in the portrayal of children of different races has taken place in 1997 and 2000 compared to 1987. The z-test for proportions confirmed that there was a higher incidence of advertisements in 1997 portraying children of different races in the same advertisement ($z = -4.30; p < .001$). These figures firstly confirm the fact that the South African community is in a process of radical change, and secondly they probably indicate that marketers are beginning to realize that their advertising messages should reflect the true nature of the new South Africa. However, taking cognizance of the fact that black people constitute 76 per cent (1996 statistics) of the total South African population, the 89 per cent portrayal of white models only can be seen as the disproportionate use of white children in advertising (North & Millard, 2003).

As mentioned earlier, the main aim of the 2000 study was to determine if (and to what extent) there are differences in the way marketers portray black and white children in the same advertisements in *Drum* (a weekly publication aimed at mainly black readers), compared to those depicted in *You* (a weekly publication aimed at mainly white readers). Both these magazines can be classified as general consumer magazines that cater for a wide variety of readers. The following aspects will be highlighted in this section:

- Comparing the demographic details of the children depicted in the race-mixed advertisements in the two magazines.
- Determining whether there are differences in respect of the roles children portray in race-mixed advertisements in the abovementioned magazines.

Of the total of 6 844 advertisements included in the sample for the four studies combined, 1 711 advertisements were analyzed from June to August 2000. Two hundred and seventy-four of the advertisements that portrayed children appeared in *You*, while 126 full-page advertisements in *Drum* depicted children in the advertisement. The information in Table 4 shows to what extent the incidence of race-mixed advertisements differ in the two weekly magazines. The findings indicate that, although far less full-page advertisements portraying children appear in *Drum* (126 vs. 274), the use of children in the advertisements depicted in *Drum* (22%) is almost double than the 12 per cent in *You* ($z = -2.43$; $p = .007$). It is surprising to note that not one advertisement in the two magazines depicted teenagers over the three-month period. Although no correlations exist, it is interesting to note that in the 1983 and 1987 studies (North, 1987), teenagers were portrayed in 27% and 24% cases respectively (total sample of nine magazines). In 43 per cent of the cases in *Drum*, advertisers preferred to use mixed-gender groups in the advertisements, almost twice as much as in *You* (24%).

Table 4: Demographic details of child models in race-mixed advertisements in weekly magazines (2000)

Magazine/Criteria	You (%)	Drum (%)
Frequency of models in advertisements	(n=274) 12	(n=126) 22
Age:	(n=34)	(n=28)
Babies/toddlers	29	36
Young children	71	64
Teenagers/mixed	0	0
Gender:	(n=34)	(n=28)
Boy	29	7
Girl	35	29
Mixed	24	43
Unknown	12	21
Race-mixed advertisements	(n=34) 29	(n=28) 0

n= number of advertisements in sample

A surprising result is that Drum did not contain any advertisements in which children of both races are depicted in the same advertisement, whereas almost one-third of race-mixed advertisements appeared in You. In these instances, it must be noted, however, that white models are more prominent in the illustrations than black children. The results of the analysis to determine the roles child actors portray in race-mixed advertisements in the two weekly magazines (Table 5) correlate to a large extent with the findings of the previous 1983-1997 studies. Advertisers prefer to depict child models in social settings, as consumers of advertised products, and acting as testimonials in the advertisements.

Table 5: Roles portrayed by children in race-mixed advertisements of two weekly magazines (2000)

Magazines/ Roles portrayed by children in race-mixed advertisements*	You (n=34) %	Drum (n=28) %
Social context:	47	35
(Family)	(35)	(21)
(Peer group)	(12)	(14)
School pupil	0	0
Partaker in sport	0	0
Animal lover	6	0
Testimonial	23	36
Consumer	18	29
Background/supporting element	6	0

n= number of advertisements in each sample

*The inter-coder reliability was a very acceptable 96.15%. Indications in literature are that an inter-coder reliability of 85% or above is acceptable (Caillat and Mueller, 1996; Viser, 1997).

The information in Table 5 indicates that no advertisements in the magazines depicted children as school pupils or as partakers in sport. Furthermore, not one advertisement in Drum portrayed a black child in the role as an animal lover. Six per cent of the models

in You acted in the role of animal lovers. And six per cent also appeared in the advertisements as part of the background, compared to zero per cent in Drum. Notably more models in You portray the role of a social being (47%) compared to 35% in Drum.

6. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Dramatic changes on various fronts have characterized the South African landscape over the past ten years, offering many new marketing opportunities for business leaders. The redistribution of income and the rapid westernization of black South Africans is of special interest to South African marketers. This article attempted to shed some light on the question of whether marketers are taking cognizance of this change in the social environment, and whether it is reflected in their advertising strategies.

Looking at the findings of the four studies as a whole, the following conclusions can be made: firstly, according to Table 1, there was an increase in the frequency of the portrayal of children in magazine advertisements from the first two studies (1983 and 1987) to the latter two studies (1997 and 2000).

Secondly, children are mostly portrayed in the role as a social being (and in these cases as a member of the family). This information is contained in Table 2 and Table 5.

Thirdly, a significant increase in the portrayal of children of different races in the same advertisement was recorded in the post-apartheid period (1997 and 2000 studies), compared to the 1983 and 1987 studies (Table 3).

Fourthly, there is much room for marketers to use teenage models as substitute communicators for their marketing messages (Table 4). The results of all four studies indicate that marketers mostly use pre-school and younger children as actors in the advertisements. The type of product advertised (e.g. personal care products) and the target audience (mothers) probably explain why most advertisements portray younger children. The use of teenagers as models for the three periods was a somewhat disappointing 27% (1983), 24% (1987) and 11% (1997). Not one teenager was depicted in advertisements in the weekly magazines analyzed for the 2000 study. They prefer to use pre-school (especially babies) and younger children as actors in the advertisements. The discretionary income of black people has increased considerably over the past few years, which opens up many opportunities for marketers. Not only can adults be targeted, but marketing efforts can also be directed to get the attention of the teenage market by building brand loyalty among the adult consumers of tomorrow. The reason why they do not make more use of teenagers (for example, to promote sporting goods) is unknown and is a topic for future research.

And fifthly, it seems that differences exist in how marketers approach the use of mixed-race advertisements in various media. Table 5 shows that child models are used as animal lovers and as part of the background in 6% of the cases in *You*, while in *Drum* magazine they do not act in these roles at all.

Annexure A contains a conceptual framework or marketing communications model in which the use of children as substitute communicators is presented. During the encoding and message formulation process, the marketer may decide to use the child model in a specific role. Seven roles were identified and discussed in the four studies described in this article. However, it is hypothesized that marketers may have a need to portray child actors in more roles. Children could, for example, be used in advertisements to portray the role of music lovers, the purchaser of an article (or seeking product information on the Internet) or taking part in entrepreneurial activities. They could possibly also be depicted in roles where they acquire skills to become responsible citizens and skillful consumers. Using children in the correct roles in the advertisements could help the marketer to achieve his communication objectives more effectively, that is, to inform, remind and persuade customers to purchase the products or services of the firm. Listed below are a few benefits for marketers when children act as substitute communicators in the advertisement:

- Children are considered to be trustworthy because of their innocence and spontaneous honesty.
- Other children will notice the child in the advertisement because the child acts in a natural way when depicted in an everyday situation. These “slice of life” advertisements can be a very effective way to reinforce the credibility of the message (Belch & Belch, 2001:285).
- Advertisers normally use attractive or cute children or just an ordinary, typical child with whom other children can identify. This enhances the attractiveness of the advertisement.
- Children are also used to act as an opinion leader in the advertisement. It is well known that opinion leaders can play a major role in the general socialization process of children, specifically to be accepted by the peer group.
- And depicting child models in appropriate roles can also help ensure that the advertising message is interpreted and decoded correctly by other children or their parents.

Although the results are based on an analysis of one medium only, it is believed that they are representative of other mediums of advertising, for example television advertising (North & Millard, 2003). It is recommended that a repeat study of the 1987 study (in which the use of children in television advertising was conducted) be done to test the above-mentioned hypothesis.

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ANNEXURE A

