

# **As seen on screen: influenced by vlogs and games**

*How do parents mediate between children and embedded advertising?*



## **Master thesis**

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## Abstract

Because of the popularity of media platforms like vlogs and games, children are confronted with many forms of embedded advertising. Legislators are in the process of making rules to protect children from unconscious persuasion, but this is a lengthy process. As young children use most media at home, parents are an important factor in children's media education and the development of advertising literacy. Therefore, the aim of this study was to gain more insight into the relationship between parents and children concerning embedded advertising and parental mediation. In Study 1 (N = 128) a quantitative method was used to determine parental opinions on embedded advertising. Parents of children between the ages of 7 to 11 were confronted with examples of embedded advertising and asked questions about recognition, ad/format liking, persuasive intent and ethical considerations. The most notable results were that vlogs were recognized significantly more than games and that vlogs and games that scored higher on persuasive intent did not necessarily have a low ethical score. The results from the questionnaire were used to make a relevant interview scheme for Study 2. Study 2 (N = 24) consisted of interviews conducted among parents of children between the ages of 7 to 11. This study aimed to gain insight into specific parental mediation techniques. Several mediation techniques that were already described in literature (co-viewing, active mediation, restrictive mediation) were found in the interviews. Interestingly, they were not always executed as described in former studies. Some additional mediation techniques were also discovered, as for instance utilizing mediation: the use of media to the parent's advantage. The discoveries that were made in this study were used to update the overview of parental mediation techniques, which is now more relevant to current practices. Practical implications and suggestions for future research are also offered.

*Keywords: embedded advertising, advertising literacy, parental mediation, media education, vlogs and advergames*



## Introduction

The world of today is dominated by technology. Children nowadays grow up surrounded by smartphones, tablets and other handy devices, and quickly learn how to use them to their advantage. While advertising has been making use of these kinds of technology for ages, advertisers keep finding new inventive ways to promote their products, especially to children.

One of these smart, inventive ways is embedding the advertising in something a lot of children watch, use or play daily. This is called embedded advertising: advertising with a less intrusive nature and with more subtle commercial content (Hudders, De Pauw, Cauberghe, Panic, Zarouali & Rozendaal, 2017). Examples of embedded advertising are advergames (games that have advertising intent built into them) or the integration of brands in videos. One of the best examples of advertising embedded in a video format is vlogging: YouTubers that capture their everyday lives, from the activities they do to the products they use. A lot of children watch vlogs daily, so the influence of vloggers is enormous. According to NOS (2018), half of children in the Netherlands between the ages of 8 and 12 are influenced in their buying behaviour by vlogs. There are specific rules for vloggers when it comes to advertising (notion of advertising, notion of promotional ends in a video) in the Netherlands (Stichting Reclame Code, n.d.) and in many other countries, like for instance the UK (ASA, 2015). However, in 2017 the Dutch Media Authority studied sponsored YouTube videos and in 75 percent of the researched videos, it was unclear to the viewer that the vlogger was being paid (NOS, 2017). As a result, the Dutch Media Authority and 31 YouTubers drafted the Social Code: an agreement among YouTubers to follow certain guidelines that offer more transparency to the viewers (desocialcode.nl, 2018). Nevertheless, almost 50 percent of these YouTubers do not conform to these rules according to a recent study (NOS op 3, 2018). This is largely due to the fact that not conforming to the rules is not punishable by law, as it is with television or radio (NOS op 3, 2018).

As children are impressionable and have not fully developed an understanding of advertising and a protective barrier against advertising attempts, advertising aimed at children has been questioned for decades (Macklin & Carlson, 1999). The European Parliament is still working for the approval of new rules concerning advertising on YouTube (European Parliament, 2018), but in the meantime it looks like protecting children against advertising attempts lies

within the social environment. For children of a young age, the most important factor in teaching them and protecting them from unwanted persuasion is the parent.

However, recent studies on embedded advertising in traditional and newer media formats have mainly focused on the children's perceptions and susceptibility towards these kinds of advertisements. Little research has been done on the role of parental mediation in the interplay between children and media. However, as children in the primary school age mostly use media in the home environment, it is interesting to gain more insight into the media behaviour at home. How parents help their children navigate in the new media landscape could have a great influence on how children respond to embedded advertising. But in order to determine the influence of parental mediation on children's media behaviour, the current parental mediation strategies for new media need to be established. This study aims to examine the role of parents in the interaction between children and embedded advertising, and determine practised parental mediation strategies.

## Theoretical Framework

In order to gain insight into the role of parental mediation in the interaction between children and embedded advertising in popular media, a couple of topics need to be further examined. Fortunately, a lot of research has been done concerning embedded advertising, advertising literacy and parental mediation. The literary findings about these subjects and what they mean for this research will be discussed in this chapter. First, embedded advertising will be discussed, followed by advertising literacy. Subsequently, the concept of parental mediation will be discussed and an overview of parental mediation techniques will be presented. The chapter will be concluded by formulating a general research question for this study.

### Embedded Advertising

Embedded advertising is not new. Said (2010) already discussed in her article that embedded advertising is a rapidly growing marketing tool. However, embedded advertising in newer media formats seems to be gaining popularity. Before discussing why embedded advertising is popular, the concept first needs to be defined. Said (2010) defines embedded advertising as ‘the insertion of promotional messages in entertainment content’. Hudders, De Pauw, and Cauberghe (2017) add that embedded advertising is less intrusive and more subtle commercial content. While this is fairly clear, there are a lot of terms that can be associated or confused with embedded advertising. It is important to distinguish the term from the others to avoid confusion. For example, terms like product placement and product integration are often used to discuss embedded advertising. However, both these terms are actually forms of embedded advertising and mostly related to television (Fujawa, 2011). Therefore, these terms are not comprehensive enough to discuss the subject thoroughly. Another term that is frequently used in this context is stealth marketing, which refers to hidden marketing. This term however, also includes practices like hiding potentially harmful product information or bait and switching techniques (Roy & Chattopadhyay, 2010). Bait and switching techniques are techniques that draw potential buyers by ‘baiting’ them with a low price, only to have the offer expire when the consumer wants to buy the product. The consumer is then offered a much more expensive product. Bait and switching techniques are considered unethical and sometimes even illegal. (Lazear, 1995). Stealth marketing refers to a broad spectrum of techniques that hide the marketing intent and does not refer to the embedding nature of embedded advertising. Stealth marketing also has a very negative connotation, as it is association with deception and theft

(Said, 2010). The use of the word embedded advertising is more neutral and indicates the integration of the advertising into content. As embedded advertising is legal, a neutral term will be used, instead of one with negative connotations.

### The Popularity of Embedded Advertising

The popularity of embedded advertising is due to important developments in the traditional advertising landscape. One of these developments is the cluttering of the marketplace. Because advertising is everywhere, the world gets ‘oversaturated’ with ads and it is increasingly hard for brands to stand out and get the consumers’ attention (Said, 2010). This causes them to use more innovative and covert ways of persuading the consumer. Embedded advertising is covert in several ways: it is not always noted to be a persuasive attempt, a call to action (f.e. “go get this in the supermarket now!”) is often missing and it uses a narrative to engage the consumer (Said, 2010). Another important development is the technological advancement of the last decade. People can now chose to evade a lot of advertising, by watching on demand or skipping through commercials, making it harder for brands to reach their target group. This causes advertisers to increase the expenditures on embedded advertising (Fujawa, 2011). Additionally, even when people do watch real time television, entertainment content is now readily available on many devices. This causes most people to look for entertainment elsewhere when it is time for the commercial break. Said (2010) even goes as far as calling the consumers of today peripatetic: wandering between different kinds of content on several platforms. Another important development is the popularity of ‘real content’. Reality television shows seemingly ‘real’ people living their ‘real’ lives, which offers a lot of opportunities for embedded advertising to thrive. The rise of vloggers and bloggers draws on this, as people use these formats to show their lives and the products they use. As vlogging is a popular format for embedded advertising, this concept will be discussed later in this chapter.

### Formats for Embedded Advertising

Embedded advertising in television is a widely researched topic and it is a general practice (Lehu, 2007; Fujawa, 2011; Hudders et al., 2017). Brands spend a lot on television advertising and using this platform is not new for them. But as indicated earlier, television is not the only format in which embedded advertising can be used. New media offer a lot of possibilities for



brands and are especially suited for inserting persuasive content. Fitting examples of this are formats like blogs, video games and social media. Persuasive messages can be easily embedded into these entertainment vehicles without revealing the intent to persuade. The message itself is not always attributed to a brand, causing it to be even less easy to recognize as advertising. New media also has a different audience that is not easy to reach through traditional media (Goodman, 2006). The important characteristics for two important contemporary embedded advertising formats (vlogs and advergames) will be discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs.

### *Vlogging*

Earlier, brands used social media to spread persuasive messages and they created content for others to share. This was not always the best strategy, as users are often annoyed by brands on social media. According to the Q3 Sprout Social Index (2016), almost 60% of social media users are annoyed by the abundance of promotional messages. Almost 35% is annoyed by the lack of personality displayed on a brand account. To avoid this, brands try to embed their persuasive message in other content. A recently popular way to do this is by partnering with popular YouTube personalities. According to Wu (2016), brands do this in one of three ways: first of all, there is explicit sponsorship, where the brand pays the YouTube personality to market their products or the brand as a whole in their ‘vlogs’ (video blogs). Sometimes they reach an agreement where the brand pays for the amount of views. The second partnership is concerned with affiliated links, where the YouTube personality provides links to a brand or products to their viewers. When a viewer clicks on the link or buys something via the link, the YouTuber will get a commission. Third of all is free product sampling, where brands send free products to YouTubers, in the hope that they will discuss the product in their vlogs. In all these strategies the advertising is embedded into the entertainment content (Wu, 2016).

Earlier, it was noted that product placement and product integration are forms of embedded advertising, rather than the same thing. In the case of vloggers, the difference between product placements and product integrations is important. For advertisers, it is more interesting to have vloggers interact with a product (product integration) than just feature it in the video, as this increases the chance that a consumer remembers the product. The brand then benefits more from the expenditures. Product integration is the most effective when the product or brand is incorporated in a central storyline of a video (Fujawa, 2011).

According to Wu (2016), embedded advertising in vlogs can be very effective as people do not generally consider this to be advertising, causing them to let their guard down. It also works because YouTube personalities tend to have a relationship with their viewers (Friis-Jespersen, 2017). The viewers tend to seek guidance from a media persona they admire. This is called para-social interaction (Lee & Watkins, 2016). Para-social interaction could contribute to the success of embedded advertising techniques. A study by Wu (2016) also supported the effectiveness of embedded advertising in terms of impressive returns on investments.

### *Advergames*

Another example in which marketing is covertly inserted into entertainment is in the gaming industry. Especially interactive games are used by brands to display brand information or specific products, in hopes of getting some brand exposure. Especially food companies use this type of embedded advertising, mostly advertising food that is high in sugar and calories (An, Jin & Park, 2014). There are already studies that delve into the harmful effects of advergames. For example, An et al. (2014) discuss studies in which children that were exposed to advergames with unhealthy foods were more likely to choose food with more sugar and fat afterwards. This shows the impact of this embedded advertising form. However, advergames are an attractive format for brands and advertisers, as they are easy to distribute, very popular, and can be used to reach difficult target groups, such as young males (Goodman, 2006).

### The Ethical Problem with Embedded Advertising

According to studies such as Wu (2016) and An et al (2014), embedded advertising seems to be an effective marketing tool, even though the effectiveness is dependent on multiple factors. The unobtrusive nature of embedded advertising is cause for some ethical considerations. The greatest problem about embedded advertising is illustrated by the new media formats that were discussed: vlogs and advergames are most often aimed at children. According to Said (2010), the adult media consumer of nowadays can be considered a 'venture consumer'. This means that the contemporary consumer is better informed and more aware of the risks and costs of advertising. They know what they want to see and where they want to see it, substantiated by the habit of skipping through advertising, using a DVR and being active on several platforms. This causes the venture consumer to be less exposed to advertising. The

venture consumer is also literate with regard to advertising. Said (2010) even claims that the venture consumer ‘may be better off in a world with extensive embedded advertising (...) with advertisement-supported content with potentially better quality and better variety than they would otherwise receive’. With this, Said (2010) refers to the extended clutter that extensive sponsorship disclosure laws might cause. However, children are not better off, as they are more vulnerable because their knowledge and skills related to persuasion have not developed fully. These knowledge and skills related to persuasion are called advertising literacy (Hudders et al., 2017). In the next paragraph, children’s advertising literacy will be discussed in reference to embedded advertising.

## Advertising Literacy

As described in the previous section, embedded advertising operates on a more covert level. This causes people to be less aware of the advertising attempt. According to reactance theory (Brehm, 1989), when people realize they are being persuaded, it may lead to the discarding of the persuasive message. This is because people perceive persuasion as a threat to their personal autonomy. It is also because, throughout their lives, people have encountered advertising attempts and gained knowledge and developed skills for how to deal with them. This is called advertising literacy (Hudders et al., 2017). According to Hudders et al. (2017), advertising literacy consists of two factors: dispositional advertising literacy and situational advertising literacy. Dispositional advertising literacy refers to their knowledge and skills related to advertising, while situational advertising literacy refers to recognizing and reflecting on a specific advertising attempt. Another word that is often used regarding this subject is persuasion knowledge. Persuasion knowledge is defined in a similar way: it refers to ‘a general understanding of persuasion and knowing how to cope with persuasive attempts’ (Boerman, van Reijmersdal & Neijens, 2012). However, using the term ‘persuasion knowledge’ might be confusing, as this term refers specifically to knowledge, while skills are also an important part when it comes to reacting to advertising attempts. Therefore, the term advertising literacy might be a better fit regarding this research.

## Development of Advertising Literacy

Advertising literacy develops throughout one’s life. According to Hudders et al. (2017), skills that concern memory, cognitive resources and message processing are important parts of

advertising literacy. These skills develop at different times. A lot of cognitive skills that help control children's inhibitions develop later in their childhood, during ages 12 to 18. The expansion of the working memory also happens during these ages (Hudders et al., 2017). Regarding message processing, children can be divided into three age categories (Hudders et al., 2017; John, 1999). According to John (1999), children under age 7 are limited processors and have difficulty processing information in general, while children from the age of 7 to 11 are cued processors and need help in the forms of cues and prompts. This means that children from the age of 7 to 11 have the ability to use processing strategies, but do not do this spontaneously. They need to be triggered to do so. From the age of 12, children are strategic processors that have strategies to process information, such as memory search, use of retrieval cues and rehearsal. Besides these processing stages, John (1999) also mentions that the ability to recognize advertising is a developmental process, which takes trial and error. John (1999) divides this developmental process into three stages: perceptual (under age 7), analytical (age 7 to 11) and reflective (age 11 to 16). Especially during the analytical stage, there are enormous improvements in children's cognitive abilities. This makes children from ages 7 to 11 interesting regarding their advertising literacy, as they are not yet fully capable of reflection on consumption and social context, but have started to develop their abilities to critically process (John, 1999).

### Advertising Literacy and Embedded Advertising

According to Boerman and van Reijmersdal (2016), the activation of advertising literacy (in their article 'persuasion knowledge') is part of the processing mechanism. Because children's advertising literacy is underdeveloped, they can have trouble critically processing advertising in a systematic way. To effectively process commercial content and recognize it as a persuasive attempt, children's ability and motivation to do so need to be high (Petty & Caccioppo, 1986; Hudders et al., 2017). Ability considers for example the amount of distraction when being confronted with the message, prior advertising knowledge, and the comprehensibility of the message. Motivation relates to, for example, the personal relevance of the message, need for cognition and personal responsibility (Petty & Caccioppo, 1986).

Embedded advertising makes critical processing harder, as the persuasion is embedded into a different, non conventional format (traditionally non-commercial). This even causes difficulty with adults (Nairn & Fine, 2008). According to Nairn and Fine (2008), embedded formats

have several characteristics that further lower childrens' abilities and motivation to process advertising. First of all, the content is often embedded in formats with enormous amounts of information, which causes an overload on children's resources and therefore lowers their abilities. Second of all, the embedded advertising format is often fun, which causes their motivation to be lowered (Hudders et al, 2016). Hudders et al. (2016), also notes that the fun nature evokes affective reactions, making it even more important for advertising literacy to work as a counterbalance. The formats that were discussed before, vlogging and advergimes, both posses this tendency to overload the consumer with information and are fun for children. This could prevent advertising literacy from being activated and reactance to the persuasive attempt to occur.

### Improving and using Advertising Literacy

In order to help children arm themselves against embedded persuasive attempts, research has been devoted to the improvement of advertising literacy and how it can be triggered. One subject many studies (Cain, 2011; Boerman et al., 2012; Campbell, Mohr & Verlegh, 2013) have focused on is sponsorship disclosures. Using a sponsorship disclosure entails explicitly informing the audience about the commercial content that has been integrated into the entertainment content. Disclosing the persuasive intent is meant to make it more fair for the consumer as they are made aware of the goal (Boerman et al., 2012). According to Boerman et al. (2012), prior research mostly focused on how sponsorship disclosures alter persuasive effects and brand memory. According to Cain (2011), another important goal of disclosing advertisements is to activate advertising literacy. Boerman et al. (2012) investigated how sponsorship disclosures affect advertising literacy (in this research persuasion knowledge) and brand responses. Their research showed that a six second disclosure triggered advertising literacy and less favourable brand attitudes. Other research has also shown that disclosures can work in the context of advergimes, blogs and radio shows (Boerman & van Reijmersdal, 2016). So using disclosures to help trigger advertising literacy might be a solution. However, their research was not conducted among children, whose persuasion knowledge might be harder to activate than that of adults. It also implies that advertisers have to conform to disclosure rules, which is often not the case when it comes to new formats like vlogging (NOS op 3, 2018). As long as embedded advertising does not follow these rules, a different approach is needed.

This different approach might be to look at the problem from the consumer side instead of the advertising side. When John (1999) described the developmental process of advertising literacy, he acknowledged that all these developments take place in a social context. This social context has a great amount of influence on children. John (1999) included peers, mass media, marketing institutions and especially parents in this social context. Parents are really important in the development of advertising literacy, but also in teaching how to consume in general, as they are the ones to give allowances, discuss purchase requests with their children and take them shopping (John, 1999). Additionally, they are important role models and often witness the media use around the house (Hudders et al, 2017). Parents can mediate between children and advertising, which can help protect them from persuasive attempts. If advertisers are not taking measures to make advertising more recognizable for children, parental mediation might be useful in guiding children. In the next section, parental mediation in relationship to embedded advertising and advertising literacy will be discussed.

## Parental Mediation

When product placement and product integration were still fairly new in advertising, there were very little rules and regulations about using them in advertising for children. According to Hudson, Hudson and Pelosa (2008), guiding and protecting children against advertising attempts was considered to be the responsibility of the parents, as they could decide what children got to see on television. As media use of children has evolved, this supervision might be harder to conduct. However, research on what this supervision might look like nowadays has been scarce. Research concerning embedded advertising has mostly focused on the perspective of the children themselves, but also on the perspective of the advertisers and legislators. But as regulation of the communication environment gets increasingly difficult, a new attempt at gaining more insight in parental guidance might be valuable.

The perspective of parents is a topic that has been less explored, but there are many arguments in favour of this perspective. First of all, conducting research among children is difficult, as they are not fully cognitively developed and therefore might have difficulty expressing certain feelings. This causes research about their view on embedded advertising to be less reliable when certain questions are asked that require cognitive effort. Furthermore, a parent's perspective can be used to inform legislators in a more effective way (Hudson, Hudson & Pelosa, 2008). Lastly, according to Hudson, Hudson and Pelosa (2008), parents are aware of

the fact that children might be more easily influenced by advertising as compared to adults. Most concerns are about the ability to differentiate between commercial and non commercial content: something that is made even more difficult by embedded advertising. However, parents tend to overestimate the effects on other people's children, as compared to the effects on their own children (Nathanson, Eveland & Park, 2002). They tend to think their children are less impressionable as compared to other people's children.

### Parental Mediation Strategies and Effectiveness

Regarding their own children, parents use strategies to restrict or help their children cope with media and advertising. These strategies are often called 'mediation'. Parental mediation entails the parental management between children and media (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008; Nathanson, 1999). This parental management goes beyond rules and restrictions and encompasses a broader view of other strategies. In literature, researchers have defined three broad strategies for parental mediation: restrictive mediation, active mediation and co-viewing/co-using (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008).

Restrictive mediation involves setting rules that restrict medium use. The restrictions could be put on the time that is spent on the medium, where they use the medium, and what content they look at or listen to. With restriction of content, the meaning of the content or why the parents are restricting the use is often not discussed. According to Van den Bulck and Van den Bergh (2000) restrictive mediation can be effective, but does not necessarily reduce risk, as it only reduces media use overall. The second strategy, active mediation, involves engaging with the child while they are using the medium. In active mediation, parents can make instructive (positive) and critical (negative) comments. Studies have shown that active mediation can cause children to be more sceptical towards television content and more knowledgeable (Nathanson, 2001; Livingstone & Helsper, 2008). The third strategy is co-viewing/co-using, in which the parent is present when the child is using the medium, often engaging with the medium themselves. When co-viewing, the parent usually does not comment on the content or effects (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008). The effects of co-viewing vary, with some studies confirming that children learn more when their parents watch the content with them (Messaris & Kerr, 1984; Livingstone, 1999).

These parental mediation strategies were mainly developed for television use. Research has been done to investigate whether or not these strategies were also used when children play video games or use the internet, where similar strategies were found (Nikken & Jansz, 2006; Livingstone & Helsper, 2008). However, many studies on parental mediation were conducted a considerable amount of years ago. Since then, the media landscape has changed and is still changing rapidly, which might cause parents to shift in used techniques, or even start using entirely different techniques. For example, in the study by Livingstone & Helsper (2008), notions are made about possible shifts in mediation techniques, due to increasing difficulties in monitoring. Internet use, compared to television use, is more often unsupervised due to mobile appliances (laptops, tablets, smartphones). Because of the rapid developments in media technology, parents often have little experience with the appliances and media formats their children use. This results in decreasing parental expertise, which might cause parents to favour restrictive methods over active mediation or co-viewing/co-use (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008). Eleven years later these developments are even more relevant, as the advancement of technology continues. However, it is not only possible that favoured mediation methods shift, it is also possible that the same techniques are executed differently. For example, parents are very concerned about the possible risks of internet use (Symons, Vanwesenbeeck, Walrave, Van Ouytsel, & Ponnet, 2019). Lee (2012) also found a positive relationship between parental concern and restrictive mediation. Parental concern might cause parents to use more restrictive mediation, or more extreme forms of restrictive mediation. All these possible changes cause the need for a more up to date view on parental mediation techniques.

## Overview of Parental Mediation and Research Questions

As discussed in the introduction and in this theoretical framework, children are being confronted with embedded advertising and parents might be able to guide them and influence their advertising literacy. However, research has yet to focus on the relationship between parents and their children's media use in relation to embedded advertising. Previous studies have focussed mainly on parental mediation for the more traditional embedded advertising formats, like television. The general aim of this study was to answer the following research question:



RQ: How do parents feel about embedded advertising and what are the parents' experiences and mediation techniques concerning their children's encounters with embedded advertising?

In order to explain possible differences in parental mediation for embedded advertising as compared to television, other factors come in to play. For example, how parents feel about embedded advertising might influence how they mediate when their children come into contact with embedded commercial content. Because of the lack of literary findings on the interplay between parental mediation, embedded advertising, and children, this research was divided into two studies. In Study 1, a quantitative research method was used to determine general parental views on several forms of embedded advertising. These findings were used to create an appropriate and relevant interview scheme for Study 2. To summarize, the aim of Study 1 was to answer the following research question:

RQ1: How do parents evaluate embedded advertising formats in terms of consumer responses (recognition, advertisement liking and ethics)?

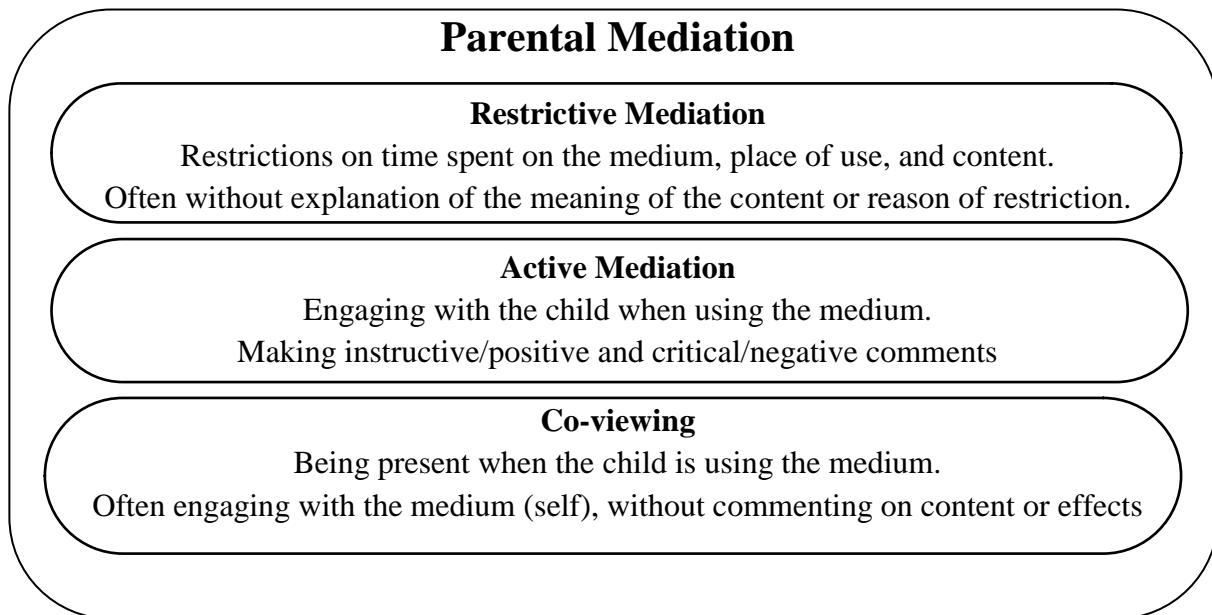
In Study 2, qualitative research was conducted to gain insight in the parental mediation techniques concerning embedded advertising in newer formats, like vlogging and games. The views of parents on embedded advertising and parental mediation, including their child's experiences with these topics, were also investigated. In conclusion, the aim of Study 2 was to answer the following research question:

RQ2: What are the parents' experiences concerning their children's encounters with embedded advertising and how do they mediate their children's media behaviour?

Based on existing literature, an overview of current parental mediation techniques was drafted by the researcher in Figure 1. This study aimed to update this overview to fit the current practises, in order to expand the literature on parental mediation for newer media formats.

Figure 1

*Overview of parental mediation (by researcher)*



## Methodology Study 1

In order to investigate the research problem as discussed in the theoretical framework, two studies were designed. As the literary findings on parental views on embedded advertising are limited, the first study is aimed at establishing some general views from parents. In Study 1, parents were shown several types of embedded advertising formats and asked to rate them on several consumer responses. The results of this study can be used to conduct Study 2 in a more informed manner. The knowledge about parental opinions can be used to address possible concerns of the parents more adequately in the second study, without making assumptions. Collecting general opinions on multiple examples of embedded advertising calls for a quantitative method. Therefore, the data was collected by questionnaire. As explained in the theoretical framework, the research question for Study 1 was:

RQ1: How do parents evaluate embedded advertising formats in terms of consumer responses (recognition, advertisement liking and ethics)?

In this chapter the methodology of Study 1 will be further explained. First, the research procedure will be discussed. Afterwards, an overview of the study materials will be provided. Next, the scales will be elaborated on and the reliability of these scales will be examined. This section is concluded by the selection and description of the research sample.

### Procedure

In the beginning of the Study 1, the participants were informed about the subject of the research, while not revealing that the examples they were about to see were embedded advertising formats. They were informed about the confidential treatment of the data. When they agreed, some demographic features were asked, for example sex, age and family composition (single parent, two-parent household, divorced, amount of children, age of children). Afterwards, the first embedded advertising example was shown. The participants were asked to answer a question about the recognition of the example. When they did not indicate that they recognized the example as something their children are confronted with, the participants were directed to the next example. When they answered affirmatively, they were shown statements about the example. These statements were about advertisement and format liking, recognition of the persuasive intent and ethical opinions. After finishing the questions, the participants were directed to the next example, where they followed the same procedure.

Afterwards, the respondents were asked if they were willing to participate in a follow-up study. If they indicated yes, they were asked to fill out their e-mail address.

### Study Materials

In order to investigate the opinions of the parents on embedded advertising, examples of embedded advertising were used to gather opinions. However, it was important to not feature too many examples, as motivation might decrease for every next example, resulting in a lower response quality (Herzog & Bachman, 1981). Using too few examples could decrease the possibility of the chosen examples being recognizable or applicable in the situation of the parents. To illustrate, not many young boys watch make-up tutorials on YouTube, while many young girls do. Therefore, a collection of six examples was chosen. These examples included three vlogs and three advergames that contained an embedded advertisement. An overview of the brands that were embedded in these media formats can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

*Examples of Embedded Advertising*

<b>Media Example</b>	<b>Embedded Brands</b>
<i>Vlogs</i>	
Enzo Knol	Iglo fish fingers (food)
Dylan Haegens	Lego Ninjago (toys)
Sabrina Putri	Zaful (clothing)
<i>Games</i>	
Pro Evolution Soccer	Nike & Adidas (clothing)
The Sims IKEA	IKEA (furniture and home accessories)
Kogama	McDonalds & KFC (fast-food)

The examples were chosen to have a few different characteristics, in order to be inclusive of the different kinds of embedded advertising that children can be confronted with. Parents might feel different about some examples of embedded advertising than they feel about others. For example, parents might feel differently about a vlog that uses a sponsorship disclosure, as they could deem them to be less misleading. Another characteristic that might cause different opinions is the degree to which the product or brand is displayed: product

placement versus product integration. As product placements are more easily missed, parents might be less aware of the persuasive intent.

### Scales

The first statements the participants were shown were related to advertisement and format liking. This was measured using two single items: ‘I like this vlog/game’ and ‘I think my child likes this vlog/game’. The items were measured on a 7 point Likert scale. The following statements were about the recognition of the persuasive intent. The statements were derived from the selling and persuasive intent scale by Rozendaal, Buijzen, and Valkenburg (2010), with 3 items that were answered on a 7-point Likert scale. The items were for example ‘this vlog/game wants me to like [product name]’ and ‘this vlog/game wants me to remember [product name]’. Ethical opinions were measured by using a condensed version of the Ethics Scale by Reidenbach and Robin (1990). This condensed version, often without the social construct dimension that is used in the original Ethics Scale, is frequently used in marketing and advertising research (Arthur & Quester, 2003; Ardelet, Slavich, & de Kerviler, 2018). This Ethics Scale consisted of 5 items that were measured on a 7-point bipolar scale (f.e. Fair/Unfair, Just/Unjust, Acceptable to me/Unacceptable to me).

### Scale Reliability

The used scales were tested for internal consistency. As ad and format liking were measured by two single items, these items were not tested for reliability. Both other scales, the scale for persuasive intent and the scale for ethical considerations, had an excellent Cronbach’s Alpha. The reliability scores of the scales across content examples can be viewed in Table 2.

Table 2

*Reliability of Persuasive Intent and Ethical Considerations Scale Across Content Examples*

<b>Scale</b>	<b>Cronbach’s Alpha</b>	<b>N</b>
<i>Persuasive Intent</i>		
Enzo Knol	.94	93
Sabrina Putri	.81	34
Dylan Haegens	.94	95
Pro Evolution Soccer	.91	38
The Sims IKEA	.91	40
Kogama	.89	45

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<i>Ethical Considerations</i>		
Enzo Knol	.91	93
Sabrina Putri	.91	34
Dylan Haegens	.95	95
Pro Evolution Soccer	.96	38
The Sims IKEA	.98	40
Kogama	.95	45

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### Sample, Data Collection and Analysis

In total, 128 parents of children between the ages of 7-11 participated in the research. The age of the children is based on the theoretical framework, which indicated that children in this age category are in an interesting stage of their cognitive development. The researcher used a convenience sample: the respondents were collected by using the social network of the researcher, for example by spreading the questionnaire via Facebook. The data was collected from July until September 2018. The collected data was then analyzed by using SPSS to calculate and compare means and determine significant differences. For example, the ratings for the different vlogs and games in terms of parental liking, perceived liking by their children, persuasive intent and ethical considerations were compared to each other. Significance was determined with the help of paired samples t-tests, ANOVA tests for variance and the Pearson Chi Square test. These results were then used to create a more specific and relevant interview scheme for Study 2.

### Respondent Demographics

The rough data (N = 272) was cleaned of unfinished responses (N = 135) and participants that did not meet the requirements for participation (N = 9). Participants that did not meet the requirements for participation were mostly parents that only had children that were younger or older than the described target group. After the cleaning of the data 128 participants remained.

The demographics of the participation sample are discussed in this section. In total, 12 men (9.4%) and 116 women (90.6%) participated in Study 1, so there were significantly more female participants. This uneven distribution could be due to the fact that women are more involved with the subject and the participants were recruited through the researchers' social network. However, due to the fact that most participants (91.4%) were married or living

together with a parenting partner, the results are indicative of a broader view. The age of the participants ranged from 27 to 53 and more than 90% of the participants had more than one child. The average age of the children of the participants was  $M = 8.9$  ( $SD = 1.24$ ), which is almost exactly the median of the target group (parents of children between the ages of 7 to 11). A more comprehensive description of the target group can be found in Table 3.

Table 3

*Respondent Demographics*

<b>Sex</b>	12 men (9.4%) 116 women (90.6%)
<b>Age</b>	ages ranging from 27 to 53 $M = 39.8$ , $SD = 5.12$
<b>Amount of children</b>	11 participants had 1 child (8.6%) 117 had more than one child (91.4%)  Most participants had either 2 (79 participants/61.7%) or 3 children (31 participants/24.2%), with the highest amount of children being 6. $M = 2.28$ , $SD = .81$
<b>Age of children</b>	40 participants had a child that was 7 years old (31.3%) 30 participants had a child that was 8 years old (23.4%) 40 participants had a child that was 9 years old (31.3%) 36 participants had a child that was 10 years old (28.1%) 28 participants had a child that was 11 years old (21.9%) $M = 8.9$ , $SD = 1.24$  Aside from children within the age category, 36.7% of the participants also had children younger than 7 and 35.9% of the participants also had children older than 11. Parents that only had children younger than 7 or children older than 11 have been excluded.
<b>Family situation</b>	117 participants were married or living together (91.4%) 2 participants were single parents (1.6%) 8 participants were divorced with shared custody (6.3%) 1 participant was divorced with sole custody (0.8%)

## Results of Study 1

In this section, the results of Study 1 are discussed. The aim of this study was to gain more insight into parental opinions on embedded advertising, in order to conduct Study 2 in a more informed and relevant manner. Therefore, the focus of the analyses was the parent's opinions on the three dependent variables: ad/format liking, persuasive intent and ethical consideration, and to compare these for each example of embedded advertising.

### Recognition of the Content

When confronted with the embedded advertising example, parents were asked to indicate whether they thought their child watches similar content or plays similar games. The responses are depicted in Table 4. The differences in recognition are noticeable. For example, there were 44 participants that did not recognize any of the games as something their children might play. This is more than the amount of participants who did not recognize any of the vlogs ( $N = 17$ ) as something their children might watch. On the other hand, there were 32 participants who recognized all of the vlogs, as compared to 6 participants that recognized all of the games. This means that overall, vlogs were more likely to be recognized by the participants as something their children watch according. The difference between the recognition of vlogs and games was significant according to a Pearson Chi-Square test ( $\chi^2(1) = 20.86, p = .013$ ).

Table 4

*Recognition vlogs and games*

		Number of vlogs recognized				Total
		0	1	2	3	
Number of games recognized	0	11	9	11	13	44
	1	5	17	17	14	53
	2	1	4	17	3	25
	3	0	2	2	2	6
	Total	17	32	47	32	128



## Responses to Vlogs

The vlog that was most familiar to parents was the vlog by Dylan Haegens, containing an embedded advertisement from Lego Ninjago. 74.2% of the parents indicated that their children watched this sort of content. This vlog was also liked the most by parents ( $M = 4.13$ ,  $SD = 1.64$ ). However, this average is not very high, considering the items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale. The vlog by Dylan Haegens ( $M = 6.02$ ,  $SD = 1.64$ ) also scored higher on perceived liking by the children of the participants, as compared to Enzo Knol ( $M = 5.62$ ,  $SD = 1.41$ ) and Sabrina Putri ( $M = 4.94$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ). This indicated that Dylan Haegens is a popular vlogger that should be included in the interviews as an example.

There are noticeable differences between all the ratings for the items 'I like this vlog' and 'I think my child likes this vlog'. For instance, the vlog by Enzo Knol was rated much lower on parental liking ( $M = 3.74$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ ), as compared to perceived liking by the children ( $M = 5.62$ ,  $SD = 1.41$ ). Similar differences can be noticed in the ratings for Sabrina Putri and Dylan Haegens. According to a paired samples t-test, the difference between parental liking and perceived liking by the children was significant ( $t(221) = -15.23$ ;  $p < .001$ ). This indicates that parents do not always like the content they think their children like to watch. This notion was included in the interviews.

The vlog by Sabrina Putri was rated highest on persuasive intent ( $M = 5.63$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ). According to the paired samples t-test that was conducted, the difference between the persuasive intent ratings for the vlog by Sabrina Putri and the vlog by Enzo Knol ( $M = 4.94$ ,  $SD = 1.53$ ) was significant ( $t(33) = -3.18$ ;  $p = .003$ ). The difference with the persuasive intent ratings for the vlog by Dylan Haegens ( $M = 5.20$ ,  $SD = 1.38$ ) was not significant ( $t(33) = 1.90$ ;  $p = .068$ ). The difference is understandable, as this is the only vlog that contained a form of advertising disclosure. Interestingly, this vlog also scores lowest on the ethical considerations scale, which means it was considered as the least ethical out of all three vlogs. The difference between the ethical ratings for Sabrina Putri ( $M = 3.71$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ) and Enzo Knol ( $M = 4.22$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ) was significant, according to a paired samples t-test ( $t(33) = 2.39$ ,  $p = .023$ ). The difference between the ethical ratings for Sabrina Putri and Dylan Haegens was not significant ( $t(33) = -1.45$ ,  $p = .16$ ).

However, paired samples t-tests might not be the best fit for this data. The paired sample t-test uses ‘pairs’ of data. As the response for Sabrina Putri’s vlog is lower than for the other two vlogs (N = 34), only a small amount of pairs could be tested. Therefore, an one way ANOVA was performed to analyze the variances. The ANOVA showed significant differences in the persuasive intent scores for the different vlogs ( $F(2, 219) = 3.12; p = .046$ ). A post-hoc-Tukey test showed significant differences in persuasive intent for the vlogs by Sabrina Putri and Enzo Knol ( $p = .038$ ). The difference in persuasive intent for Sabrina Putri and Dylan Haegens was not significant ( $p = .272$ ), as was the difference in persuasive intent for Dylan Haegens and Enzo Knol ( $p = .412$ ). The ANOVA also showed significant differences in the ethical considerations scores for the different vlogs ( $F(2, 219) = 6.05; p = .003$ ). A post-hoc-Tukey test showed significant differences in the ethical score for the vlogs by Sabrina Putri and Dylan Haegens ( $p = .002$ ). The difference in ethical scores for Dylan Haegens and Enzo Knol was not significant ( $p = .136$ ), as was the difference in ethical scores for Sabrina Putri and Enzo Knol ( $p = .116$ ). This is interesting, as the paired samples t-test did find a significant difference between the ethical ratings for Sabrina Putri and Enzo Knol. However, the outcome of the ANOVA is more logical, as the differences in means are greater between Sabrina Putri and Dylan Haegens. The average scores and standard deviations for the vlogs are depicted in Table 5. A more comprehensive overview on a statement level can be found in the Appendix.

Table 5  
*Responses to vlogs*

	<b>Enzo Knol</b>	<b>Sabrina Putri</b>	<b>Dylan Haegens</b>
<b>Recognition</b>	72.7% (N = 93)	26.6% (N = 34)	74.2% (N = 95)
<b>Ad/format liking parent</b>	M = 3.74, SD = 1.50	M = 2.65, SD = 1.67	M = 4.13, SD = 1.64
<b>Ad/format liking child</b>	M = 5.62, SD = 1.41	M = 4.94, SD = 1.37	M = 6.01, SD = 1.08
<b>Persuasive intent</b>	M = 4.94, SD = 1.53	M = 5.63, SD = 1.09	M = 5.20, SD = 1.38
<b>Ethical Considerations</b>	M = 4.22, SD = 1.24	M = 3.71, SD = 1.18	M = 4.58, SD = 1.36

## Responses to Games

The game that was most familiar to parents, was Kogama. Kogama contained an embedded advertisement for KFC and McDonalds. 35.5% of parents indicated that this was a game that their children played, or that it was similar to the kind of games they played. Kogama was also rated the lowest for liking, for both parental liking and perceived liking by their children (respectively  $M = 3.47$ ,  $SD = 1.33$  and  $M = 5.64$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ). Both other games, Pro Evolution Soccer ( $M = 4.58$ ,  $SD = 1.70$ ) and The Sims IKEA ( $M = 4.58$  and  $SD = 1.55$ ) were rated higher on parental liking. The average rating for perceived liking by their children was also higher for both games (respectively  $M = 6.29$ ,  $SD = .61$  and  $M = 6.05$ ,  $SD = .60$ ).

Similar to the liking ratings for vlogs, there is a noticeable difference between the average ratings for parental liking and the average ratings for perceived liking by their children. For example, the parental liking rating for Pro Evolution Soccer is much lower ( $M = 4.58$ ,  $SD = 1.70$ ) as compared to the rating for perceived liking by the children ( $M = 6.29$ ,  $SD = .61$ ). According to a paired samples T-test, this difference was significant ( $t(122) = -11.97$ ;  $p < .001$ ). This indicated that parents do not necessarily like the games they think their children like or play. This notion was included in the interview, to gain insights into how parents deal with this.

Pro Evolution Soccer (PES) scored significantly higher on perceived liking by the children ( $M = 6.29$ ,  $SD = .61$ ) as compared to Kogama ( $M = 5.64$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ). This difference was significant, as concluded by a paired samples t-test ( $t(37) = 3.16$ ;  $p = .003$ ). The average rating for perceived liking by the children was also higher for PES as compared to The Sims IKEA, but this difference was not significant ( $t(37) = 1.43$ ;  $p = .160$ ). PES scored significantly lower on persuasive intent as compared to The Sims IKEA according to a paired samples t-test ( $t(37) = -3.26$ ;  $p = .002$ ). The difference in persuasive intent for PES and Kogama was not significant ( $t(37) = 1.97$ ;  $p = .056$ ). A high score for liking combined with a low score for persuasive intent could indicate that the likability of the format influences the perceived persuasive intent. The Sims IKEA contained the most obvious embedded advertisement, as the brand IKEA was prominently featured in the title and in the video of the game. This game was also rated significantly higher on persuasive intent than PES ( $t(37) = 3.256$ ;  $p = .002$ ) and Kogama ( $t(39) = 2.02$ ;  $p = .049$ ) according to a paired samples t-test.

Kogama was rated lowest on ethical considerations ( $M = 4.18$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ), meaning it was considered the least ethical game out of all three games. The difference between the ethical considerations score for Kogama and for PES ( $M = 5.01$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ) was significant ( $t(37) = -2.92$ ,  $p = .006$ ). The difference between the ethical considerations score for Kogama and for The Sims IKEA was not significant ( $t(39) = -1.33$ ;  $p = .192$ ).

Similar to the vlogs, there were also differences in the response for each game. For example, Pro Evolution Soccer had the lowest response ( $N = 38$ ) and Kogama the highest ( $N = 45$ ). This means only 38 pairs of data could be included in a paired samples t-test. Therefore, an one way ANOVA was performed to analyze the variances. The ANOVA showed significant differences in the persuasive intent scores for the different games ( $F(2,120) = 7.63$ ;  $p = .001$ ). A post-hoc-Tukey test showed a significant difference in persuasive intent for PES and IKEA ( $p = <.001$ ). The difference in persuasive intent for PES and Kogama was not significant ( $p = .051$ ), as was the difference in persuasive intent for IKEA and Kogama ( $p = .228$ ). The ANOVA also showed significant differences in the ethical considerations scores for the different games ( $F(2,120) = 4.39$ ;  $p = .015$ ). A post-hoc-Tukey test showed a significant difference in ethical scores for PES and Kogama ( $p = .011$ ). The difference in ethical scores for PES and IKEA was not significant ( $p = .364$ ), as was the difference in ethical scores for IKEA and Kogama ( $p = .261$ ). These results are similar to the results for the paired samples t-test. The average scores and standard deviations for the games are depicted in Table 6. The average scores on a statement level are depicted in the Appendix.

Table 6  
*Responses to games*

	<b>Pro Evolution Soccer</b>	<b>The Sims IKEA</b>	<b>Kogama</b>
<b>Recognition</b>	29.7% ( $N = 38$ )	31.3% ( $N = 40$ )	35.5% ( $N = 45$ )
<b>Ad/format liking parent</b>	$M = 4.58$ , $SD = 1.70$	$M = 4.58$ , $SD = 1.55$	$M = 3.47$ , $SD = 1.33$
<b>Ad/format liking child</b>	$M = 6.29$ , $SD = 0.61$	$M = 6.05$ , $SD = 0.60$	$M = 5.64$ , $SD = 1.00$
<b>Persuasive intent</b>	$M = 4.61$ , $SD = 1.49$	$M = 5.69$ , $SD = 1.04$	$M = 5.25$ , $SD = 1.12$
<b>Ethical Considerations</b>	$M = 5.01$ , $SD = 1.37$	$M = 4.62$ , $SD = 1.40$	$M = 4.18$ , $SD = 1.03$

## General Conclusions

The target group for Study 1 consisted of 128 parents of children between the ages of 7-11. Study 2 consists of interviews with 20 parents from the same target group, to gain a deeper understanding of the role of embedded advertising at home, and the parental mediation techniques that are used to guide children in their media use. The obtained data helped tailor the questions to this specific target group and their children.

The overall amount of parents that indicated they recognized the games in this research as the sort of games their children played, was not very high. This could indicate that the kinds of games children in the age category (7 to 11) play are very different from the examples that were used during this part of the research. Therefore, questions were added to the interview scheme for Study 2, to indicate what kinds of vlogs children within the age category watch and what kinds of games they play.

The overall amount of parents that recognized the vlogs was very high. This indicates that children watch enough vlogs that their parents recognize the content. The results indicated which examples of vlogs could be useful to help guide the interviews, to trigger thoughts and opinions from parents. These results indicated that vloggers like Sabrina Putri might be suitable for a different audience than children between the ages of 7 to 11. However, the vlogs by Dylan Haegens and Enzo Knol are recognized by a large percentage of the sample group.

Other results that were included in the interview scheme for Study 2, was the significant difference between parental liking and perceived liking by their children. Parents might mediate in different ways when they do not like the content their children watch, so this notion was included in Study 2. The vlog by Sabrina Putri was rated lowest on liking, but highest on persuasive intent. For the games, the results were reversed, as the highest rated game for liking (Pro Evolution Soccer), was rated lowest on persuasive intent. This might indicate that there is a relationship between format liking and perceived persuasive intent.

Concerning ethics, parents do not seem very concerned about the ethical considerations surrounding vlogs and games. All ethical scores are slightly on the upper side of the bipolar scale. However, this does indicate that there are some ethical objections to be made, otherwise the scores would be higher. As discussed, the vlog by Sabrina Putri contained a form of

advertising disclosure and was rated higher for perceived persuasive intent and lower for ethical considerations. Questions about advertising disclosures were added to Study 2 as a result, to gain more insight into parental opinions on advertising disclosures.

## **Methodology Study 2**

In Study 1, the main objective was to gain more insight into parental opinions on embedded advertising in vlogs and games in terms of liking, persuasive intent and ethical considerations. The data from this study was used in Study 2. This study consisted of the conducting of interviews. Interviews are a good tool to get a deeper understanding about the relationship between children and their parents concerning embedded advertising, as qualitative interviews aim to elicit participant experiences and feelings (King & Horrocks, 2010). While the questions and the results of Study 1 were more general in nature, the questions in Study 2 were used to investigate the specific situations of the respondents and their children and how they construct mediation techniques. As explained in the theoretical framework, the aim of Study 2 was to answer the following research question:

RQ2: What are the parents' experiences concerning their children's encounters with embedded advertising and how do they mediate their children's media behaviour?

### **Interview Protocol**

Interviews can be both very structured, but also very open in character. For Study 2, a semi-structured approach was used. This allowed for the use of questions based on existing literature and Study 1, but also allowed the respondents to discuss own experiences. This was important, as the aim of this research was to discover (new) parental mediation techniques that were not present in the literature. Semi-structured interviews are appropriate for this goal, as it combines the opportunity to address topics derived from theory with the opportunity to add new information to the focus of the study (Galletta, 2013). This means that several topics can be introduced with questions prepared beforehand. But there is also room for the parents to introduce their own worries or experiences, and discuss their own way to mediate their children's media behaviour. The most relevant topics, corresponding example questions and main goals that were included in the interview scheme are presented in Table 7. A more comprehensive overview of the interview scheme can be found in the Appendix.

Table 7

*Main topics, example questions and goals interview*

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Example question</b>	<b>Goal</b>
<b>Demographics</b>	‘How many children do you have and what are their ages?’	Determine context
<b>Media usage</b>	‘What kind of devices does your child use?’ ‘What kind of games does your child play?’ ‘What kind of vlogs does your child watch?’	Determine media environment and to decide on relevant questions for the specific situation
<b>Advertising Encounters</b>	‘How often do you think your child is confronted with advertising?’  ‘How does your child react to advertising?’	Create the opportunity to discuss embedded advertising  Establish the children’s process and behaviour, as this might affect how the parent mediates
<b>Mediation techniques</b>	‘Have there ever been difficult situations concerning your child’s advertising encounters?’  ‘How do you respond in those situations?’  ‘What is the best and the worst tactic to employ?’	Gain knowledge about used parental mediation techniques and best and worst practices.
<b>Rules and Regulations</b>	‘What are the rules concerning these kinds of advertising for children, or what rules should there be?’	Gaining insight into the parent’s thoughts on rules for embedded advertising
<b>Media Education</b>	Are there, to your recollection, any programs/lessons at your child’s school about embedded advertising or advertising in general?  Do you think certain guidelines that could help you educate your child about embedded advertising would be helpful?	Gaining knowledge about parental views on media education and possible guidelines for embedded advertising education.



The topics in Table 7 are based on the three phenomena discussed in the theory, namely embedded advertising, advertising literacy and parental mediation. These topics were complemented by the results of Study 1. All the questions that were drafted beforehand can be found in the Appendix. The questions that resulted from Study 1 are in italics.

Before the interviews started, the participants were informed about the goal of the interview, their rights and confidentiality. Afterwards, they were asked for their permission to continue and to record the conversation, so the participants could consent to the interview in an informed manner. After some demographic questions, the first two topics that were presented were media usage and advertising encounters. Gaining knowledge about a child's media usage was useful, as this prevented the interviewer from asking questions that might not be relevant to the specific situation. The questions about advertising encounters were meant to help establish the child's process and behaviour when dealing with embedded advertising. This informs how parents react to the usage. This topic featured questions about embedded advertising in general and advertising literacy as well. During this topic, the aim was to remain very open and encourage experience sharing. The third topic, mediation techniques, was aimed at gaining knowledge about parental mediation strategies. The most important goal of this topic was to uncover possible new techniques that have not been described in literature yet. The fourth topic handled rules and regulations, which was meant to obtain parental views on embedded advertising regulations and expected advertising rules. The last topic included questions on media education, to raise the question of parental responsibility and the responsibility of educators concerning advertising literacy. The topic also included questions on possible tools to help parents effectively guide their children in training their advertising literacy.

### Sample, Data Collection and Analysis

In total, 20 parents or parental couples (24 parents in total) with children between the ages of 7 to 11 participated in Study 2. At the end of Study 1, participants were asked if they would be willing to participate in a follow-up study. This resulted in 10 participants or participating couples, which is 50% of the sample for Study 2. The sample also included parents that did not take part in the first study (also 50%). The descriptive statistics of the participants can be found in Table 8. They were collected by means of a convenience sample: by using the direct social environment of the researcher. The interviews took place in the Netherlands during the period between the end of October and early December 2018. The duration of the interviews

was 45 minutes on average, the shortest interview lasted 30 minutes, the longest 1 hour. The data was analyzed by transcribing and then coding the data with Atlas.ti.

Table 8

*Descriptive statistics*

<b>Sex</b>	N = 24 14 women (70%) 2 men (10%) 4 couples (man + woman; 20%)
<b>Amount and age of children</b>	The participants had in total:  30 children in the relevant age category (M = 9.0 years) - 21 girls (M = 8.9 years) - 9 boys (M = 9.2 years)  17 children (6 girls, 11 boys) that were younger or older - 53% was older than 11 years - 47% was younger than 7 years
<b>Family situation</b>	23 participants were married or were living together with a parenting partner (95%)  1 participant was a single parent
<b>Residence</b>	Most participant were clustered in the east of the Netherlands (90%)  1 participant lived in Germany  1 participant lived in the south-west of the Netherlands
<b>Relevant occupation</b>	17 participants did not have an occupation that is relevant to the research subject (65%)  7 participants did have a relevant occupation. An occupation was deemed relevant when it concerned working with children in the target group (35%)
<b>Participation previous research</b>	10 participants (or participating couples) took part in the previous study (50%)  10 participants (or participating couples) did not take place in the previous study (50%)

*Note.* Of the 24 participants, four participants were divorced but lived with their new partner. One participant was widowed but lived with a new partner.

## Codebook and Inter-rater reliability

To analyze the data effectively, a coding system was drafted. A large part of the codes was preconceived, based on the theoretical background for embedded advertising, advertising literacy and parental mediation. Some codes were created by means of open coding, as some new information came forward during the interview. The complete codebook can be found in Table 9. The codes that were created during the coding process are in italics.

Table 9

### *Codebook*

<b>Main code</b>	<b>Sub code</b>	<b>Valence/underlying categories</b>
<i>General Media</i>	<i>Behaviour</i> <i>Effects</i> <i>Knowledge and Skills</i> <i>Opinion</i>	
General Advertising	Effects (on Children) Knowledge and Skills Opinion Recognition (by Children)	
Embedded Advertising	Effects (on Children) Knowledge and Skills Opinion  Recognition (by Children) Recognition (by Parents)	Positive Negative General
Disclosing Advertisements		
<i>'Honest' Sponsorships</i>		
Rules for Advertising		
Parental Mediation	Do's Don'ts Co-viewing Active Mediation  Restrictive Mediation	Positive Negative  Preventive Measures Control & Setting Boundaries Monitor

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	<i>Utilizing Mediation</i>	Use as a punishment Use to own advantage Use as a learning experience
Differences in Mediation	Differences in children (general) Differences in children (own) Differences in media	
Media Education	Amount Form and Subjects Responsibility Guidelines Use of Guidelines	
Reports on other people		
Concerns		

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Information on children's media usage was not coded, but analyzed separately. Among this information were the different media devices that the children used, the amount of time they spent on these devices, the social media channels they used, the amount of television they watched, the games they played and the YouTube channels they watched. The data that was collected about these subjects can be found in the results section as well.

To ensure inter-rater reliability, 10% of the data was coded by a second reviewer. Coding was done separately and then compared to compute Cohen's Kappa. Based on the agreement between the reviewers, the inter-rater reliability of the codes was deemed adequate:  $\kappa = .75$ ,  $p < .001$ .

## Results of Study 2

In this results section, the results of Study 2 are depicted. First of all, the general findings on media use of children will be described. Afterwards, the findings on embedded advertising will be discussed. Next, the results on advertising literacy and media education will be elaborated on. To conclude, new findings to expand the literature on parental mediation techniques will be examined. In each section, the experiences of the parents will first be described and afterwards be reflected upon.

### Media Use and Trends

To gain a general understanding of the types of media children in the age category from 7 to 11 use, some questions were added on general media use. The aim of these questions was to help guide the interview, but also to gain more information about trends and parental views on these trends. The questions mainly focused on media devices and two types of newer media formats: vlogs and advergames. First, the most important observations will be discussed and interpretations will be presented afterwards.

#### *Devices, amount of time and social media*

During the interview, the participants were asked to name the device(s) that was most used by their children. After this, they were asked what other devices their child used. The most used device was the tablet. A lot of children had their own tablet or had to share one with their siblings. Most families owned more than one tablet. The second most used device the participants mentioned was television. However, participants do mention that their children do not spend a lot of time watching television. Some participants even mentioned that their children barely watch broadcast television anymore. Other popular devices are the smartphone and game consoles. Of these game consoles, Playstation was the most mentioned. In 8 cases, the child had their own smartphone and it was one of their most used devices. Children that did not own a smartphone, sometimes used their parent's smartphone. However, it was only in one case that the parents' smartphone turned out to be one of the most used devices. The laptop was another device that was mentioned frequently, but never as one of the most used devices. Parents indicated that the laptop was primarily used for homework, and barely for playing games or watching YouTube. Other devices that were mentioned were other game consoles (f.e. Nintendo Wii, Nintendo Switch, Microsoft Xbox) and the PC. An

overview of the devices and the amount of participants that mentioned them can be found in Table 10.

Table 10

*Mentioned Devices and Most Used Devices*

<b>Most used devices</b>	<b>Mentioned by (N)</b>	<b>Other devices</b>	<b>Mentioned by (N)</b>
Tablet	12	Laptop	10
Television	10	Television	8
Smartphone (own)	8	Smartphone (own)	5
Gaming Console	7	Smartphone (parent)	4

*Note:* ‘Mentioned by (N)’ indicates in how many interviews it was mentioned that the child uses the device or that it is the most used device

The participants often found it difficult to estimate how much time their children spent on various devices. The estimated amount of device use on a daily basis, varied from 20 minutes to 3 hours. The average estimated amount was approximately 1.5 hours per day. This was estimated for the most used devices (tablet, television, smartphone and Playstation). The participants were also asked to indicate their children’s television use, when television was not mentioned as one of the most used devices. This amount varied from 20 minutes to 2 hours on a daily basis. The average estimated amount of television use, was approximately 1 hour.

Many participants indicated that their children watch television on demand or use the streaming service Netflix, rather than or as an addition to regular scheduled programming. Half of participants indicated that their children watch Netflix, while 40 percent indicated that their children use on demand services, like NPO Uitzending Gemist.

Apart from YouTube and Whatsapp, children in the age category from 7 to 11 do not use a lot of social media, according to their parents. Only a few used popular social media platforms like Snapchat or Instagram. Some children used a social media app called Tik Tok (former Musical.ly, the app was renamed in August, 2018). This is an app that allows for the sharing of short videos. However, parents were often unsure if Tik Tok was a social media application. They often did not mention Tik Tok when asked about social media, but did mention the application during the interviews.

### *Games and Gaming devices*

Concerning the games, the parents were asked questions about the kind of devices that their children use to play games, and what kind of games their children play. The gaming devices are listed in Table 11. Most noticeable is that a gaming console was mentioned by 13 participants.

Table 11

#### *Popular Gaming Devices*

<b>Gaming device</b>	<b>Mentioned by (N)</b>
Gaming console	13
Tablet	10
Computer/laptop	4
Smartphone	3

*Note:* ‘Mentioned by (N)’ indicates in how many interviews it was mentioned that the child uses the gaming device.

As previously noted in, the gaming console in question was most frequently a Playstation. This is interesting, as the games that are available for consoles often embed advertising in a different way than the games that were used as examples in the previous study. When looking at the mentioned games for consoles in Table 12, it can be noticed that FIFA and Fortnite are the most popular games within the age category. Both these games mostly try to persuade the player to make in-app purchases. For example, FIFA tries to persuade the player to invest money to get a better team. While this is also embedded marketing, the current study does not include monetization practices under embedded advertising.

Table 12

#### *Mentioned games for consoles and for tablets/smartphones*

<b>Games (console)</b>	<b>Mentioned by (N)</b>	<b>Games (other)</b>	<b>Mentioned by (N)</b>
FIFA	7	Subway Surfers	3
Fortnite	6	Helix Jump	3
Mario	3	Minecraft	2
Minecraft	2	Candy Crush	2

*Note:* ‘Mentioned by (N)’ indicates in how many interviews it was mentioned that the child plays the game.

Another noticeable result is that the tablet is the second most mentioned gaming device. This indicates that most games children in the age category from 7 to 11 play are downloaded games, from either the App Store (Apple) or Google Play (Android). Most games from gaming websites do not work on a tablet and are therefore less likely to be played by this age category (7-11 years).

The other games that were most mentioned by participants support this, as they were all games that can only be played by being downloaded on a tablet or smartphone. Web games (games supported by HTML5 or Flash) were not mentioned at all. When asked if their child played any games on a game website, parents often replied that this was not the case, or that their children used to do it. They were also not able to name any games, in contrary to tablet games and console games.

There were some other interesting findings as well. For example, when the participant owned a gaming console that their child used, they barely mentioned the games that were played on other devices. Fortnite was an interesting example, as many participants noted the popularity and the investment of their child in the game. One participant noted, when asked if their children were sensitive to advertising messages:

*“No, not necessarily, but when you talk about Fortnite, they find that they want stuff from Fortnite.(...) they want to have it, because that one has a more beautiful skin or whatever it is called, than you have when you do not invest money in the game.”*

Mother of two boys (11 &12)

Even when parents did not own Fortnite, it was discussed, as many parents are confronted with the game or talk about the game with other parents.

#### *Mentioned vlogs and kind of content*

Almost all participants indicated that their child watches YouTube videos. The kind of videos were often based on their interests, like tinkering, sports or certain games. In most interviews, specific YouTube channels were mentioned. The most frequently mentioned YouTube channels (by the participants themselves) are listed in Table 13. Most popular are Enzo Knol and Dylan Haegens, two vloggers that were also used as examples during the first study. However, the numbers listed in Table 12, are the amount of participants that actually



indicated that their children watched vlogs by Enzo Knol and Dylan Haegens. All of the mentioned YouTube Channels featured sponsored videos. Participants that mentioned that their children play FIFA or Fortnite, also indicate that their children watch YouTube videos about FIFA or Fortnite. These videos also often feature sponsored content. Another YouTube channel that was mentioned a couple of times, was ‘detoptien’, a YouTube channel that offers videos on various top ten lists. This YouTube channel uploads videos such as ‘Top Ten Coolest Kids’ or ‘Top Ten Cutest Pets’, which do not seem to feature sponsored content. Therefore, it was disregarded.

Table 13  
*Mentioned vlogs and kind of content*

<b>YouTube channels</b>	<b>Mentioned by (N)</b>	<b>Kind of Content</b>
Enzo Knol	8	Daily live videos, gaming videos
Dylan Haegens	7	Pranks, product try-outs and comedy
MeisjeDjamila	6	Making slime, product try-outs
OnneDi	4	Product try-outs, unboxing toys
PaardenpraafTV	3	Horses, horse care, horse products
StukTV	3	Challenges
De Bellinga’s	2	Daily life and holidays

*Note:* ‘Mentioned by (N)’ indicates in how many interviews it was mentioned that the child watches the YouTube channel.

## Interpretation of the Results on Media Use

The answers of the participating parents gave an interesting overview of the general media use of children between the ages of 7 to 11. As predicted in advance, the most popular device is a very mobile one: the tablet. This might affect the way parents mediate, as mobile devices are more often used unsupervised (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008) and parents are concerned about the risks of internet use (Symons et al., 2019).

Parents found it difficult to estimate the time that their children spent on their devices. This might indicate children do not have strict time restrictions on screen time. Participants also might have had trouble answering, due to social desirability bias (Fisher, 1993). They might have been afraid to indicate the actual amount of screen time, or were considering what was perceived as a ‘normal’ amount of screen time.

Television use seems to be more on demand: children watch Netflix and use other appliances that allow for watching content at any time. This fits with the YouTube trend: children can watch anything they like at various times. This might mean that restricting time use is more difficult, as the content is more readily available.

When asked about the social media use of their child, parents often named well-known social media channels like Snapchat, Instagram and Facebook. These social media platforms were not frequently used by their children and in many cases children were not allowed to. Parents said that they found their children too young for social media. However, some social media applications were unaccounted for by the parents during this section. YouTube was used by almost all the children of the participants in this study, but they often did not mention this when asked about social media. This could be due to the kind of use, as most children used YouTube in a passive way. They watched videos, but did not post them or comment on them according to the parents. This might cause parents to disregard YouTube as a social media platform. Some children used Tik Tok (Musical.ly), but this was also discussed later on in the interview, rather than during the section about social media. This might indicate that parents do not define Tik Tok as a social media platform, while the app does contain social media characteristics. Tik Tok, similar to YouTube, allows for the sharing and commenting on videos. It is interesting that apps that were not considered to be social media (while containing social characteristics) were not or less restricted by the parents in this study. It might also mean that there are more kinds of social media that are popular within this age category, but that were not mentioned as they were not considered as a social media platform.

The vloggers that were mentioned by the parents made videos with a wide range of commercial messages. This shows that the concerns about embedded advertising aimed towards children are grounded. The participants did not mention the embedded content themselves. This could mean that parents were not explicitly aware of the embedded advertisements in these videos, or they do not mind the messages.

The decreasing popularity of the laptop for other purposes than doing homework might especially cause a difference in the kind of games these children play. Tablets often do not support games on gaming websites, which is illustrated by the lack of HTML/Flash games mentioned by the parents. The games that were mentioned were often played on gaming consoles. As mentioned earlier, these games also contain embedded marketing, such as paying for extra options or investing in the game to gain more points or credits. This is different than

the kind of embedded advertisements that were originally considered, such as product placement or product integration. As the marketing in games like FIFA or Fortnite is even more part of the game itself and is less focused on brands, the commercial intent might be even harder to recognize for children. But because these games are more focused on purchases, parents might experience more negative effects, which in turn could influence how they mediate the behaviour.

## Embedded Advertising

### *Knowledge and Recognition of Embedded Advertising*

During the interview, the parents were asked about how prevalent they thought advertising was in their children's lives. They were asked how much their child was confronted with advertising. Every parent responded by saying that their children are presented with advertising very frequently. Parents are aware that advertising is a big part of their children's lives. When asked about where their children were confronted with advertising, some parents referred to traditional advertising, like television advertising. When asked about advertising on new media devices, most parents recalled their children being confronted with pop up advertisements in free downloaded games or YouTube advertisements that are displayed before the start of a video:

*'Especially with YouTube. If you watched a video, there will be an advertisement at first, and then you have to wait 2 or 3 seconds, and then you can tap to skip it.'*

Mother of boy (8)

*'You have quite a lot of those games where you see advertising for other games.'*

Mother of two girls (10 & 18)

A few parents brought up the subject of embedded advertisements in YouTube videos or games. This indicates that these parents do recognize embedded advertising. The participants that did not bring up embedded forms of advertising themselves, were informed on the subject. This means it is hard to judge these participants' ability to recognize embedded advertising. Participants questioned whether their child recognized commercial messages in vlogs and games. Most participants think their child does not notice the messages while

engaging with the content. They did perceive that their children do recognize the commercial messages in traditional advertising, like television advertising:

*'I do not think he is aware that that is advertising. But he is aware that the commercials on Nickelodeon are advertising, as it is said clearly that it is a commercial break.'*

Mother of boy and girl (both 9)

#### *Opinions and attitudes towards embedded advertising*

When the participant did not display any knowledge or recollection about embedded advertisements in vlogs or games, they were informed by the researcher. The example of Enzo Knol and his affiliation with Iglo was used to explain how vloggers incorporate commercial messages into their videos. They were then asked how they felt about it. Several participants indicated that they felt negatively towards embedded advertising. They felt that embedded advertising is annoying, that it is unethical to target children and that the effects are harmful:

*'I think it is wrong that they get money to promote a product in surreptitious advertising I do not think it is fair, because children are not the ones that have to spend it [money]. That is up to the parents, so children should have nothing to do with advertisements.'*

Mother of boy (8) and girl (10)

*'If you are going to promote something, a child can think it is really great and they might stop thinking. I do not like that.'*

Mother of two boys (11 & 12)

However, most parents also felt like embedded advertising was part of the world of today, and it was not very different from regular advertisements:

*'If you watch certain television programs, there are also concealed advertisements. (...). When you watch the Voice of Holland, there is also sponsoring by some kind of soda brand. It is very normal I think.'*

Mother of boy (5) and girl (8)

They understood why advertisers feel the need to embed their commercial messages into popular content and were generally not alarmed by it. In some cases, how they felt was dependent on a number of aspects. For instance, many participants thought using embedded advertising in videos was acceptable, as long as the promoted products were not unhealthy (for example McDonalds and Burger King) and suited for the age category.

*'Fish Fingers, I do not mind. But when it is about candy or soda, I have a bit more trouble with it. I think it depends on what they promote.'*

Mother of two girls (10&18)

Participants also indicated that they felt more negatively towards embedded advertising if a child is very impressionable and sensitive towards commercial messages. They also think it is their job to guide and protect their children, and that it is therefore not necessarily unethical to use embedded advertisements.

*'I mean, I do not worry about that for a second, but I can imagine if your child is very easily influenced, that you are worried about embedded advertisements.'*

Father of boy (10) and girl (8)

*'I do not believe I have a lot of trouble with it, because I think it is my job to guide my children in how they deal with it.'*

Mother of two boys (11&12)

#### *Effects of embedded advertising on children*

Participants were asked if they noticed any effects of embedded advertising on their children, most notably if they think embedded advertising influences their children in terms of their wants and needs. Most participants indicated that they noticed that their children wanted the products that were advertised in vlogs, or felt the need to make in-app purchases in games. They were aware that their children's buying behaviour is being influenced by embedded advertising:

*'And these too, Dylan Haegens, my daughter loves these videos. And she is sensitive to that, because they play games in these videos, and we were at the store this week, and there were all these kinds of games. And my daughter says to me, oh this is a fun game, that is my favourite game. But she had never played it before, she had only seen it in the YouTube video.'*

Mother of boy (5) and girl (8)

Some participants also noted that while they did not notice many effects, they felt embedded advertising influenced children on some unconscious level. However, many participants noted that they thought their children were not that impressionable. They seem to underestimate the effects of embedded advertising on their own children. During the interviews, the same participants often mention an instance in which their child was interested in buying something they encountered on YouTube, while also claiming that their child did not seem to be influenced by embedded advertising. This indicates that parents are not always aware of the influence of advertising on their child. For example, the participant that first said this:

Interviewer: *'Suppose that you would see that she wants a certain product, which might be a result from the vlog she just watched, how would you handle that?'*

Participant: *'She is not sensitive towards that.'*

Later described this situation:

*'For example, when we went to the USA on vacation, she talked about Build-A-Bear all the time. I had never heard of that, but it was very well-known by the girls, and we had to go to the Build-A-Bear store (...) She was obsessed with it. But how do you get obsessed with that? Because MeisjeDjamila says, look what I have discovered, this is Build-A-Bear.'*

Mother of three girls (8, 14 & 15)

Some participants were convinced that embedded advertising has an effect on children, but that the effects are mediated by other factors. For example, they noted that some children are more impressionable than others and that children are more easily influenced when they like the product beforehand. The role of friends was also discussed, as some participants said that their child was more likely to be persuaded to like something on the playground, and that

embedded advertisements strengthened the persuasion. Others said they think that more traditional forms of advertising had more effect on their child:

*‘Actually, advertising on television still works best [for my children]’*

Father of three boys (6,8,13) and one girl (11)

Of course, there are many different forms of sponsorships. Participants might have more difficulty with one form of embedded advertisement than they might have with another. Especially concerning vlogs, there is a lot of variety. Therefore, participants were also asked questions on how they feel about sponsorship disclosures and the concept of honest sponsorships.

#### *Disclosing sponsorships*

Participants were asked how they would feel about embedded advertising, if the ‘advertiser’ would disclose the sponsorship. For example, Dylan Haegens adds a comment to every sponsored video he makes. In this comment he clarifies the brand that is advertised in his video. Participants were conflicted about the disclosure of sponsorships. Many thought it was the right thing to do and that it was decent. Others doubted that it would have any effect on how children look at vlogs, and were worried about possible negative consequences, as illustrated in the following quote:

*‘You can name it, but I do not think that it matters to children. Whether Enzo Knol says, “These sneakers were a gift from Nike, thank you Nike” or “look at these awesome sneakers”. When Enzo Knol says that he gets all this stuff for free, it might even result in a lot of children wanting to become a vlogger. But I do not think it has any effect on wishing and buying behaviour of children.’*

Mother of two boys (11&12)

The participants that were more positive about sponsorships disclosures noted that it could be a helpful tool to parents. When a YouTube video features a sponsorship disclosure, parents could use this to help explain the commercial messages in the video and the possible effects, and therefore help to teach children:

*‘In general, it [disclosing sponsorships] is decent. But you can also use it. When children want something from a video, and you watch it together, then you can say*

*“this boy, he works for that company, they work together, and that is why he uses it.”  
You can justify it to your child.’*

Mother of two girls (7&9)

During the interviews, the Social Code (Desocialcode.nl, 2018) was used as an example of a sponsorship disclosure. Vloggers that adhere to the Social Code use the YouTube video description to disclose the kind of collaboration. Many participants indicated that this was not sufficient. A sponsorship disclosure should be more obvious, for example by featuring the disclosure at the beginning of the video or having an advertising warning on screen the entire duration of the video.

#### *‘Honest Sponsorships’*

Early during the interviews, the subject of honesty in sponsorships was brought up. A participant mentioned a popular vlogger, OnneDi, who makes a series of YouTube videos called ‘Leuk of Meuk’, in which new products are discussed and tested. These videos are made in collaboration with a brand, which means that they contain an embedded advertisement. As parents seemed to like this format, some information on this vlogger was obtained. According to her agency, the vlogger in question only posts positive videos when she feels positively towards the products. This means that when she feels negatively towards a product, this is also mentioned (RTLMCN, n.d.) . Her representatives (that also represent various other YouTubers) inform brands about this policy. Because many participants had notions about these kinds of embedded advertisements, the statements about honest sponsorships were analyzed as well.

Various participants noted the importance of honesty in vlogs. They noted that sponsorship deals that are comparable to those of OnneDi, brought nuance and realism to the content their children watched:

*‘Sometimes, something looks fantastic in a video. And when the person that tests the product says that it does not work, or that it is not fun, it might cause children to think “well I am not sure if that is so great”. While when they see something very nice and it is also rated as very nice, then they will think oh I want to have it. I have a lot of bad buys [for the children] in the closet, stuff that looked very nice but then was not.’*



Mother of one boy (6) and two girls (8&10)

However, participants were divided about the effects of honesty in vlogs, especially when a vlogger would discuss that he or she did not like a certain product. Some participants thought it would influence children in their choices, while others said a need would be created, regardless of the vloggers' judgement. This is depicted in the following quote:

*'I do not think that children will be taken aback when they say it is junk [meuk]. I think they will continue to find it interesting.'*

Mother of three girls (8,14 &15)

Some participants questioned the reliability of these kinds of collaborations. They noted that it still concerns the opinion of one specific person, which is not representative. They also thought that because these collaborations still require payment or free samples, the YouTuber would be more inclined to judge the product in a more positive manner:

*'I think that, because they receive everything for free, they will deal with the product more easily and more positively.'*

Mother of girl (11) and boy (13)

This is interesting as this shows the parents' scepticism towards branded content, even though parents do not seem to be particularly worried about the consequences and influence of the content on their children.

## Interpretation of the Results on Embedded Advertising

Parents feel like their children are confronted with advertising all the time, but many of them feel like more traditional forms of advertising are more prevalent as compared to embedded advertising. The notion that few parents even brought up embedded advertising shows that their knowledge on the subject is generally low, or that they do not think embedded advertising is very relevant to their children. It is also notable that some parents think traditional forms of advertising (namely television advertising) are more effective in influencing their children. This is interesting, as they also feel like their children are better at recognizing television advertising as compared to embedded advertising. This might indicate

that embedded advertising, due to its covert character, works on a more subconscious level.

For example, some parents mentioned that when their child watches a television commercial, they point to the television and tell their parents they want the toy that it is advertised.

Embedded advertising has this effect as well sometimes, but it also shapes children's styles and certain trends among youth. The effects of embedded advertising, might therefore be less directly recognizable to parents.

The notion that parents feel like children do not seem to recognize embedded advertising makes sense (because of the insertion in fun content), but could be cause for worry. As discussed in the theoretical framework, recognition of commercial content or realization of persuasive intent is an important part of advertising literacy (Hudders et al., 2017). However, parents do not seem to mind that their children do not recognize the persuasive intent of embedded advertisements in vlogs and games. Some even go as far as saying that it is better that they do not recognize it, as they feel that this allows the children to simply enjoy the content. This also indicates that parents underestimate the effects of embedded advertising and that awareness about the effects is low.

When parents talk about the effects of embedded advertising, they often refer to effects on children in general or the effects on other people's children. They often use phrases such as: 'my child is not impressionable' or 'if your child is susceptible, embedded advertising could be problematic'. This also shows how parents underestimate advertising effects on their children. This could be due to third person effect (Davison, 1983). Third person effect is the perception of people that media messages have a greater effect on others, as compared to themselves. As parents are very close to their children, third person effect may also apply to perceptions about their children. The perceived effects on other people and on children in general, are the reason why many parents feel like embedded advertising is unethical. They also claim that embedded advertising is part of today's world, which seems to indicate that the ethical objections are not that great. However, when asked how to restrict embedded advertising, parents are very critical.

For instance, parents feel like there should be strict rules about the kind of products that are promoted. They think the promotion of unhealthy foods and dangerous products should be

forbidden from being embedded in content aimed at children. Parents also feel like disclosing the advertisement is not enough to protect children, as they are not convinced it will have any effect on them. This shows that advertising disclosures are not enough to take away ethical objections. However, they do feel like advertising disclosures could be a useful tool, as it could help parents explain how advertising in vlogs works. Parents also feel collaborations like those of OnneDi bring nuance, but are also not necessarily ethical. In conclusion, parents would like to see restrictions on embedded advertising, even though they do not feel their children are very persuaded by them.

## Advertising Literacy and Media Education

As discussed earlier, participants were aware of the prevalence of advertising in their children's lives. They were able to recognize and deal with several forms of advertising on new media platforms, but were less informed about embedded advertising in vlogs and games. They were also unsure about advertising on the social media apps their children use, like Snapchat and Tik Tok. Because parents are not always aware about the effects of advertising, schools are also an important part of a child's media education. For this reason, the participants were asked about the media education their child receives at school.

### *Preferred Amount of Media Education*

Most participants think that media education at school is very important. However, in many cases, they thought the amount of media education was insufficient. Others were not sure about the amount of media education their children were receiving, but do think their children should be receiving it:

*'We talked about that recently. Because I think that every week, they should have an hour. At our school, they just started with e-mail for the children, and that is already a big thing. But I believe it is too little. Because I never hear about anything they do at school, while I do think it is very important. That they are aware of social media and friendships online.'*

Mother of two girls (4&8)

### *Forms and Subjects*

Also illustrated in the previous quote, is the possible subjects and forms for media education that the parents would like to see. Most participants feel like the last two years of primary school are most suitable for media education. Children in these school years are often 11 or 12. They think that it is a good addition to other subjects that are preparing the children for high school. Others feel like media education should start much earlier, from the age of 7/8. Many participants also think media education should be a fixed part of the curriculum:

*'I think that it will become a fixed part of the curriculum, and it should be'*

Mother of boy (5) and girl (8)

Others feel that a yearly reminder course is sufficient. Concerning the subjects that should be discussed, many parents feel that social media, the dangers of the internet (f.e. online contact with strangers) and the dangers of too much media use are the most important subjects. Especially social media is already being discussed at many schools. Some schools even go as far as teaching cyber security during an organized 'media wisdom' week. When asked, some participants feel that the dangers of advertising should and could also be incorporated:

*'I would do it in the same way they do it in these vlogs. I would let their idol, like f.e. Enzo Knol, make a video about internet use, media use and the dangers of advertising and things like that. That works the best. Let them play with it. Or let them playfully judge 30 videos on hidden messages.'*

Father of three girls (8,14&15)

As the previous quote indicates, many participants are also positive towards small media homework assignments, that they would be willing to help their children with.

### *Responsibility*

Most participants feel like the school has a certain amount of responsibility in media education. While parents feel like they have the main responsibility, they do think that it is important that school deals with the subject of children's media use as well, as media is such a big part of society nowadays. Almost all parents indicated that their child works with a Chromebook during the lessons, so it is also possible that children are confronted with media

content and advertising during school. Other participants also think that hearing the same message from multiple angles will be the most effective way of educating:

*'I do not think you should not discuss it as a parent, I think you have to, but who knows, if it comes from both sides [parents and schools], that it sticks.'*

Mother of boy (6) and two girls (8&10)

### *Guidelines and Use of Guidelines*

Participants were also asked if they think some media education guidelines would be helpful when dealing with their children's media use. These guidelines could be drafted by professionals to help parents deal with certain concerns about their children's media use or risks their children might be exposed to. Most participants think that in general, some media education guidelines would be helpful. They are curious to what professionals would advise parents to do and what certain statistics on media use are (f.e. amount and popular rules), as depicted in this quote:

*'I would like to know what they would advise me about it. There is a lot happening on YouTube [...] Fortnite [...] and social media. I think you should prepare parents for that. I would certainly want to know more about that, I think I only know half of it. I try to convey the things I know and the dangers I am aware of to my children, but I think there is a lot more that could go wrong.'*

Mother of girl (8) and boy (10)

Some participants said that it would be best to distribute media education guidelines via an umbrella organization in childcare, like an 'Integraal Kindcentrum'. This is an umbrella organization in which education, daycare, and kindergarten are merged (Wij-leren, n.d). This is in line with suggestions by a couple of other participants that were negative towards media education guidelines distributed by schools. They noted that schools already give a lot of advice and that it is not always appreciated. When asked specifically if the participants would use these guidelines, they were mostly positive.

*'Yes I would use them. Sometimes it is just very difficult to explain to a youngster why they should not do something. In these cases, it could be useful to be supported by*

*something like that [helpful guidelines], something like “you should do this or that”, or [...] how to make certain compromises.’*

Mother of girl (11) and boy (13)

Participants that did not think they would use the guidelines, do think they could be useful if they are experiencing problems in their child’s media behaviour. Others think they would only use guidelines about specific subjects that are relevant to them.

### Interpretation of the Results on Advertising Literacy and Media Education

Considering media education, the participants in this research voiced several conflicting opinions. However, all participants feel like some sort of media education should be offered by schools as well. Parents are not always convinced embedded advertising should be part of this education. When asked if they think embedded advertising should be incorporated, they often respond by saying ‘it could be’ or ‘it will not hurt’. But when simply asked what subjects should be incorporated, embedded advertising is not mentioned. This indicates that other subjects, like f.e. the dangers of social media, take precedence for the parents.

Parents would like to see more interplay between parents and schools when it comes to media education. However, some of these interviews were conducted among parents that work in elementary schools. They note that not every parent would like more involvement of schools in the media upbringing of their children, as parents already feel like schools are interfering more nowadays. However, as parents indicate that some media related incidents also happen on school grounds and many schools provide children with Chromebooks in class, it is unavoidable to discuss some of these topics in class as well.

This is contrary to the notion by parents that they would like to have some assistance in the media related upbringing of their children. They seem to be positive towards helpful guidelines drafted by professionals, but also indicate that they would only use sections that apply to their situation. This could mean that parents will seek confirmation of their own techniques and disregard information that is contrary to their own ideas.

## Parental Mediation

Participants were also asked how they deal with their children's media behaviour. These mediation techniques were grouped based on literary findings and complemented based on the interviews. The participants were also asked which mediation techniques are do's (which techniques should be applied by other parents as well) and which are do not's (which technique should not be applied by other parents).

### *Restrictive Mediation*

In the literature, restrictive mediation was defined as setting rules that restrict medium use. Literary findings indicate that the restrictions that are put on the medium use are not always discussed with the child. In this study, parents named a lot of restrictive strategies. However, most of the parents indicated that they often discuss why they put restrictions on their children's media use.

When analyzing the data, three restrictive methods were discovered: taking preventive measures, monitoring and setting boundaries. The first method that is discussed in this section is taking preventive measures. Modern technology offers many options to restrict what children can or cannot see. Parents are prepared to use these options. However, most parents try to prevent unwanted media use by not allowing their child to own a smartphone or tablet, or by not allowing unsupervised use (f.e. use of media in the child's bedroom).

*'When they are alone upstairs, they can click and do what they want so to speak, without anyone who can say anything about it. Because they are alone. If they are sitting here, even though we are not watching along and there is no control, I still feel like, maybe they will not search for something.'*

Father of three girls (8, 14&15)

Unsupervised use was also restricted in the evening, as parents feel it interferes with their children's rest. However, many parents feel like taking preventive measures is not enough.

The second restrictive method is monitoring their children's internet behaviour, which is a frequently used parental mediation technique. Parents monitor the behaviour by checking the YouTube search history, checking their Whatsapp or by watching on the screen every now

and then. They do this with games too, especially to check who their children have contact with in online games. The participants indicate that they mostly do it to know what their child is up to online and to check that they are not watching or doing anything their parents do not approve of:

*'I do it because I want to know what they are watching and what they are doing, and who they are talking to. My son too, with Fortnite. I want to know who he is talking to, who is online, who is he friends with [in the game]. You should not be friends with just anyone, so I keep an eye on it.'*

Mother of girl (8) and boy (10)

Most parents indicated that their children are aware of the monitoring. Some parents feel like they should do it more often. However, none of the parents say they encountered alarming results when monitoring.

Of course, parents do not only try to monitor media behaviour and prevent unsolicited behaviour. They also make rules about their child's use of media, set boundaries and forbid certain activities in order to have control over their child's behaviour, which is the third technique. All interviewed parents agree: children should have boundaries concerning their media use and they should not be completely free in the matter. Some participants make rules about the amount of time children spend on their favourite devices (tablet and Playstation). This varies between a half hour and one hour a day. Others also make rules about the moment of use. For instance, many parents do not want their children to use media before school or in the evening. Many parents made comments similar to the following quote:

*'It is good to define your boundaries: you can spend this amount of time [on the device]. Sure you can vary 5 or 10 minutes, or say: you have done so well today, you can have an hour and a half. But you have to make it an exception.'*

Mother of girl (8) and boy (10)

Participants also set boundaries concerning the products their children want. Even though many of the children receive an allowance, parents want to be careful that their children do not spend it on things they do not need or that are unfit for their age. They want to teach their children to spend their money wisely and are careful that their children do not impulse buy.



*'It depends on what it is, but if it fits her age and the product is okay, then I would tell her to save up for it or ask it as a present for her birthday. But I tell her to think about it at first. I do not want her to buy it immediately. That she sees it and then 5 minutes later she wants to buy it, I am not in favour of that.'*

Mother of girl (11) and boy (13)

However, whether or not parents allow their children to buy a certain toy or product does not only depend on whether they think it is a good fit for their age and if they think their child would use it. It also depends on if they like the product themselves, the quality of the product and the child's buying history. Parents are also more hesitant when their child always wants to have something. Parents are also critical of in-app purchases, like those in Fortnite. This is mostly because they have trouble understanding why their children want to have something that is not 'real'.

*'I would not necessarily say no. But I would never pay for them. So if they have money saved, then it is okay. But I try to make them aware that they are buying something that you will never have in your hands and that you cannot sell. You would have to like it a lot, so I try to explain why I would not do it and if they want to make really crazy purchases, then I just forbid it. In the end, I am the parent. But it can sometimes cause problems.'*

Mother of two boys (11&12)

Participants also forbid their children to watch certain vlogs and play certain games they deem unfit. Parents do this when the vlog has inappropriate language or is unfit for the age group in other ways, f.e. the YouTuber performs dangerous stunts or unkind pranks. For instance, some children are not allowed to watch popular vlogger Dylan Haegens and Milan Knol, brother of Enzo Knol. Games that parents forbade their children to play are Grand Theft Auto and Fortnite. This is mostly because of the violence in the games.

*'I do not want them to watch Dylan Haegens. I do not like him, he is kind of foul. He tries out certain things and (...) I just do not think he's a pleasant boy. So no, I do not want them to look at that.'*

Mother of girl (8) and boy (10)

*'No I do not allow them to. I do not think it is a game to shoot each other.'*

Mother of boy (8) and girl (10)

This shows that parents do not necessarily forbid their children from watching vlogs or playing games on grounds of advertising, but rather because of harmful content. The used restrictive methods show that there are different reasons for mediation: sometimes parents want to protect their children, other times they want to teach their children to make responsible purchasing decisions.

### *Active Mediation*

In literature, active mediation was divided into making instructive (positive) and critical (negative) comments. During this research, this division was hard to make. Parents did not always specify the nature of the comments they made when their child was engaging with a medium or with embedded advertising. However, a division could be made based on another subject: parents either talked to their child about the rules they set up surrounding media use, or they talked to their child about the nature of advertising and how to handle being persuaded.

*'I think you should not forbid something. However, some things you have to forbid, but you always have to explain it. Explain why you do not want it. And I think there should be consequences. We do that with [daughter, 8] too.'*

Mother of boy (5) and girl (8)

*'At the moment she says something, and I say where did you get that, and if she tells me that she saw that in a YouTube video for example, then I would talk to her about that. I would tell her that they say that because they get money for it and they want to sell her something.'*

Mother of two girls (10&18)

However, many parents said they do not necessarily practice this mediation technique currently, but will do this when necessary or think they should do it more. Parents do indicate that they talk to their children about the products they want to have, whether or not that is influenced by embedded advertising. When a child picks up something from an advertisement, parents more often talk about the product than the advertisement. They ask

why the child wants it, if the child wants to spend money on it, and if they would not rather save up for something else. The following quote is about a child that wants to spend his money on Fortnite:

*'We explain that it is not always possible. That it is also a waste of your money, because you can also spend it on other things. And that it is nice if it is occasionally, but not every time. The game is also very addictive, I feel.'*

Mother of two boys (4&9) and girl (14)

A parental mediation technique that was not discussed in literature, but is related to active mediation and co-viewing as well, is active participation. With active participation, the parent does not only talk to the child when engaging with the medium, but actually participates as well. Vlogs are often interactive and ask children to participate. A good example of this is MeisjeDjamila, a vlogger who is famous for her 'slime-making' videos. In these videos, she uses several ingredients (one of which is shaving cream) to make slime. She encourages her viewers to try it at home. Several parents help their children with this.

*'We made slime. And a while ago, we also coloured our hair, you can do that with crêpe paper. She looked that up. That was fun.'*

Mother of two girls (4&8)

This shows that parents sometimes engage with the content as well.

### *Co-viewing*

Some participants indicate that they view content together with their children. The parents that practise co-viewing do this once in a while. Most parents feel like they can hear the content that their children watch sufficiently, so co-viewing is not necessary. However, when children use ear buds, parents do check the screen every now and then. Parents name having knowledge about the kind of content their children watch as the most important reason to co view. Others also indicate that their child likes it when their parent watches vlogs with them.

*'Yes, I sometimes watch with her. Not constantly, because I can hear her. But every now and then she wears earplugs (..) so then I really must take a look at the screen.'*

Mother of boy (5) and girl (8)

None of the participants noted that they played games together with their child. However, they do co-view videos about the games their child plays or wants to play.

*'I usually watch with [daughter (8)], with MeisjeDjamila, but also with [son (10)], with the Fortnite videos. Especially when we first got Fortnite, I wanted to know what it was, what happens, and if it was violent or not.'*

Mother of girl (8) and boy (10)

### *Utilizing Mediation*

Parents do not only mediate for their children's benefit, but also for their own. Several parents indicate that restriction of tablet and Playstation use can make an excellent punishment for their children, or extra screen time can serve as a reward.

*'We can punish her very much by putting the tablet away, and not giving it back to her for a couple of days, if she has done something, anything.'*

Mother of boy (5) and girl (8)

Some participants also indicate that sometimes it is easy to just let their children use media when they are busy. However, other participants condemn this behaviour, as they think it is lazy parenting and there are a lot of children that spend too much time on devices because of this technique.

*'Some parents use it as a comfort agent. As a replacement, so their children are quiet or they can cook or clean quietly. My son sometimes says that he is bored. But it is okay to be bored, it makes you creative. We were bored as children, but we had to deal with that. You have to entertain yourself, and I think that is something that goes wrong a lot nowadays because of tablets and everything.'*

Mother of boy (8) and girl (10)

This mediation technique differs from the others, as it does not necessarily occur during the use of the medium, but rather beforehand. However, it might have an effect on how other techniques are performed and how they child uses media. When parents use media as something to keep their children occupied, they might be less aware of the content that their child is viewing, or be less inclined to make comments when they are busy themselves.

## Interpretation of the Results on Parental Mediation

The parental mediation techniques that were discussed by the parents shared many similarities to those that can be found in literature, but they were also several differences. First of all, co-viewing was not restricted to viewing, but also to listening to the content. Whether a parent actually watched the content, seemed to be based on whether their child wore earplugs or not. However, many parents find it convenient when their child wears earplugs, even when makes it harder to monitor the child's behaviour. Co-viewing seemed to be less about sitting down with the child to watch the content, but more about checking in with the content they were viewing. As YouTube videos are shorter, children transition easily from one video to another. This might explain why parents choose to check in occasionally instead of watching along for an extended period of time.

As YouTube videos are shorter, it is harder to make comments while children are engaging with the content as well. This could explain why parents had difficulties with expressing what kind of comments they made. Concerning active mediation, parents were talking to their children more about the product they were persuaded to buy, than they talked about the cause. When their children came to them with requests for products they saw in vlogs, parents made more comments about the products, than they talked about what persuaded them. However, some parents did talk about the effects of advertising to their children. This shows that some parents do feel their children should be more informed and they feel like they should educate their children.

Restrictive methods like making rules are popular strategies among parents. As discussed in the theoretical framework, restrictive methods might not reduce risks or improve children's advertising literacy and media knowledge. However, all parents felt the need to explain to their children why they were restricting certain behaviour. This differs from the way the method was described in literature. The popularity of restrictive methods indicated that parents have concerns about the media use of their children, even though they are not necessarily related to embedded advertising. The concerns were more related to unwanted content or online contact with strangers. For example, monitoring was also related to these online activities, as parents monitor to prevent their children from watching dangerous content. Parents seemed to feel like monitoring was very normal, as they indicated it was necessary to monitor their children's media use. This is interesting, as most of the parents

claimed they never encountered alarming results.

Parents do not necessarily forbid their children to buy something or ask for something they saw in a YouTube video. They did not seem to be concerned that their children were persuaded to buy something, but they were more concerned about what the product was. For example, parents would be concerned about the quality of the toys their children had taken a liking to. This also related to in-app purchases. Parents generally did not like or did not understand what their children wanted to buy in games like Fortnite or FIFA, and therefore put restrictions on it.

Some of the mentioned techniques are harder to classify as one of the existing mediation techniques. For example, some parents are actively participating in some of the activities their children undertake that were inspired by vlogs. This seems to be a combination of co-viewing and active mediation. Active participation allows the parents to monitor what their children watch, which might allow them to detect possible dangers or persuasive effects of the content.

As discussed earlier, YouTube, games and other new media offer fun content to children whenever they want to engage. This causes parents to use it as a reward or punishment. While this is not parental mediation in the sense of 'protecting children against harmful effects of media', it does relate to how children use and view media. Especially when parents use media as a way to occupy their children when they are busy, parents might be less aware of the content their children watch. This might expose children to online risks.

## Conclusion

The aim of this research was to investigate the interaction between children and their parents concerning children's media use. As embedded advertising can be hard for children to recognize, the involvement of parents could be important in order to protect children from unwanted persuasion. Based on this research problem and several literary findings, a research question was formulated:

RQ: How do parents feel about embedded advertising and what are the parents' experiences and mediation techniques concerning their children's encounters with embedded advertising?

With the results of this study, this question can be answered. During this study, it became apparent that parents are aware of the impact of media use on their children's lives and try to protect their children from possible harmful effect. They think it is their job to help guide their children. Even though tablets, gaming consoles and smartphones are gaining importance, television is still important in children's media landscape. Parents still feel like television advertising has the most influence on their children. However, they seem to underestimate the impact that embedded advertising has on their children. Parental knowledge on embedded advertising is relatively low, even though they are confronted with it frequently. When the concept was explained, most parents were prompted to recognize the kind of content.

Parents feel like embedded advertising is part of the world of today. They do think embedded advertising is a problematic concept, as they believe it can influence children in negative ways. However, parents are prone to underestimate the effect on their own children and would rather talk in terms of 'children in general', the so-called third person effect (Davison, 1983). They often indicate that their children are not affected by embedded advertising, while later referring to a situation in which their child was influenced. This means that there is much to be done to make them aware of specific advertising effects.

When asked, parents were not able to conjure up certain situations in which their children's media use caused problems or caused them to interfere. However, during the interviews, almost all of them mentioned a situation that was concerning or striking to them, or that prompted them to make rules about the media use. In literature about parental mediation, three main techniques were found: restrictive mediation, active mediation and co-viewing

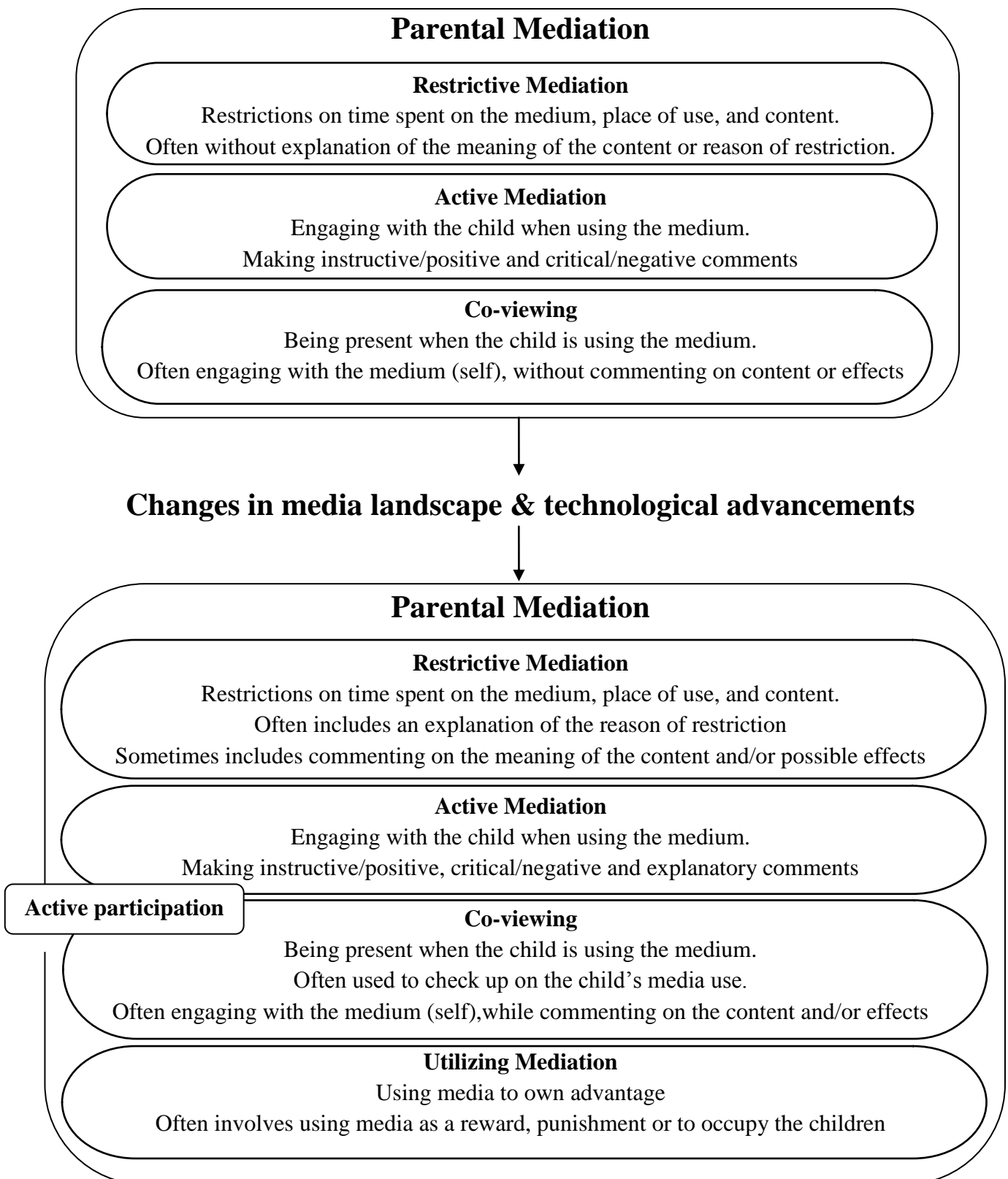
(displayed in Figure 1). All these techniques were also used by the parents in this study. However, there seem to be changes and several additions to the techniques that are discussed in literature. For example, restrictive mediation was explained by Livingstone and Helsper (2008) as ‘restrictions on time spent on the medium, place of use, and content, often without explanation of the meaning of the content or possible effects’. The parents in this study often commented that it is important to explain the rules to their children, and that it is important that they know why they cannot do or have something. A similar change can be noticed in co-viewing, which was explained in literature as follows: ‘the parent is present when the child is using the medium, often engaging with the medium themselves. When co-viewing, the parent usually does not comment on the content or effects’ (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008). In this study, parents indicated they often comment on the content and sometimes even on the effects of the content their children watch while they are watching it. There also seem to be new techniques like for example active participation, which seems to be a combination of co-viewing and active mediation. Lastly, parents also seem to be using their children’s media use to their own advantage. They use it to reward or punish their children, but also to occupy their children when it is convenient. This last technique has been named utilizing mediation and it differs from other mediation techniques, as it might influence how other techniques are performed. For instance, when a parent requests their child to go on YouTube to watch vlogs so they can cook, they might not adhere to certain restrictions that were made previously (like a usage limit) or they might not be able to view the content themselves.

As discussed in the theoretical framework, mobile devices like tablets and smartphones and technical advancements might have an influence on how parents mediate. For instance, a parent indicated that she often uses instructive YouTube videos to make slime together with her children (active participation). This would be harder to do if it was not for tablets and the possibility to watch videos at any possible time. Punishing a child by taking away their tablet or smartphone would also be impossible if it was not for modern technology. Of course, parents have been able to punish children by taking away television privileges for a considerable amount of time. However, mobile devices make it easier to target the punishment.

Because of these developments and the results found in this study, Figure 1 was adjusted to fit the current practices. The updated model can be seen in Figure 2.



Figure 2  
*Updated model of parental mediation*



Other than the changes that are depicted in Figure 2, it was also noticeable that restrictions are used very often. This was to be expected, as Symons et al (2019) said in their study that parents have many concerns about the possible risks of internet use. According to Lee (2012), there is a positive relationship between parental concerns and the use of restrictive methods. The popularity of vlogs and games might have resulted in the frequent use of restrictive mediation methods.

## Limitations of the Study

As with most studies, this study has several limitations. Study 1 was conducted among 128 participants, that were asked to indicate whether they recognized a video as something their child watches or plays. This might have been difficult for parents that were not very involved with their children's media behaviour. If the parent indicated that their child watches or plays similar content, they were directed to questions about the example. This resulted in an uneven distribution of data: for the vlog by Dylan Haegens 95 participants answered the questions, while only 34 participants answered the questions about the vlog by Sabrina Putri. This caused problems when analyzing the data, as most statistical tests are not equipped for comparing samples with different amounts of responses. When comparing the vlogs by Dylan Haegens and Sabrina Putri, the responses for Dylan Haegens were cut off at the 34th participant. Because of this problem, an one way ANOVA test for variance was also performed. This test confirmed most of the significant differences that were initially confirmed by the paired samples t-test. The one way ANOVA also showed more logical significant differences, for example a significant difference in the ethical ratings for Sabrina Putri ( $M = 3.71$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ) and Dylan Haegens ( $M = 4.58$ ,  $SD = 1.36$ ). The paired samples t-test showed significant differences in the ethical ratings for Sabrina Putri and Enzo Knol ( $M = 4.22$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ), while the average scores are relatively closer to each other.

Another limitation of Study 1 is the amount of women that participated (90%). This reduces the representativeness of the study. However, most of the women that participated in the study were married or living with a partner. As these couples parented their children together, the answers of the participants are inclusive of a joint parenting style and possible shared opinions.

Because the media examples were drafted beforehand, the examples might not have been the best fit in respect to the target group. During Study 2, the parents were asked what kind of vlogs their children watch and what kind of games they play. There was a discrepancy between the games that were presented in Study 1 and the games that were mentioned by the parents in Study 2. The games in Study 1 were mostly internet games (HTML or Flash) instead of the console games mentioned in Study 2. As mentioned earlier, the console games often embedded advertising in a different way, by means of in-app purchases. The interviews did not focus on in-app purchases, which might have influenced the acquired data on games.

There were also some limitations to Study 2. As the researcher used a convenience sample, the same problem occurred as in Study 1: there were significantly more female participants. This might cause representation issues. Coincidentally, the participants mostly had daughters (70%). This might have shifted the focus of this research more towards vlogs, as these were more popular among the girls in this study. The cause of this imbalance might be because women were generally more interested in the subject as compared to men. This can be prevented in the future by using quota sampling (based on sex) instead of convenience sampling.

## Practical Implications

As many parents still underestimated the effect of embedded advertising on their children, there is much to be done in terms of parental awareness. When parents are not aware of the effects of embedded advertising, they might not feel the need to mediate when their children are confronted with embedded advertisements. But before it is possible to help parents mediate in an effective manner, it was necessary to gain more insight into current practices. This study aimed to update mediation techniques for television use (and early internet use) in literature to fit the world of today.

Many parents feel like the amount of media education should be increased. However, they do not feel like it is the school's sole responsibility. Parents do not feel that advertising is the most important subject, but do think it could be discussed in combination with other subjects of a higher priority, like social media and dangers of the internet. They feel like these subjects should be a fixed part of the curriculum. This shows the importance of media education at schools. As of now, the amount of media education and the subjects that are discussed vary

between schools. There might be a need for a more collective approach to media education.

Parents felt some guidelines on how to deal with their children's social media use are useful. Even if they might not have a need for them at the moment, they would like the option to use them when problems occur. They mostly look for estimates (how much media use), useful tips and warning signs. It could be beneficial for parents to have guidelines drafted by pedagogical experts and media experts.

Concerning media use, these guidelines could also include more information on embedded advertising. As noted in the introduction, NOS (2018) reported that half of children in the Netherlands between the ages of 8 and 12 are influenced in their buying behaviour by vlogs. As parents seem underestimate its influence on their children, it could be useful to include statistics on how many children purchase something they encounter in vlogs. The guidelines could also include trends in embedded advertising, so that parents can better signal when their child is being influenced. For example, YouTube videos on making slime and unboxing of products are currently very popular. Knowing more about these trends might help parents anticipate their children's requests and help them mediate their children's behaviour.

### Suggestions for Future Research

Study 2 was conducted among 24 participants. In order to get better insight into parental mediation techniques, the study might need to be conducted again among a different group of participants. However, this study also offers several opportunities for future research. For example, this study described how parental mediation techniques are used nowadays, but did not look into the effects of these mediation techniques. In order to help protect children from persuasive attempts, it might be beneficial to investigate how parental mediation influences children's advertising literacy.

As advertising disclosures do not seem to be enough to take away concerns on embedded advertising, research into how to activate children's advertising literacy is needed. This includes research on different kinds of advertising disclosures, in order to confirm what works best and has the least negative consequences.

Research is also needed on how schools can effectively incorporate media education into the school programme. This research already put forward several subjects that could be incorporated into a lesson plan, and also includes suggestions on the preferred starting year for media education (year 7 or 8). Future research could build on these findings and combine them with pedagogical findings on the benefits of media education.

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## Appendix

1. Study 1. A comprehensive overview of averages on a statement level.

	Enzo Knol	Sabrina Putri	Dylan Haegens
	N = 93	N = 34	N = 95
<i>Ad/format liking</i>			
I like this vlog	M = 3.74 SD = 1.50	M = 2.65 SD = 1.67	M = 4.13 SD = 1.64
I think my child likes this vlog	M = 5.62 SD = 1.41	M = 4.94 SD = 1.37	M = 6.01 SD = 1.08
<i>Persuasive intent</i>			
The producers of this vlog want me to like this vlog	M = 4.87 SD = 1.61	M = 5.50 SD = 1.40	M = 5.27 SD = 1.42
The producers of this vlog want me to remember the brand ' <i>brand</i> '	M = 5.03 SD = 1.61	M = 5.71 SD = 1.19	M = 5.25 SD = 1.42
The producers of this vlog want me to buy ' <i>brand</i> ' products	M = 4.93 SD = 1.62	M = 5.71 SD = 1.24	M = 5.08 SD = 1.53
<i>Ethical considerations</i>			
Unfair - Fair	M = 3.99 SD = 1.47	M = 3.47 SD = 1.62	M = 4.38 SD = 1.47
Wrong - Right	M = 4.06 SD = 1.37	M = 3.44 SD = 1.31	M = 4.44 SD = 1.41
Unacceptable to me – Acceptable to me	M = 4.40 SD = 1.58	M = 4.85 SD = 1.31	M = 4.73 SD = 1.57
Unacceptable to my surroundings – Acceptable to my surroundings	M = 4.45 SD = 1.47	M = 3.91 SD = 1.29	M = 4.83 SD = 1.53
Unethical - Ethical	M = 4.19 SD = 1.39	M = 3.85 SD = 1.28	M = 4.52 SD = 1.47

	<b>PES</b>	<b>The Sims</b>	<b>Kogama</b>
	N = 38	N = 40	N = 45
<i>Ad/format liking</i>			
I like this game	M = 4.58 SD = 1.70	M = 4.58 SD = 1.55	M = 3.47 SD = 1.33
I think my child likes this game	M = 6.29 SD = .61	M = 6.05 SD = .60	M = 5.64 SD = 1.00
<i>Persuasive intent</i>			
The producers of this game want me to like this game	M = 4.45 SD = 1.62	M = 5.63 SD = 1.10	M = 5.29 SD = 1.14
The producers of this game want me to remember the brand ' <i>brand</i> '	M = 4.68 SD = 1.69	M = 5.85 SD = 1.05	M = 5.20 SD = 1.33
The producers of this game want me to buy ' <i>brand</i> ' products	M = 4.71 SD = 1.56	M = 5.60 SD = 1.24	M = 5.27 SD = 1.25
<i>Ethical considerations</i>			
Unfair - Fair	M = 4.95 SD = 1.51	M = 4.60 SD = 1.43	M = 4.07 SD = 1.14
Wrong - Right	M = 4.92 SD = 1.48	M = 4.60 SD = 1.34	M = 4.07 SD = 1.03
Unacceptable to me – Acceptable to me	M = 5.26 SD = 1.47	M = 4.70 SD = 1.49	M = 4.38 SD = 1.15
Unacceptable to my surroundings – Acceptable to my surroundings	M = 5.16 SD = 1.44	M = 4.67 SD = 1.47	M = 4.29 SD = 1.24
Unethical - Ethical	M = 4.74 SD = 1.50	M = 4.50 SD = 1.52	M = 4.11 SD = 1.11

2. Study 2. The complete interview scheme.

Subject	Questions	Goal
<b>Introduction</b>	Participant Permission and Information about the research	
<b>Demographics</b>	Family composition Amount and age of children	
<b>Media usage</b>	<p>What kind of devices does your child use? (Computer, laptop, tablet, smartphone, television, Playstation or similar)</p> <p>How many hours a day does your child use a tablet or smartphone?</p> <p>Does your child watch television channels?</p> <p>Does your child rewind or record television or watch Netflix?</p> <p>What kind of social media platforms is your child on? (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube etc.)</p> <p><i>Does your child play certain games online? On what device and what games?</i></p> <p>Does your child watch vlogs? What kind of vlogs?</p>	Establish the media usage to help ask more specific questions. For example, if someone does not play games, parental mediation techniques for gaming will not be relevant.
<b>Advertising Encounters</b>	<p>How often do you think your child is confronted with an advertisement? (and how often incorporated on the platforms mentioned)</p> <p><i>(Explain Embedded advertising)</i> What is your opinion on this kind of content?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do you like it?</li> <li>- Do they like it?</li> <li>- Do they want the product?</li> <li>- Do they ask questions or make remarks?</li> </ul> <p>How does your child react to advertising in general? (how do they cope)</p>	Establish the child's process and behaviour. The child's behaviour might affect how the parents mediate.

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	Do they know when something is an advertisement?	
<b>Mediation techniques</b>	<p>Have there been difficult situations with your child's encounters with advertising? (f.e. buying something without permission), If yes, what happened?</p> <p>How do you respond to those situations?</p> <p>Do you employ a tactic when it comes to your children and advertising? (f.e. talk to them when they use media, employ certain rules, limit the usage)</p> <p>Do you have certain rules concerning media usage?</p> <p>Do you use different tactics for television? Or for different children?</p> <p>What do you think is the best tactic for parents to employ?</p> <p>What do you think is the worst tactic to employ?</p>	<p>Gaining knowledge about used parental mediation techniques, best and worst practices, 'when do parents use what tactic'.</p>
<b>Rules and Regulations</b>	<p>According to you, what are the rules concerning these kinds of advertising for children?</p> <p>What kind of rules should there be?</p> <p><i>Should YouTubers include a sponsorship disclosure, when they include an embedded advertisement into their videos?</i></p>	<p>Gaining insight into the parent's thoughts on rules for embedded advertising</p>
<b>Media Education</b>	<p>Are there, to your recollection, any programs/lessons at your child's school about embedded advertising or advertising in general?</p> <p>Do you think it's the responsibility of the parent to teach their children about advertising, or the responsibility of educators?</p>	<p>Gaining knowledge about parental views on media education and possible training programs/guidelines for embedded advertising education.</p>

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Do you think certain guidelines that could help you educate your child about embedded advertising would be helpful?

Would you make use of these guidelines?

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