

Investigating the effects of television advertising on children aged 8-11 in transitional Bulgaria

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ABSTRACT

Extensive research has been carried out to examine the effects of television advertising on children in the 'Western', more developed world, where exposure to television advertising has been linked with increased materialism and involvement in consumer culture, and decreased life satisfaction. Empirical evidence whether these assumptions would also be valid for an 'Eastern', economically developing setting, is however missing. To challenge this, the present study employs a survey research among 273 Bulgarian children (aged 8-11 years). An investigation whether the amount of television advertising they get exposed to makes them more materialistic and consumer oriented, and less happy, is conducted. Furthermore, a closer look in the advertising literacy capabilities of children is taken as a response to an expected difference in the levels of advertising literacy among the survey participants. More specifically, since part of the sample consists of children who attend a private acting school and are actively involved in the advertising industry, they are expected to be more advertising literate than the other study participants, who are enrolled in general state schools. Moreover, this difference in school background and the associated variance in advertising literacy abilities are thought to determine the magnitude of the television advertising effects on children, in a way that those with state school background would be affected stronger. A combination of regression and independent t-test analyses confirm the expected associations between exposure to television advertising and materialism and consumer involvement, as well as confirm the assumption that the children-actors would appear better advertising literate. Yet, they do not provide statistically significant evidences to link exposure to television advertising with decreased life satisfaction, and to confirm the expectation that the regular state school pupils would suffer more by the effects of television advertising.

KEYWORDS: *Television advertising effects, Materialism, Involvement in consumer culture, Life satisfaction, Advertising literacy*

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1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing distress over the amount of time children in Bulgaria spend watching television, and the amount of advertisements they get exposed to - nearly 40,000 per year per single child (Stoyanova, 2015). In general, advertising is met with skepticism and distrust by adults (Obermiller, Spangenberg & MacLachlan, 2005); in Bulgaria it is considered as having a negative effect on children's education and criticised for its manipulateness (Petrovici & Marinov, 2007). Advertising has reached young audiences in Bulgaria to such an extent that major toy selling online stores now offer entire catalogues, dedicated to as-shown-on-TV and advertised toys (Hippoland, 2016). And since advertising is defined as paid content, distributed with the sole goal of persuasion and altering the audience's opinion and behaviour (Richards & Curran, 2002), it is of no surprise that parents, educators and child advocates are alert. To study whether their worries hold ground, the following research question will be investigated:

RQ: To what extent does television advertising exposure foster materialism, involvement in consumer culture, and lower life satisfaction in children aged 8-11 in transitional Bulgaria?

Due to the complexity of the aforementioned question, it will be broken down into several components that will be introduced below.

1.1. Research problem

According to Blades, Oates, Blumberg, and Gunter (2014), advertising to children as a whole is a subject raising concern. The reason behind is the believed inability of children to assimilate and make sense of advertising's promotional intents, which makes them susceptible to manipulation and bad influence. Moreover, claimed to employ a "hostile takeover of childhood" (Schor, 2005, p.2), advertising is held responsible for the commercialisation of children's early years, thus leading to problematic further development of the children.

What authors find particularly harmful in regards to advertising to children is television advertising. Although some argue that television advertising plays an important role in supporting children's consumer socialisation and learning (Gunter, Oates & Blades, 2005; Livingstone & Helsper, 2006; Valkenburg, 2000), others believe that exposure to television advertising promotes materialistic and consumerist values in children (Bottomley, Nairn, Kasser, Ferguson, & Ormrod, 2010), as a consequence of which an overall sense of dissatisfaction can

settle (Hill, 2011). The claim that television advertising can make children materialistic (Chan, 2003; Vega & Roberts, 2011; Oprea, Buijzen, van Reijmersdal & Valkenburg, 2013), is further supported by Kasser (2016), who adds that in the longer term, a materialistic viewpoint can cause economic, welfare, and social issues in the lives of children. In terms of children's involvement in consumer culture, television advertising is considered especially dangerous, because it is linked to causing "depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and psychosomatic complaints" (Schor, 2004, p. 34). In addition to causing both physical and psychological distress in children's well-being, exposure to television advertising is also believed to impact children's happiness and satisfaction with life (Nairn, 2015). What this research will focus on is studying whether children who are exposed to television advertising appear to be more materialistic and involved in consumer culture, and whether this impacts their wellbeing by lowering their life satisfaction. Therefore, answering the following questions will be aimed at:

- 1. Is an increase in television advertising exposure associated to an increase in materialism?*
- 2. Is an increase in television advertising exposure associated to an increase in consumer orientation?*
- 3. Is an increase in television advertising exposure associated to a decrease in life satisfaction?*

Advertisers try to reach young audiences in various ways, with television still being their most preferred medium because of its wide availability (Blades, Oates, Blumberg, & Gunter, 2014). Television is an intrusive way to reach viewers – in the case with children, it normally "strikes" during leisure times at home, when control on the amount of advertisements seen is somewhat restricted (Gunter, Oates & Blades, 2005). To withstand the power of television advertising, children need to have well developed media and advertising literacy. In a home and educational setting, media literacy comes down to adults assisting children (youth) in learning about the different sources of information (Boyd & Dobrow, 2011). However, according to Muto (2005), media literacy is achieved through literacy education, by aiding children "develop the critical and discerning attitudes needed to make informed judgements about what they see and hear" (p. 41). The first step toward achieving advertising literacy, as Kunkel and Castonguay (2011) argue, occurs when children become confident to tell apart advertisements from the rest of a television programme. However, recognising advertising content as such is not enough.

Understanding the persuasive nature of advertising, the authors add, is another important requirement for children to start gaining advertising literacy.

In Bulgaria, the population as a whole lacks advertising literacy, due to a historical characteristic of the nation - the communist regime between 1945 and 1989 (Ibroscheva, 2013). In 1948, Vasil Kolarov - Head of the Communist Party in Bulgaria at the time, condemns Western advertising as a product of capitalism and labels it as useless to a socialist society (Atanasova, 2009). Advertising is proclaimed a wasteful, “parasitic form of activity and a drain on the economy” (Ibroscheva, 2013, p. 292), promoting consumer culture by pushing individuals to desire things they do not need. Since the government has been accountable for the production of all goods in the country there has been no need of advertisements (Tolstikova, 2007), unless they have served state priorities – to promote the government and strengthen the socialist spirit (Neuburger, 2016).

Another reason for the lack of advertising literacy among the population, in particular television advertising literacy, is the “age” of television advertising in Bulgaria. Unlike other Western nations, where television advertising has been employed for over 70 years (Rutherford, 1994), in Bulgaria television advertising is considered a relatively recent phenomenon. The first television commercial spot in Bulgaria has been aired in 1991, as part of a ten minute long rubric for information and advertisements, called “TV Digest” (BNT, 2016). While for most parts of the world television advertising has been gradually introduced into households and audiences have learned to withstand its exposure, in Bulgaria things have happened quite the opposite. Not before the 1997 communist “dictatorship of the proletariat” end (Dillon & Wykoff, 2002, p. 116) and democratic government win have things started to develop and change for the better. Imko (2009) describes the period as a “shock over the unbearable lightness of being”, which must have been “overwhelming for someone unequipped with any kind of advertising literacy – the most important skill that television teaches” (p. 4). In order to determine whether the lack of advertising literacy has had an impact on the media and consumer development of the Bulgarian population, this research will zoom into studying children aged 8-11 years. The reason behind choosing this particular age group is because it is the generation whose parents and grandparents have experienced the life in communism and the transition toward capitalism first hand, and whose lack of knowledge on advertising now plays a role into the way they bring up the children.

More specifically, this research will examine Bulgarian children’s materialism, involvement in consumer culture, and life satisfaction, and whether they vary depending on the exposure to advertising and advertising literacy of the children. To do this, two different groups of children will be studied – children, attending regular state schools where a standard form of education is being

employed, and children – actors, trained in the advertising industry and attending a private acting school. An argument for this choice is an expected difference in the levels of advertising literacy between the groups. More specifically, the children attending the private acting school are expected to be better advertising literate. This assumption is formed on the basis that the children who are involved in the advertising industry by acting or doing voiceovers for advertisement clips get extensive training on how advertisements are constructed, what they are in general, and how they work. This knowledge is expected to make them less susceptible to the negative effects of advertising, namely, less prone to materialism, involvement in consumer culture and decreased life satisfaction. To confirm the expected associations, providing an answer for the following questions will be pursued:

4. *Do children involved in advertising industry and attending private acting school have better advertising literacy compared to children involved in standard form of education provided by regular state schools?*
5. *If so, is the magnitude of the associations stated above stronger for children involved in standard form of education provided by regular state schools rather than for children involved in advertising industry and attending private acting school?*

1.2. Academic relevance

The choice for picking this particular age group as appropriate to do research with is confirmed by many previous studies (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2000; Chan, 2003; Schor, 2005; Bottomley, Nairn, Kasser, Ferguson, & Ormrod, 2010; Vega & Roberts, 2011; Oprea, Buijzen, van Reijmersdal & Valkenburg, 2013). However, these studies focus entirely on the “Westernised”, more developed societies. Kasser (2016) suggests additional research be carried out in economically developing countries. Valkenburg (2000) supports this claim, adding that cross-cultural research allows for further development of concepts on the effects advertising might have on children’s consumer behaviour and values. Therefore, the choice for examining Bulgaria as a geographical region, which has so far been unexplored, is justified. On another note, Nairn, Ormond, and Bottomley (2007) propose that more research needs to be carried out with children who belong to groups of different backgrounds. By studying children of different school background – such, attending regular state schools and such, enrolled in a private acting school, the scholars’ suggestion can be pursued. Moreover, previous studies suggest that media literacy

training has the potential to increase children's overall understanding of advertising, however this needs to be further examined (Oates, Blades, & Gunter, 2002; Kunkel, Wilcox, Cantor, Palmer, Linn, & Dowrick, 2004). By assessing the levels of advertising literacy of the aforementioned groups, this suggestion can be explored. Lastly, Kaneva and Ibroscheva (2012) advise that a follow up on the role advertising and media have played on the consumer development of the Bulgarian population in the period after the end of the communism regime is carried out. Since this study aims at examining the implications of television advertising on the children of this transitional period, its scientific significance can be rationalised.

1.3. Practical relevance

From a regulatory purpose, such a study would be of great importance. In Bulgaria there not only is lack in media and advertising literacy, but also is lack in up-to-date regulation, and especially self-regulation in advertising. Although there is an ethical code of the national standards for advertising and commercial communication, being created in 2009 makes it outdated (NSS, 2016). Moreover, what marketers have put into practice out of these guidelines, can be challenged. Therefore, through this research, regulatory organs can be presented with valuable and current information whether television advertising has a negative impact on children in Bulgaria. This could aid the respective authorities make decisions regarding whether and what measures should be taken in terms of those advertising to children. The findings of this research could act as an indicator whether the control over marketers should be strengthened, or even whether changes in the legislations on advertising to children should be made. Thus, a social purpose can be served.

On another note, such study could be of help to scholars and educators, by shedding light on the subject of teaching of advertising principles to students enrolled in an elementary form of education. In the United Kingdom and United States, for instance, special media and advertising literacy programmes have already been put into practice, in order to equip the youngest with important skills in recognising and withstanding the persuasive pressures of advertisements (Gunter, Oates, & Blades, 2005; Hobbs, 2011; Nelson, 2016). This has been done in an attempt not only to protect them from the harmful influence advertisements might have on them, but also to help them develop relevant consumer socialisation, which would allow them to make better informed and healthy purchase choices in the future. What the results of this research could contribute with is to identify whether such an initiative is needed in Bulgaria, as well.

Finally, the findings of this study and the specific responses children give could provide important information on what is harmful to their physical and psychological well-being. Thus, both

child advocates and parents can be advised of the measures that need to be taken by child protecting organisations and within the family, so that the normal and harm-free upbringing of children is secured.

1.4. Thesis outline

After introducing the research problem and justifying its academic and practical relevance in the Introduction chapter, the theoretical foundations of the key concepts of interest to this study will be explored. The second, Theoretical background chapter will provide a thorough exploration of the touched upon in the introduction concepts. In other words, a deeper understanding in regards to children's exposure to television advertising, as well as their materialism, involvement in consumer culture, life satisfaction, and advertising literacy will be accomplished, by reviewing existing literature on the subject. Moreover, the chapter will propose hypotheses developed in line with the stated research question and sub-questions. The third chapter will present the chosen research design and method, which for the purpose of this study will be in the form of a quantitative research, and more specifically, conducted through administering surveys to children. A justification on the appropriateness of this choice will be provided, followed by a discussion of the data collection process, sample, measurements, and data analysis tools used. The questionnaire developed for the purpose of data collection of this study can be found in the Appendix. Chapter four will introduce the results of the carried out analyses and inform whether they support or reject the outlined in the second chapter hypotheses. The final, fifth chapter will provide a general discussion of the findings and examine to what an extent they are in line with previous research and literature on the subject. Additionally, the limitations of the carried out research will be discussed, followed by provision of suggestions for future research. Furthermore, the academic and practical implications will also be communicated. As a conclusion to this thesis, a summary of the proposed expectations and the extent to which they were met will be presented.

2. Theoretical framework

Television is a powerful medium, and as such, can play an important role in the process of consumer related expertise development of audiences. Moreover, it is thought to be the medium that can influence viewers the most, yet often in a negative way (Shrum, Burroughs, & Rindfleisch, 2005). The reason behind is that television is associated with creating a false sense of freedom in audiences, forcing opinions on them, and blurring their abilities to distinguish between reality and fiction (Mitu, 2010). According to the author, in such setting “children become victims of the television hypnosis” (p. 240) - the more they get exposed to the medium, the larger the implications are. In essence, exposure can be clearly explained by the expression “open eyes facing a medium” (Ross & Nightingale, 2003, p. 45). In other words, there has to be a physical interaction with the message or content provided by the medium, for the phenomenon to occur (Potter, 2009). While some suggest that exposure to television can be beneficial to children, as it allows them to attain knowledge and develop relevant behaviour patterns (Villani, 2001; Heather, Kirkorian, Wartella, & Anderson, 2008), others share different opinions. According to Zillmann, Bryant, and Huston (2009), spending long periods of time watching television can have harmful effects on children. Among others, it can promote bad lifestyle habits and lead to decreased social acceptance, as well as damage relationships within the family. A way, in which extensive viewing of television prompts undesirable outcomes for children, is through exposing them to a large number of advertisements (Livingstone & Helsper, 2006). What is particularly worrying about the amount of television commercials children get exposed to is the overall lack of knowledge and understanding of advertising children demonstrate (Rozendaal, Buijzen, & Valkenburg, 2009). This makes children vulnerable and incapable of shielding themselves against the manipulateness of advertisements (Greenfield, 2014).

In general, exposure to advertising in childhood is thought to lead to biased product evaluation in adulthood (Connell, Brucks & Nielsen, 2014). Since it has been established that exposure to advertising has negative effects on children (Owen, Lewis, Auty, & Buijzen, 2013), the authors propose that stricter control over the amount of television children watch, is established. According to Buijzen and Valkenburg (2005), it is the parents who should provide advertising mediation and outline the consumer communication specifics in the family. Thus, by limiting the exposure to advertising of their children, they can protect them from the negative consequences associated with the encounter.

Contrary to the aforementioned opinions, other scholars believe that exposure to advertising have its benefits. More specifically, exposure to television advertising is seen as an opportunity for children to attain crucial skills in understanding the intent of advertisements and

recognising their persuasive messages (Andronikidis & Lambrianidou, 2010; Panic, Cauberghe, & De Pelsmacker, 2013; Desrochers, 2015). But while the relationship between exposure to television advertising and food consumption in children has been well documented (Kelly, Smith, King, Flood & Bauman, 2007; Buijzen, Schuurman & Bomhof, 2008; Andreyeva, Kelly & Harris, 2011), the more abstract relationship between television advertising exposure, involvement in consumer culture, and decreased life satisfaction has not yet been fully explored. Although there are studies carried out, which focus on the connection between exposure to television advertising and materialism in children (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2003a; Oprea, Buijzen, & Valkenburg, 2012; Chan, 2013), none of them also incorporates the possible impacts high levels of television advertising exposure might have on increasing the involvement in consumer culture and lowering life satisfaction of children.

Therefore, literature related to the three main effects of interest to this study, namely, the effects of exposure to television advertising on materialism, involvement in consumer culture, and decreased life satisfaction, will be examined next.

2.1. Effects of television advertising exposure on children's materialism

In general, materialism could be attributed to those who cherish material possessions and physical convenience more than intangible virtues and spiritual qualities, thus giving the term a rather negative connotation (Srikant, 2013). Moreover, it refers to how people perceive attaining, owning and displaying of material objects (Nairn, Ormrod, & Bottomley, 2007). It is important to note that such beliefs do not come into being on their own; rather, they need a force to drive them. Advertising can be considered as such a force, because, as Sirgy et al. (2012) suggest, it draws the attention toward what people possess, rather than what they are as human beings.

In research done on children, materialism has been thoroughly documented (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2000; Chan, 2003; Oprea, Buijzen, van Reijmersdal & Valkenburg, 2013) and defined as "having a preoccupation with possessions and believing that products bring happiness and success" (Oprea, Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2012, p.487). In terms of the relationship between exposure to television advertising and materialism in children, Western studies show that the two are positively connected. The majority of studies done on children demonstrate a linear relationship between the two constructs, indicating that it is the exposure to television advertising that predicts materialistic views in children (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2003 a,b; Young, 2010; Vega & Roberts, 2011). Scholars explain this link by the fact that children get exposed to a lot of product advertising while watching television. And because children are led

into thinking that by owning the advertised on television products they can achieve satisfactory status in life, as well as popularity and success among their peers (Oprea, Buijzen, van Reijmersdal, & Valkenburg, 2011), they wish to possess these products. The reason behind this desire not only lays in the strong appeal of advertisements, but also depends on the amount of advertisements seen and their viewing frequency (Pine, Wilson, & Nash, 2007).

In order to confirm that television advertising exposure enhances materialism, the majority of the aforementioned scholars carry out survey research among children aged, on average, between 8 and 12 years. In class, children are given paper-and-pencil questionnaires to fill in, which they take approximately 20 minutes to complete. The research findings, reported by most of the authors, indicate that exposure to television advertising can be a predictor of materialism in children. Moreover, the positive correlation between the two suggests that the effect of television advertising exposure on children's materialism is such, that when the first increases, the same follows for the latter.

In order to claim a causal relationship, however, a longitudinal research has to be carried out (Ruspini, 2002). According to the author, it is longitudinal research that allows for inferences to be made, and can be used to 'construct more complicated behavioural models than purely cross-sectional or time-series data' (p. 26). In terms of whether exposure to television advertising causes materialism in children, an answer is provided by the study by Oprea, Buijzen, van Reijmersdal, and Valkenburg (2014). The undertaken longitudinal research by the authors allows for the causal relationship between the two constructs to be established.

Based on the mentioned above, it is to be expected that the similar findings will be established for the young television audiences in Bulgaria, as well. This leads to the formulation of the first hypothesis, namely:

H1: An increase in television advertising exposure is associated with an increase in children's materialism

2.2. Effects of television advertising exposure on children's involvement in consumer culture

According to Hill (2015), defining consumer culture is a challenging task, because of the broadness of the concept. Schor (2007) describes it as the culture of purchasing and spending. Sheehan (2013) builds upon this explanation by adding that it is a culture, " in which the idea of consumption totally overwhelms and ultimately destroys other aspects of the culture" (p.17). Those, involved in consumer culture can be characterised as consumer oriented people, who

focus on their preferences and needs as consumers (Wu, 2004). For children, involvement in consumer culture is seen as a way to express their 'individuality' (Hill, 2015) and demonstrate social participation (Roche, 2009). According to Valkenburg and Cantor (2001), it is the age between 8 and 12 years when children start to develop a strong feeling of belonging, be it toward social groups, or products and goods. In order to prove as loyal to their peers, children have to become more selectively consumer oriented. They can fulfill this requirement by participating in consumer culture in a way that the peer group would approve of. In other words, to be perceived as faithful, children have to demonstrate their readiness to fully embrace the consumer norms and values of the peer group. Taking such a course of action can have two outcomes, depending on whether the peer group's participation in consumer culture is overall harmful or beneficial to those involved. On one hand, following the 'rules' set out in a group can appear helpful to children, since they become less influenced by the harmful power of certain consumer socialising forces, such as advertising. On another hand, quite the opposite can happen – following a group, heavily involved in consumer culture for the sole sake of consuming, can fortify the exposure of children to harmful consumer socialising stimulus. Growing of children into informed and independent active consumers is an important part of their social development (Calvert, 2008). The often blindly following of standards set by others, however, compromises this development, as well as children's safe participation in consumer culture. Authors believe that involvement in consumer culture can have various negative impacts on children. It can lead to undesirable consumer socialisation of children (Ekström, 2010), cause parent - child relationship problems (Nairn & Fine, 2008), and promote addiction to acquisitions (Hill, 2011), to name a few.

Children's involvement in consumer culture is determined by the influence media have on their behavior (Schor, 2005). In addition, studies show that the amount of time children spend watching television, thus exposing themselves to advertising content, creates and promotes more involvement in consumer culture (Schor, 2004; Wilkinson, 2007; Piachaud, 2008; Pugh, 2009). It is the media, in particular television, which is to be held responsible for the consumerisation of children ahead of their time (Buckingham, 2007). Although some see this commercialisation of childhood process as a natural path to adulthood, it is premature and worrying. The reason behind is that it poses a great deal of danger on the social, emotional, and physical development of children (Friestad & Wright, 2005; Schor, 2005; Linn, 2010).

In literature, the concept of consumer culture involvement/orientation has often been used interchangeably with that of materialism. An explanation for this could be the fact that the two concepts share roughly the same idea. They both focus on what is physical, tangible, or

material, and disregard everything that is spiritual or concerned with the mind. Even though no clear distinction between the two concepts has explicitly been established by previous research, Graeber (2011) and Srikant (2013) imply that materialism is an aspect to consumer culture, in a way that it has been introduced so that consumption can be secured. In order to apprehend what involvement in consumer culture is, one needs to first understand materialism. Proving the same point, Kasser, Ryan, Couchman, and Sheldon (2004) suggest that it is those involved in consumer culture who develop materialistic values, not the other way around. In other words, the authors propose that materialism is a consequence of participation in consumer culture. Furthermore, although no direct comparison between the constructs has been drawn, an investigation of the definitions attached to them by scholars indicates there is a difference to an extent. While materialism is mainly concerned with the importance of obtaining and possessing material objects, consumer involvement goes beyond the mere acquisition of products, and rather assesses the bigger picture of consumption as a whole.

To further examine the connection between children's exposure to television advertising and their involvement in consumer culture outlined by previous research, and test whether similar results can be found for Bulgarian children, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: An increase in television advertising exposure is associated with an increase in children's involvement in consumer culture

2.3. Effects of television advertising exposure on children's life satisfaction

According to Buijzen and Valkenburg (2003a), life satisfaction can be described as children's happiness with their lives or themselves. It is a meaningful concept in positive psychology and is mainly concerned with how to achieve the 'good life' (Proctor, Linley, & Maltby, 2009). It can be considered as the cognitive component of children's subjective well-being, which can serve as an indicator of their development (Park, 2004). Since the concept of subjective well-being is concerned with the internal evaluations of life circumstances (Huebner, 2004), high levels of subjective well-being would also indicate high life satisfaction and experiences of positive emotions. On the contrary, low levels of subjective well-being would be a sign of developmental problems – be it physical, psychological, or social (Park, 2004; Eid & Larsen, 2008). According to Veenhoven (2008), life satisfaction, happiness and subjective well-being are synonymous as terms. Therefore, they will be used interchangeably for the remaining of this research.

In general, happiness is thought to depend on the amount of satisfaction with the different realms of life, taking into account social and ethical norms (Haybron, 2007; Layard, 2009). For children, the reach of these domains is usually limited to their proximate environments – family, class, school, and friends (Oberle, Schonert-Reichl, & Zumbo, 2010). In this setting, other factors can also influence children's life satisfaction, often negatively. One such is television viewing (Bruni & Stanca, 2008). On one hand, watching television can cause nightmares in children, thus negatively affecting their happiness (Holder, Coleman, & Sehn, 2009). On another hand, unhappiness can be caused by exposure to advertising through watching television, as a result of the often unrealistic way products and brands are presented to the young audiences (Buijzen and Valkenburg, 2003b). Moreover, television advertising encourages children to pester their parents, which eventually leads to distress and conflicts in the family, and thus decreases the children's overall life satisfaction (Pine & Nash, 2002; Nairn & Fine, 2008). In addition, children's subjective well-being can be decreased because of television advertising's linkage to mood and happiness damaging conditions, such as depression, anxiety, and loneliness (Park, 2004; Kremer, Elshaug, Leslie, Toumbourou, Patton, & Williams, 2014).

While some study findings reveal a negative correlation between exposure to television advertising and life satisfaction, indicating that the former is related to a decrease in the latter (Holder, Coleman, & Sehn, 2009), others find no support of this assumption (Buijzen and Valkenburg, 2003a). In order to examine whether this expectation will be proven or disproved if applied to a non-Western setting, such as Bulgaria, the following is hypothesised:

H3: An increase in television advertising exposure is associated with a decrease in children's life satisfaction

Reviewing past research on the effects of television viewing on children's life satisfaction overall indicates a negative correlation between television advertising exposure and happiness. It also reveals the presence of additional factors causing unhappiness that are fueled by exposure to television advertising, namely materialism and consumer involvement.

While literature demonstrates direct causal relationship between television advertising exposure and materialism (Oprea, Buijzen, van Reijmersdal, & Valkenburg, 2014), studies also show that television advertising exposure indirectly affects children's life satisfaction through materialism. The majority of studies done demonstrate a negative correlation between the concepts. However, since correlation is not a matter of causation, it is possible that children who possess materialistic values suffer from a decreased life satisfaction, as well as it is possible that

unhappy children seek comfort in material possessions (Abela, 2006; Piachaud, 2008; Dittmar, Bond, Hurst, & Kasser, 2014). Other scholars, researching the relationship between these constructs, reveal the same negative correlation, yet they suggest that extensive desire for material objects is a sign of dissatisfaction with life (O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2002). In other words, they imply of a causal relationship between the concepts. Such is established by Oprea, Buijzen, and Valkenburg (2012) through a longitudinal research. It reveals that a decreased life satisfaction in children is a cause for an increase in their levels of materialism, and not the other way around, however only those, who have prior been exposed to high levels of television advertising.

Since there is theoretical evidence that exposure to television advertising causes materialism, and indications that materialism leads to decreased happiness in children, this study will aim to establish whether materialism could be mediating the effects of television advertising exposure on children's life satisfaction. Hence, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H3a: Television advertising exposure is indirectly associated with a decrease in children's life satisfaction through materialism

As previously outlined, overall, television advertising exposure and children's life satisfaction correlate negatively. Alongside the direct relationship between these two concepts, studies also reveal that there is an indirect effect, mediated by children's consumer orientation. In particular, indulging in consumer culture of children who are also exposed to television advertising is observed to negatively impact them psychologically, leading to lower self-esteem and happiness, and depression and anxiety (Kasser, 2002). Moreover, by promoting the idea that life satisfaction can be achieved through consumption of goods and participation in consumer culture, television advertising distorts the perception of young audiences toward what is truly important in life (Oprea, Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2012). Finally, involvement in consumer culture is believed to negatively affect the well-being of children, when there has been exposure to television, and television advertisements, respectively (Bottomley, Nairn, Kasser, Ferguson, & Ormrod, 2010). More specifically, as the authors claim, television exposure is mainly associated with higher consumer orientation, as well as with greater overall dissatisfaction.

The established by previous research relationships give ground to the expectation that similar findings could also be revealed for the young Bulgarian surveyees. Therefore, the following hypothesis can be proposed:

H3b: Television advertising exposure is indirectly associated with a decrease in children's life satisfaction through involvement in consumer culture

The purpose of testing the relationships between television advertising exposure and materialism, involvement in consumer culture, and life satisfaction, respectively, is to answer the first three sub-questions stated in the introduction. To tackle the next one, further zooming into the school background of children is required. This will establish whether and to what extent school belonging determines the level of advertising literacy of the study participants, and whether there would be an observed difference between the two groups' scores.

2.4. Effects of school background on children's levels of advertising literacy

Prior to elaborating further why a difference in the levels of advertising literacy between the two groups of children is expected, and why this variance is attributed to their school background, it is important to discuss some concepts that are key to this study. One such is the concept of advertising.

By definition, advertising refers to a "paid, mediated form of communication from an identified source, designed to persuade the receiver to take some action, now or in the future" (Richards & Curran, 2002, p. 74). Since this description is rather outdated, it might not be able to comprehend the full scope of the construct. Nowadays, advertising not only focuses on providing information regarding certain products or services with the intention to sell them, but also increasingly puts effort into building brands and creating such bespoke value for consumers, which would instill a sense of belonging and loyalty in them (Wijaya, 2012). Moreover, by communicating a strong message, although often biased, advertising aims to make an impact that would trigger consumers to respond. If done right, advertising can be a powerful technique for influencing audiences' attitudes and buying behaviours (McDaniel, Lamb, & Hair, 2011). Hence why the need of a tool capable of mediating the effects of advertising, so that any potential harm can be evaded.

This is especially necessary in the case of television advertising to children, because of the appeal and attractiveness of television commercials. They are often made to be humorous and enjoyable (Shimp, 2007), in an attempt to mask their real intentions, and thus succeed in reaching their desired audiences. Although children develop some cognitive and attitudinal defenses to television advertisements with age (Priya, Kanti Baisya, & Sharma, 2010), such shield cannot be strong enough to withstand the power of commercials completely. Acquiring

advertising literacy is what can equip children with the necessary skills and knowledge to combat the effects of advertising (Livingstone & Helsper, 2006; Kunkel & Castonguay, 2011; Rozendaal, Opre, and Buijzen; 2016).

In theory, advertising literacy boils down to consumers' abilities to read, deconstruct, and understand advertising messages, thus protecting themselves from the manipulative and persuasive intentions of advertising (Lawlor & Prothero, 2008). In terms of children, some scholars claim that advertising literacy relates to children's ability to process advertising information, understand the marketer's perspective, and distinguish advertising's persuasive and commercial intent (Young, 2003). Others (Rozendaal, Lapierre, van Reijmersdal & Buijzen, 2011), elaborate further, and suggest that there are seven characteristics to advertising literacy - the ability to recognise a commercial as such, identify the origin of the commercial, realise the targeting trait of commercials, understand the commercial (profit oriented) purpose of advertisements, their persuasive approach, the tricks marketers use to influence the audience, and the biased nature of commercials. Without the aforementioned skills, children will be likely to perceive all commercials as trustful, fair, and unbiased content (Dittmann, 2004). Moreover, this lack of basic media literacy would make them especially vulnerable to the effects of advertising (Livingstone & Helsper, 2006).

However, even if such set of skills and knowledge are present, it is believed that children under the age of 12 years are still incapable of applying this expertise properly (Buijzen, 2007). This, according to Reid (2014), is due to the yet incomplete cognitive development of children this age - more specifically, the years between seven and eleven. Children this old are thought to be in the so-called "analytical stage" of their intellectual and social advancement. And although this is the period when children start to understand the persuasive intent of commercials, as well as sense the bias in advertising, they are yet to fully comprehend advertising and its tactics (Lawlor & Prothero, 2008; Laczniak & Carlson, 2012; Reid, 2014).

Contrary to this belief, Livingstone and Helsper (2006) claim that children "of all ages could be, more or less equivalently, affected by advertising but that the effects of advertising are dependent on advertising literacy" (p.576). In other words, the authors suggest that not the age of children determines the extent to which they would be affected by advertising; rather, it is their level of advertising literacy. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Rozendaal, Lapierre, van Reijmersdal and Buijzen (2011) distinguish seven knowledge components to children's advertising literacy. According to more recent studies (Opre & Rozendaal, 2015; Rozendaal, Opre, & Buijzen, 2016), advertising literacy is to be considered as a two-dimensional construct. The first dimension, conceptual advertising literacy, relates to children's ability to distinguish

advertising as such, by identifying its source, and how they perceive it. Moreover, it entails children's understanding of the selling and persuasive intents of advertising, as well as the persuasive tactics advertising employs. The second dimension, attitudinal advertising literacy, relates to children's skepticism and dislike toward advertising, as well as to their ability to comprehend advertising's bias.

As briefly outlined in the introduction, two groups of primary school pupils are to be assessed in regards to their levels of advertising literacy. The first group attends a private acting school. As such it offers a specialised form of education, namely, 'media arts education', "where students are taught to value the aesthetic qualities of media and the arts" (Kellner & Share, 2007, p.61). Although the main focus of teaching is on performing arts - children get trained to act for film, theatre, musicals, and television, they also get media literacy coaching. As children-actors, who are often employed by marketing agencies to star in television and radio advertisements, they need to have at least a basic knowledge on what the nature of advertising is. The children attending regular state schools, on the other hand, are enrolled in a standardised form of education, decided upon by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science. The subjects taught are common for everyone, with only variance in the foreign language children can choose to study. Comparing the two groups solely on the basis of curriculum content indicates that the children-actors would have a better understanding of advertising, compared to the other group. Although this assumption does not take into consideration other factors that might contribute toward attaining of advertising literacy, such as parental or peer influence (Oates, Blades, & Gunter, 2002; Rozendaal, Buijzen, & Valkenburg, 2009; Priya, Kanti Baisya, & Sharma, 2010) and age (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2012), it is expected to hold true. Not only are children trained in the advertising industry expected to be more confident with understanding the nature of commercials, but also are supposed to have better advertising literacy skills. The latter would be a result of the specific training children-actors get, as well as the educational environment they study in. In order to examine whether this assumption holds true, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H4: Children who attend the private acting school and are trained in the advertising industry will have a higher level of advertising literacy compared to the children enrolled in standard form of education, provided by general state schools

After outlining an action plan in regards to tackling the first four research sub-questions as stated in the introduction chapter, the final, fifth one will be approached next. As the last sub-question to this study, it bridges all previous four, and aims to establish whether and to what an extent the school background of children could affect the effects of television advertising exposure on children's materialism, involvement in consumer culture, and life satisfaction.

2.5. Effects of television advertising exposure on materialism, involvement in consumer culture, and life satisfaction, depending on the school background of children

As discussed throughout this chapter, previous research done on the subjects of television advertising exposure, materialism, involvement in consumer culture, life satisfaction, and advertising literacy, rather gives a notion that the constructs are somewhat related. Indeed, exposure to television advertising is expected to be positively associated with materialistic values and consumer involvement of children. In the same time, it is supposed to associate negatively with children's subjective well-being. On one hand, this association takes the form of a direct interaction between the two subjects. On another hand – the association is indirect, mediated by the effects materialism and consumer orientation are believed to have on children's life satisfaction. Moreover, a specific in the sample is supposed to play a role for the overall advertising literacy levels of the children. The school belonging of ones and their training in the advertising industry suggests they have a higher level of advertising literacy compared to the others, who have had no such encounter with advertising. And since the children attending the private acting school are presumably more familiar with advertisements and better advertising literate as a whole, it can be expected that they will be less impacted by the negative effects exposure to television advertising is associated with.

This expectation is based on the assumption that advertising literacy makes children less susceptible to advertising effects. Although some studies refute this presumption (Livingstone & Helsper, 2006; Rozendaal, 2011), more recent research supports it (Jeong, Cho, & Hwang, 2012; De Pauw, Hudders, Cauberghe, & De Kuyscher, 2015; Hudders, Cauberghe, & Panic, 2015). It provides evidence that there is a direct relationship between the level of media literacy, and in particular advertising literacy, and the effects advertising has on children. In other words, the relationship reveals the mediating impact of advertising literacy on advertising effects, in general. If true, this indicates that the levels of advertising literacy of the children who have taken part in this research can be expected to mediate the effects of television advertising exposure on

their materialism, involvement in consumer culture, and life satisfaction. The expected direction of this relationship would suggest that the higher the level of advertising literacy among children, the lower the overall impacts television advertising exposure would have on them.

If the pupils attending the private acting school indeed show as better advertising literate, this would indicate that the others, enrolled in a standardised form of education provided by general state schools, would be more susceptible to the effects of advertising. This is to be expected due to their lower level of advertising literacy. By studying the school belonging of children, the levels of advertising literacy of the two groups can be determined. This will allow for a further exploration to be carried out, aimed at establishing whether there is a difference in the advertising literacy skills of children, and whether this difference would lead to a variance in the effects of television advertising exposure on these children. In order to answer the final sub-question of this research and examine this assumption, the following three hypotheses are formed:

H5: The effect of advertising exposure on materialism will be stronger among the children attending general state schools than among those enrolled in private acting school and trained in the advertising industry

H6: The effect of advertising exposure on involvement in consumer culture will be stronger among the children attending general state schools than among those enrolled in private acting school and trained in the advertising industry

H7: The effect of advertising exposure on life satisfaction will be stronger among children attending general state schools than among those enrolled in private acting school and trained in the advertising industry

Based on a review of previous literature discussing the aforementioned concepts and in line with the proposed research question and sub-questions, eight hypotheses have been postulated. The next chapter will present the research design and method this study will adopt. It will discuss the data collection process, participants, sample, and research measures. In addition, it will present the concrete data analysis tools that will be employed, in order for the relevant statistical tests to be carried out, and hypotheses be tested.

3. Research Design

In this section the research design will be presented in more detail.

3.1. Method

A cross-sectional survey was conducted for the purpose of this study, because this method is thought to allow for data to be collected at one point in time (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Another reason supporting the use of surveys is that questionnaires are relatively inexpensive to administer and can provide data, representative of a population (Bartlett, Kotrlik & Higgins, 2001). Moreover, surveys offer a great opportunity to gather information from many respondents within a short time frame (Rowley, 2014). In addition, surveys are useful for gathering standardised information and determining correlations between certain constructs (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). In terms of cognitive development, children attain their reading and writing skills around the age of eight. Their use of logic and language improves, which allows for survey research to be conducted with them (Borgers, de Leeuw, & Hox, 2000). Furthermore, since previous research on children in the 8-11 years age group has extensively adopted surveys as a means to gathering data (Vega & Roberts, 2011; Opre, Buijzen, van Reijmersdal, & Valkenburg, 2013; Rozendaal, Opre, & Buijzen's, 2016), the use of the method for the purpose of this research could also be considered appropriate.

3.2. Survey design

Surveying children has its specifics – one cannot simply apply the same phrasing, questions, and overall complexity of language used as with research on adults. Studies show that children in the age between 8-11 years have not yet developed the required cognitive abilities to apprehend complex questions, especially such using negative or ambiguous wording (Read & Fine, 2005). Moreover, incorporating Likert scale questions using midpoints can turn out to be particularly challenging when carrying out research on children. Selecting a midpoint response in a survey is often done in an attempt to achieve satisficing results or when a respondent cannot perform well in terms of question answering (Weems & Onwuegbuzie, 2001). For children, choosing a midpoint response is particularly appealing if they are not certain how to answer a question. Therefore, it is advisable that such are left out. Questions should give fewer options for answering, because children at primary school age cannot comprehend the fine differences between proposed answers (Borgers, Hox & Sikkel, 2004).

Applying the aforementioned suggestions, a survey was designed. It consisted of fifty-nine questions – three open and fifty-six closed ones. To ensure the appropriateness of

questions and allow for comparable results with previous studies, all questions were adopted from pre-defined and validated scales. Since the chosen measurement scales comprised of questions originally in English, they had to be translated into Bulgarian to guarantee that children could fill in the surveys. In order to verify the semantic equivalence of the translation, which according to Beck, Bernal and Froman (2003) refers to ensuring that the meaning of each text item remains the same after translation in a different language, a back-translation technique was adopted. As the authors continue, “this method requires the use of at least two bilingual translators, who work independently” (p. 68). For this requirement to be met, a professional in legislation and translation was commissioned to translate the questionnaire in Bulgarian. Her translation was compared to that of the researcher to check for matchability. After such was identified, a Bulgarian version of the survey was created.

The questionnaire opened with an introduction page, explaining children their rights as participants and giving them directions how to fill out the survey. It included questions on children’s demographics, as well as questions measuring television advertising exposure, life satisfaction, involvement in consumer culture, materialism, and advertising literacy. All measures will be further discussed later in this chapter.

3.3. Survey administration process

The data collection was carried out in Sofia, Bulgaria, on a ‘one-shot’ basis rather than longitudinally. The employed sampling method was a mixture of convenience and snowball sampling. Although these types of sampling are claimed to often produce biased, non-generalisable results (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007), they were chosen over others, given the short data collection period that was available. An initial communication was launched with the principal of one state school in Sofia. The principal identified a number of other schools where survey research has been carried out with children before and staff was interested in having their students participate in such projects. Yet, a few requirements had to be met, before schools could be considered suitable for taking part in the research. First, the schools had to be located in Sofia. Second, they had to teach children in primary level of education. And third, they had to keep direct email communication with children’s parents so that participation consent letters could be sent out. Out of the approached state schools, which also met the abovementioned criteria, three agreed to partake in the study. Yet, due to the specific nature of educational organisation in most Bulgarian state schools, a formal approval from the regional inspector of education was required for the research to take place. After informing the respective authorities of the purpose and scope of the study, the permissive document was obtained, and

schools were contacted. Participation of the children-actors, trained in the advertising industry, on the other hand, was sought in a private acting school, which also met the requirements stated above. Since the school was privately managed, no formal permission by the regional inspectorate of education was necessary.

Children's participation was secured after reaching out to parents early March 2016. An email letter from each school's staff was sent to parents. For the purpose of this study, passive consent procedure in reaching them was adopted. In essence, a passive consent form sent out to parents (usually via email) informs them of a data collection initiative their children have been included in. It is responsibility of the parents to withdraw their children from participation in case they do not wish them to get involved (Fletcher & Hunter, 2004). However, since few parents do it, this yields very good participation rates, which overall allow for more representative samples to be formed, by including children who may otherwise not engage (Spence, White, Adamson, & Matthews, 2015). The email sent prompted parents to reply back within a period of two weeks, in case they did not allowed their children to partake in the research.

After obtaining the required informed consent, surveys were administered in the period between the 21st of March and 14th of April 2016. Depending on parents' responses and children availability, each school's principal appointed the class where questionnaires were to be distributed, as well as the date and time, in order to guarantee optimal participation. The surveys given to children were in the form of self-administered paper-and-pencil questionnaires. The choice was made, because not all schools had dedicated computer rooms where the surveys could be completed digitally. They were carried out face to face, as an in-class activity, and in the presence of the respective class' teacher. To avoid any misunderstanding, children were verbally briefed of their rights and responsibilities as respondents. Filling out the questionnaires was anonymous and took 10 to 20 minutes to complete. In order to distinguish the surveys, each was assigned with an identification number.

3.4. Sample

Data were collected from a total of 273 children ($N=273$), with children attending regular state schools making the majority of the sample – 66.3% (181 respondents). Children, enrolled in the private acting school accounted for 33.7% of the total (92 respondents). According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) for a sample to be representative of the population, its size has to be such, so that the minimum confidence level can be reached. The population of interest to this study would comprise of all Bulgarian children, aged 8-11 years and enrolled in primary education. For the 2015/16 school year the number was 248,508 children (NSI, 2016). The

minimum number of participants to ensure a statistically representative sample, as outlined by the authors, was 272; the obtained 273 responses by this study therefore met the requirements. This number was reached after administering questionnaires to the children who were present in class on the appointed date and whose parents had agreed on their participation.

To ensure that the approached children were in the age group of interest to this study - 8 and 11 years, only certain school class divisions were surveyed. In Bulgaria, the majority of children at the age between 8 and 11 years fall into the class divisions of second to fifth grades. Therefore, the participation of second, third, fourth and fifth grade pupils was sought. However, since some parents enroll their children in school a year earlier or a year later than the common practice, seven of the surveyed children appeared to not fall in the age range of 8-11 years. Two second grade students were 7 years old, while five fifth graders were 12 years old. Since these children were in the same school grades as the children in the age group of interest and their development was comparable to that of the rest, their responses were kept.

3.5. Research measures

Following the order of research questions appearance outlined in the introduction, the research variables will be presented below.

Prior, it is important to note down that in order for the measure variables to be constructed, a principal component factor and reliability analyses were carried out. This was done to examine the factorability and reliability of the scales. To be able to assess whether the scale item loadings onto certain components were accurate, few criteria had to be met. First, the sampling adequacy of the scales had to be ensured. This could be achieved by reaching a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value of .6 (Pallant, 2010). Second, items loading on a given component had to hold a coefficient value of .3 and above (Pallant, 2010). And third, the internal consistency reliability of the scales had to be justified. To do so, a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient value of .7 had to be attained (Pallant, 2010). According to DeVellis (2005), reaching a Cronbach's alpha value of .6 was also considered acceptable, yet provided a relatively moderate estimation of reliability. As stated by Spiliotopoulou (2009), Cronbach's α coefficient value depended on the scale length – the lower the number of items in a scale was, especially below seven, the more particularly noticeable the effect on the α was.

3.5.1. Television advertising exposure

Television advertising exposure was measured in accordance with the proposed strategy by Oprea, Buijzen, van Reijmersdal, & Valkenburg (2013) – asking children about their specific

viewing frequency of certain broadcasts on television. For the purpose of this study, children were asked to share how often they watched seven television channels. In order to identify the television channels to include for the measurements, a pilot study was carried out.

In Bulgaria, television is broadcasted digitally through cable television operators. Since the data collection was to be executed in Sofia, an examination of all cable television providers operating on the territory of the capital was done. A total of seven operators were established and their programme offerings were investigated. Only the dedicated to children television channels, which were offered in subscription packages by all seven operators, were retained for the final questionnaire. This filter was applied to ensure that regardless of the television subscription package children had in their households, they had an equal access to the same television channels. The remaining television channels were further examined to exclude those not catering for the 8-11 years age groups; channels dedicated to baby, toddler, or teenager audiences were dismissed from the selection. Finally, five television channels meeting the abovementioned criteria were identified: Cartoon Network, Super 7 (a local television channel), Boomerang TV, Disney Channel, and Nickelodeon. To justify the choice made, twenty parents of children in the 8-11 years age group of interest were contacted on social media. They were requested to ask their children of their top five most favourite television channels to watch. Alongside the five already distinguished television channels, the children listed another two: Discovery Channel and National Geographic.

In order to accurately measure children's amount of television advertising exposure based on watching the aforementioned channels, an additional content analysis was carried out. A one-hour long broadcast of each channel was watched, in order to determine the amount of advertisements shown. The screening was carried out over the course of a week, to ensure that the figures were accurate. On average, the preselected television channels showed around six minutes and a half of advertisements per hour (Cartoon Network: six minutes; Super 7: eight minutes; Boomerang TV: zero minutes; Disney Channel: five minutes; Nickelodeon: two minutes; Discovery Channel: five minutes; and National Geographic: eight minutes). Since the channel Boomerang appeared to be advertisements free, it was excluded from further analysis.

As an additional validation whether the list with television channels children were provided with in the questionnaire fully reflected what children watched the most, they were asked to write down their favourite television channel and show. The majority of children indeed appointed channels such as Disney and Nickelodeon, and their respective programmes. Based on this information, the decision behind choosing which television channels to investigate was

justified. Moreover, it allowed for comprehensive examination of the amount of children's television advertising exposure to be carried out.

For the purpose of this study, children's viewing frequency of Cartoon Network, Super 7, Disney Channel, Nickelodeon, Discovery Channel and National Geographic was examined. Children were asked how often they watched the aforementioned television channels. The response options for the questions spanned from 1 (Never) to 4 (Very often). In order to create the overall score for the *Television Advertising Exposure* variable, all six television channel viewing scores were averaged ($M = 2.39$, $SD = 0.50$, range 1.00-4.00).

3.5.2. Materialism

Materialism in children was measured using the complete eighteen-item Material Values Scale developed by Oprea, Buijzen, van Reijmersdal, and Valkenburg (2011). Since it was validated for the age group of interest of this study, its use was considered appropriate. It consisted of three sub-scales: Material centrality (six items), Material happiness (six items), and Material success (six items). Response categories for each sub-scale ranged from 1 (No, not at all) to 4 (Yes, very much).

Principal component analysis showed that all six items from the Material centrality sub-scale loaded on a single component, since they measured the importance of material possessions to children (Eigenvalue 3.50). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value of .88 ($p = .000$) supported the combination of the items. Together they explained 58.3% of the variance in material centrality (factor loadings as follows: .78 for Item 1 - 'Do you think it's important to own expensive things?', .68 for Item 2 - 'Do you think it's important to own a lot of money?', .81 for Item 3 - 'Do you think it's important to own expensive clothes?', .82 for Item 4 - 'Do you think it's important to own expensive brands?', .79 for Item 5 - 'Do you think it's important to be able to buy a lot of things?', and .69 for Item 6 - 'Do you think it's important to get a lot of presents for your birthday?', respectively).

Similarly, all six items from the Material happiness sub-scale loaded on a single component (Eigenvalue 3.16), since they aimed at examining the extent to which children believed material possessions would make them happy. However, only five items were retained, since the item measuring children's upset if not received the things they wanted – Item 6 - 'Do you feel unhappy if you don't get the things you really want to have?' did not meet the factor loading minimum criterion discussed above (factor loading of .28). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin coefficient showed a value of .84 ($p = .000$), therefore the five items were combined, explaining 52.7% of the variance in material happiness (factor loadings as follows: .79 for Item 1 - 'Does

buying expensive things make you happy?', .76 for Item 2 - 'Does having a lot of money make you happy?', .79 for Item 3 - 'Would you be happier if you owned more clothes that are expensive?', .80 for Item 4 - 'Would you be happier if you could buy more brands that are expensive?', and .78 for Item 5 - 'Would you be happier if you owned more things?', respectively).

The items from the third sub-scale - Material success, measuring the extent to which children like one another based on their material possessions, loaded on two individual components (Eigenvalues 3.46 and 1.03, respectively). Four items, related to what children thought about other children based on their material possessions, loaded strongly on the first component. Two items, related to how children thought others would perceive them if they themselves had a lot of material possessions, loaded on the second component. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value of .80 ($p = .000$) supported the combination of the items and their loadings on the two components. Together they explained 74.8% of the variance in material success (factor loadings for the first component as follows: .82 for Item 1 - 'Do you like children who have expensive things more than you like other children?', .81 for Item 2 - 'Do you like children who have a lot of money more than you like other children?', .82 for Item 3 - 'Do you like children who have expensive clothes more than you like other children?', and .80 for Item 5 - 'Do you like children who have a lot of things more than you like other children?', respectively; and second component as follows: .90 for Item 4 - 'Do you think other children like you more if you have expensive brands?' and .87 for Item 6 - 'Do you think other children like you more if you have many expensive things?', respectively).

In order to establish the overall score for the *Materialism* variable, another principal component analysis was carried out. This was done in line with the findings of the original study by Oprea, Buijzen, van Reijmersdal, and Valkenburg (2011), where the Material centrality, Material happiness, and Material success sub-scales are used together to predict materialism in children overall. All four component items loaded onto a single factor (Eigenvalue 2.62), which explained 65.5% of the variance in materialism (factor loadings as follows: .85 for Item 1 - 'Material centrality', .88 for Item 2 - 'Material happiness', .74 for Item 3 - 'Material success – others', and .76 for Item 4 - 'Material success – self', respectively). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin coefficient demonstrated a value of .73 ($p = .000$), therefore the four component items could be combined to represent a cumulative measure of materialism in children. Before the new variable was constructed, a reliability analysis was conducted, confirming the internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$). The overall score for the *Materialism* variable was created after averaging the four materialism sub-scale component item scores ($M = 1.96$, $SD = 0.59$, range 1.00-3.62).

3.5.3. Consumer orientation

Involvement in consumer culture of children was measured using a five-item sub-scale of the Consumer Involvement Scale originally created by Schor (2004) and validated by Bottomley, Nairn, Kasser, Ferguson, and Ormrod (2010). The overall scale measured Dissatisfaction (six items), Consumer orientation (five items), and Brand awareness (five items). For the purpose of this research, only involvement in consumer culture through consumer orientation was studied. Each item was formulated as a statement, rather than question, with response categories ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 4 (Strongly agree).

Principal component analysis showed that all five items of the sub-scale of interest loaded on a single component (Eigenvalue 2.02), explaining 40.5% of the variance in consumer orientation (factor loadings as follows: .71 for Item 1 - 'I usually have something in mind that I want to buy or get', .66 for Item 2 - 'I want to make a lot of money when I grow up', .56 for Item 3 - 'I care a lot about my games, toys, and other possessions', .61 for Item 4 - 'When I go somewhere special, I usually like to buy something', and .64 for Item 5 - 'I like shopping and going to stores', respectively). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin coefficient displayed a value of .73 ($p = .000$), hence the reasoning behind combining the items to represent a cumulative measure of children's consumer orientation. Prior to formulating the new variable, a reliability analysis was conducted, confirming the internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .63$). In this particular case the Cronbach's α value could have been attributed to the small number of items in the consumer orientation sub-scale. Nevertheless, the overall score for the *Consumer Orientation* variable was calculated by averaging the scores of the five sub-scale items ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 0.56$, range 1.40-4.00).

3.5.4. Life satisfaction

Life satisfaction was measured by a eight-item scale developed by Oprea, Buijzen, van Reijmersdal, and Valkenburg (2011). Similar to the materialism measurement scale, this scale was validated as appropriate for doing research on children aged 8-11 years. Therefore, it was considered applicable to this study. Eight questions related to children's sense of happiness with their proximate surrounding were asked, giving response options ranging from 1 (Not happy) to 4 (Very happy).

Principal component analysis revealed that the eight items loaded on two components (Eigenvalues 3.29 and 1.16, respectively). All eight items loaded on the first component, while the item measuring children's happiness with their friends – Item 4 - 'How happy are you with

your friends?’ co-loaded on the second component, as well (factor loadings for the first component: .49; and second component: .55, respectively). Together they explained 55.6% of the variance in life satisfaction (factor loadings for the first component as follows: .78 for Item 1 - ‘How happy are you with your life?’, .66 for Item 2 - ‘How happy are you with your home?’, .66 for Item 3 - ‘How happy are you with your parents?’, .64 for Item 5 - ‘How happy are you with your class?’, .62 for Item 6 - ‘How happy are you with your school?’, .64 for Item 7 - ‘How happy are you with yourself?’, and .60 for Item 8 - ‘How happy are you in general?’, respectively). Although the aforementioned item loaded stronger on the second component, it was retained in the first. This was done to ensure that results could be comparable to previous research and to remain in line with the original study approach to grouping the items. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value of .80 ($p = .000$) further supported the factorability of the scale. In order to construct a unified variable measuring *Life Satisfaction*, a reliability analysis was undertaken. Moreover, an additional Cronbach’s alpha if item deleted test was carried out to examine whether the choice for retaining the item on the first component was correct. The test showed that if the item was removed, the overall reliability would have slightly decreased (Cronbach α from .78 to .77), therefore the chosen option was justified. A *Life Satisfaction* variable was computed by averaging the eight scale items ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.37$, range 1.50-4.00).

3.5.5. Advertising literacy

Advertising literacy was measured by fifteen items out of a twenty-five item scale developed by Rozendaal, Oprea, and Buijzen’s (2016). Filtering out nine of the scale items was necessary, since they required visual stimulus materials to be presented to children, in order to be measured. As discussed earlier in the chapter, the adopted research method was to be a self-administered paper-and-pencil survey, which would have not allowed for television advertisements to be displayed to children. Hence why studying the attitudinal and conceptual dimensions to advertising literacy was considered most appropriate. This choice was further justified by the authors of the measurement scale, who claim that questionnaires are better suited to measure the conceptual and attitudinal dimensions of advertising literacy, rather than the more specific concept of advertising literacy performance (Rozendaal, Oprea, & Buijzen, 2016).

In the original study, the conceptual advertising literacy dimension was studied by a sixteen item scale, consisting of six sub-scales. Two of them were used for the purpose of this research, given the aforementioned reasoning – Understanding the persuasive intent of advertising (three items) and Understanding the selling intent of advertising (three items).

Response categories spanned from 1 (Yes, for sure) to 4 (No, certainly not). The attitudinal advertising literacy dimension was investigated by a nine item scale, consisting of three sub-scales – Understanding advertising’s bias (three items), Skepticism toward advertising (three items), and Disliking of advertising (three items), offering response options ranging from 1 (Never) to 4 (Very often). For the purpose of this research, all three sub-scales were examined.

Prior to carrying out principal component and reliability analyses for each of the sub-scales, their items’ consistency with one another was examined, since the original study suggested that few items from the Understanding the persuasive intent of advertising, Understanding the selling intent of advertising, Understanding of advertising’s bias, and Skepticism toward advertising sub-scales be reversed. To ensure comparability of results between studies, the respective response categories were changed. The items from the Understanding the persuasive intent of advertising and Understanding the selling intent of advertising sub-scales were reversed, to become 1 (Yes, for sure) to 4 (No, certainly not). This would indicate overall high levels of conceptual advertising literacy for scores closer to 1, and low levels of conceptual advertising literacy for response scores closer to 4. Identically, the items belonging to the Understanding of advertising’s bias and Skepticism toward advertising sub-scales, appointed by the original study, were reversed. Their new range, from 1 (Very often) to 4 (Never), indicated that response scores closer to 1 would suggest poor attitudinal advertising literacy, while scores closer to 4 would demonstrate good attitudinal advertising literacy. By taking these actions, the direction of responses for all items could be unified with those of the original study.

The executed principal component and reliability analyses revealed that all items belonging to their respective sub-scale loaded on single components. The Conceptual advertising literacy scale was examined first. For the Understanding the persuasive intent of advertising sub-scale, the single component (Eigenvalue 2.14) explained 71.4% of the variance in advertising’s persuasive intents (factor loadings as follows: .76 for Item 1 – ‘Are commercials on television there to make you want to have the advertised products?’, .87 for Item 2 – ‘Are commercials on television there to make you think positively (i.e., think happy) about the advertised products?’, and .88 for Item 3 – ‘Are commercials on television there to make you feel positively (i.e., feel happy) about the advertised products?’, respectively). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .68 ($p = .000$) and Cronbach’s alpha value was .80. A new sub-scale variable, consisting of the three items loading on the single component, was created ($M = 2.05$, $SD = 0.88$, range 1.00-4.00). For the Understanding the selling intent of advertising sub-scale, the single component (Eigenvalue 2.09), explained 69.8% of the variance in advertising’s selling

intents (factor loadings as follows: .87 for Item 1 – ‘Are commercials on television there to make you buy the advertised products?’, .85 for Item 2 – ‘Are commercials on television there to make you ask your parents to buy the advertised products?’, and .80 for Item 3 – ‘Are commercials on television there to make you buy the advertised products of your allowance?’, respectively). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .69 ($p = .000$) and Cronbach’s alpha value was .78. A new sub-scale variable, reflecting the factor loadings revealed by the undertaken analyses, was constructed ($M = 1.79$, $SD = 0.84$, range 1.00-4.00).

Following, the Attitudinal advertising literacy scale was examined. For the Understanding advertising’s bias sub-scale, the single component (Eigenvalue 1.57), explained 52.3% of the variance in advertising’s bias (factor loadings as follows: .87 for Item 1 – ‘How often do you think television commercials are real?’, .77 for Item 2 – ‘How often do you think television commercials are fake?’, and .47 for Item 3 – ‘How often do you think that what you see in television commercials is like things are in reality?’, respectively). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value of .48 ($p = .000$) did not meet the criterion for sampling adequacy and factorability of the sub-scale. The executed reliability test also revealed a poor internal consistency of the sub-scale (Cronbach’s alpha = .51). The additionally performed Cronbach’s alpha if item deleted test revealed an improvement in the internal consistency of the sub-scale could be achieved, if the item measuring children’s opinion whether television advertisements reflected real life was removed. After disposing the item and reaching a better reliability coefficient value (Cronbach’s alpha = .64), an additional factor analysis was carried out for the outstanding two items. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value of .50 indicated that the two items could not be combined into a sub-scale. To further investigate if this was the case, a correlation test was run. The correlation coefficient value of .48 ($p = .000$) revealed a rather good correlation between the two items, confirming the appropriateness of combining them. Thus, a new sub-scale variable was created ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 0.72$, range 1.00-4.00). For the Skepticism toward advertising sub-scale, the single component (Eigenvalue 2.06) explained 68.8% of the variance in skepticism (factor loadings as follows: .80 for Item 1 – ‘How often do you think television commercials are truthful?’, .85 for Item 2 – ‘How often do you think television commercials tell the truth?’, and .84 for Item 3 – ‘How often do you think you can believe television commercials?’, respectively). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Cronbach’s alpha values were .69 ($p = .000$), and .77, respectively. A new sub-scale variable retaining the initial items was established ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.60$, range 1.00-4.00). Finally, for the Disliking of advertising sub-scale, the single component (Eigenvalue 2.22) explained 74.2% of the variance in advertising dislike (factor loadings as follows: .84 for Item 1 – ‘How often do you think television commercials are boring?’, .86 for Item 2 – ‘How often

do you think television commercials are stupid?', and .88 for Item 3 – 'How often do you think television commercials are irritating?', respectively). Its Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .71 ($p = .000$). The Cronbach's alpha value was .83. Similarly to the actions taken for rest of the sub-scales, a new sub-scale variable was created for disliking of advertising, as well. The new variable consisted of all three items originally included in the sub-scale ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 0.83$, range 1.00-4.00).

Constructing new variables out of each sub-scale would allow for further principal component analyses to be carried out. Thus, a prompt following of the scale structure outlined in the original study by Rozendaal, Oprea, and Buijzen's (2016) could be achieved. The undertaken analysis of the Conceptual advertising literacy's Understanding the persuasive intent of advertising and Understanding the selling intent of advertising sub-scale variables revealed that both sub-scale items loaded on a single component (Eigenvalue 1.63). The component explained 81.6% of the variance in conceptual advertising literacy (factor loadings: .90 for both items). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin coefficient displayed a value of .50 ($p = .000$). Since this score was considered low, an additional correlation analysis was conducted to see whether the two sub-scales could nonetheless be combined. The analysis revealed a significant correlation coefficient of .63 ($p = .000$), indicating a strong correlation between the sub-scales (Pallant, 2010). Thus, as well as on the basis of an overall good reliability (Cronbach $\alpha = .77$), the combination of the two sub-scales was supported. Creating a cumulative measure of children's ability to understand the intent of advertising was performed, and a new variable was established - *Conceptual Advertising Literacy* ($M = 1.92$, $SD = 0.78$, range 1.00-4.00).

For the Attitudinal advertising literacy sub-scales variables, the analysis also showed a single component presence (Eigenvalue 1.77), explaining 59.1% of the variance in attitudinal advertising literacy (factor loadings as follows: .79 for Item 1 – 'Understanding of advertising's bias', .80 for Item 2 – 'Skepticism toward advertising', and .72 for Item 3 – 'Dislike of advertising', respectively). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .65 ($p = .000$), while the reliability analysis demonstrated a good internal consistency of the scale (Cronbach $\alpha = .64$). The sufficient internal consistency of the sub-scales representing Attitudinal advertising literacy allowed for a common variable measuring children's attitudes toward advertising to be constructed – *Attitudinal Advertising Literacy* ($M = 3.09$, $SD = 0.55$, range 1.00-4.00).

The choice made regarding establishing two individual measurement variables was supported by the original study. Moreover, thus comparability of results with other studies could be made possible.

3.6. Data analysis

As communicated earlier in this chapter, research was carried out through administering surveys. An examination on the filled in paper questionnaires was done, in order to identify whether there were any invalid responses. After no such were established, answers were loaded in the statistical software SPSS. Data were labeled and response values were assigned, as well as recoding of items was done where necessary. Having computed all required for the data analyses variables, the statistical tests could be run.

The theoretical framework established a total of eight hypotheses, based on the proposed research questions in the introduction. Hypotheses H1, H2, H3, and H3a and H3b were formulated according to the first, second and thirs sub-questions, respectively. In order to test them, linear regression analyses were employed. Hypothesis H4 was based on the forth sub-question stated in the introduction chapter. It was tested with the use of an independent t-test analysis. The final three hypotheses - H5, H6, and H7, were drawn upon the fifth sub-question, and were tested by the means of multiple regression analyses with added interaction effects. To justify the use of linear regression analysis, though, preliminary assumption tests were carried out. This was done to ensure there was no breach of the assumptions of normality of distribution of the dependent variables and linearity of the relationships between predictor and criterion variables. This was achieved through an inspection of the normal probability plots and scatterplot graphs revealed in SPSS.

The next chapter will present the results of the research. It will begin by providing the descriptive statistics of the main research variables for the entire sample, as well as providing the individual variable descriptives for each of the school background groups. Furthermore, a zero-order correlation table will be included, displaying the expected correlations between the main variables. Finally, the carried out statistical analyses will be introduced, supporting or rejecting the outlined hypotheses.

4. Results

As discussed, this chapter will present the research findings from the data analysis. It will start with expanding on the descriptive statistics for the measurement variables that were briefly mentioned in the previous chapter.

4.1. Descriptive statistics

A descriptive statistics analysis not only allows for identification of missing values in the data, as it was outlined in the previous chapter, but also justifies the use of certain statistical techniques. Examining the measurement variables for breach of the assumptions, having an impact on these statistical tests, is an important part of the preliminary analysis phase (Pallant, 2007).

Table 4.1 summarises and expands on the previously presented descriptives for the whole sample ($N = 273$). In addition to including the mean, range, standard deviation, and Cronbach's alpha values of the variables, the table also displays the variables' percentile values. Justification for the appropriateness of the choice made was the percentile values' quality to withstand outliers, hence enabling a better distribution of the variables (Field, 2009).

The mean scores indicated that overall, the children who took part in the research, showed as being exposed to television advertising ($M = 2.39$). Their responses suggested a rather non-materialistic viewpoint ($M = 1.96$), yet a strong trend toward involvement in consumer culture was revealed ($M = 3.02$). In terms of their life satisfaction, children reported as very happy with their lives and surroundings ($M = 3.65$). As for their level of advertising literacy, children scored high in both the conceptual and attitudinal categories ($M = 1.92$, and 3.09 , respectively). Despite this, children's percentile value results showed that 25% of them lacked on conceptual advertising literacy ($M = 2.33$), while as many as 75% had rather poor attitudinal advertising literacy ($M = 2.67$). Moreover, although children appeared not overly materialistic, one in every four demonstrated a much higher score on materialism ($M = 2.39$). Together with the reported high levels of consumer orientation, children's responses indicated of a tendency toward involvement in consumer culture for the age group of interest. Whether exposure to advertising and advertising literacy were predicting factors for this trend, was to be further examined.

Table 4.1. Descriptive statistics for the main research variables for the whole sample ($N = 273$)

	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>Percentiles</i> <i>50</i>	<i>75</i>
Television Advertising Exposure	1.00	4.00	2.39	.50	*	2.08	2.33	2.75
Materialism	1.00	3.62	1.96	.59	.82	1.46	1.94	2.39
Consumer Orientation	1.40	4.00	3.02	.56	.63	2.60	3.00	3.40
Life Satisfaction	1.50	4.00	3.65	.37	.78	3.50	3.75	3.88
Conceptual Advertising Literacy	1.00	4.00	1.92	.78	.77	1.33	1.83	2.33
Attitudinal Advertising Literacy	1.00	4.00	3.09	.55	.64	2.67	3.06	3.56

Note: Television Advertising Exposure entails children's reports on their general viewing frequency of six pre-defined television channels (1 = Never, 4 = Very often. Materialism represents children's fixation over material objects and values (1 = No, not at all, 4 = Yes, very much). Consumer orientation reveals children's susceptibility to involvement in consumer culture (statements to answer to with 1 = Strongly disagree, 4 = Strongly Agree). Life satisfaction is concerned with the subjective well-being of children and overall happiness (1 = Not happy, 4 = Very happy). Advertising literacy reflects on children's capabilities to understand advertising's intents (Conceptual advertising literacy; 1 = Yes, for sure, 4 = No, certainly not) and their attitudes toward advertising (Attitudinal advertising literacy; 1 = Very often, 4 = Never)

Since this research was interested in studying two different groups of children – private students in acting and regular students, their individual scores on each of the aforementioned variables will be presented, as well. Table 4.2 displays the scores of the children attending the private acting school ($N = 92$), and Table 4.3 - of those, enrolled in regular schools ($N = 181$).

As seen on Table 4.2, compared to the whole sample, the children attending the private acting school on average scored lower in their exposure to television advertising, materialism, consumer orientation, and life satisfaction ($M = 2.36, 1.76, 2.92,$ and 3.63 , respectively). On the contrary, they demonstrated higher scores in terms of conceptual and attitudinal advertising literacy skills ($M = 1.39$ and 3.31 , respectively). The percentile score results revealed that as many as 75% of the children attending the private acting school had very high level of conceptual advertising literacy ($M = 1.00$) and rather high level of attitudinal advertising literacy ($M = 2.90$). Although scoring lower on life satisfaction compared the sample, it could be said that the children enrolled in the private acting school were happy and satisfied. This was further supported by the fact that the lowest score a child from this group had attained ($Min. = 2.38$) already indicated of a rather high level of life satisfaction.

The numbers on Table 4.3 indicated that the children from the second group - those attending regular schools - appeared to score higher than the overall sample in terms of television advertising exposure, materialism, consumer orientation, and life satisfaction ($M = 2.41, 2.07, 3.07,$ and 3.66 , respectively). The table also demonstrated lower level of conceptual and attitudinal advertising literacy for this group, compared to that of all surveyed children ($M = 2.19$ and 2.98 , respectively). The percentile score results not only showed that the children belonging to this group had higher scores on materialism and consumer orientation compared to the whole sample, but also revealed that as many as 25% of them appeared to be overly materialistic and involved in consumer culture ($M = 2.48$ and 3.50 , respectively).

Prior to revealing the results of the carried out analyses and tests of hypotheses, how the main variables of this study correlate with one other will be presented (Table 4.4). As the table demonstrates, the expected relationship between television advertising exposure and materialism and consumer orientation was confirmed. As seen, there was a positive and significant correlation among the variables. No such significant correlation could be attributed to television advertising exposure and life satisfaction variables, though. Quite interestingly, conceptual advertising literacy demonstrated no significant relation relationship with any of the other variables, while attitudinal advertising literacy showed as negatively and significantly correlated to all of them. Finally, materialism showed as positively related to consumer orientation.

Table 4.2. Descriptive statistics for the main research variables for the children attending private acting school ($N = 92$)

	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Percentiles</i>		
					<i>25</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>75</i>
Television Advertising Exposure	1.00	4.00	2.36	.54	2.00	2.33	2.67
Materialism	1.00	3.21	1.76	.51	1.37	1.67	2.12
Consumer Orientation	1.60	4.00	2.92	.58	2.60	3.00	3.40
Life Satisfaction	2.38	4.00	3.63	.35	3.50	3.75	3.88
Conceptual Advertising Literacy	1.00	2.17	1.39	.35	1.00	1.33	1.67
Attitudinal Advertising Literacy	2.11	4.00	3.31	.46	2.90	3.33	3.72

Note: Television Advertising Exposure entails children’s reports on their general viewing frequency of six pre-defined television channels (1 = Never, 4 = Very often. Materialism represents children’s fixation over material objects and values (1 = No, not at all, 4 = Yes, very much). Consumer orientation reveals children’s susceptibility to involvement in consumer culture (statements to answer to with 1 = Strongly disagree, 4 = Strongly Agree). Life satisfaction is concerned with the subjective well-being of children and overall happiness (1 = Not happy, 4 = Very happy). Advertising literacy reflects on children’s capabilities to understand advertising’s intents (Conceptual advertising literacy; 1 = Yes, for sure, 4 = No, certainly not) and their attitudes toward advertising (Attitudinal advertising literacy; 1 = Very often, 4 = Never)

Table 4.3. Descriptive statistics for the main research variables for the children attending general schools ($N = 181$)

	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Percentiles</i>		
					<i>25</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>75</i>
Television Advertising Exposure	1.00	3.50	2.41	.48	2.17	2.33	2.83
Materialism	1.00	3.62	2.07	.61	1.60	2.05	2.48
Consumer Orientation	1.40	4.00	3.07	.54	2.80	3.00	3.50
Life Satisfaction	1.50	4.00	3.66	.39	3.50	3.75	4.00
Conceptual Advertising Literacy	1.00	4.00	2.19	.80	1.58	2.17	2.67
Attitudinal Advertising Literacy	1.00	4.00	2.98	.56	2.61	2.94	3.39

Note: Television Advertising Exposure entails children's reports on their general viewing frequency of six pre-defined television channels (1 = Never, 4 = Very often. Materialism represents children's fixation over material objects and values (1 = No, not at all, 4 = Yes, very much). Consumer orientation reveals children's susceptibility to involvement in consumer culture (statements to answer to with 1 = Strongly disagree, 4 = Strongly Agree). Life satisfaction is concerned with the subjective well-being of children and overall happiness (1 = Not happy, 4 = Very happy). Advertising literacy reflects on children's capabilities to understand advertising's intents (Conceptual advertising literacy; 1 = Yes, for sure, 4 = No, certainly not) and their attitudes toward advertising (Attitudinal advertising literacy; 1 = Very often, 4 = Never)

Table 4.4. Correlations among the main research variables

	Television Advertising Exposure	Materialism	Consumer Orientation	Life Satisfaction	Conceptual Advertising Literacy	Attitudinal Advertising Literacy
Television Advertising Exposure	–					
Materialism	.22***	–				
Consumer Orientation	.21***	.45***	–			
Life Satisfaction	.08	.03	.12*	–		
Conceptual Advertising Literacy	.05	.10	.09	.08	–	
Attitudinal Advertising Literacy	-.16**	-.24***	-.23***	-.15*	-.23***	–

Note: Television Advertising Exposure entails children’s reports on their general viewing frequency of six pre-defined television channels (1 = Never, 4 = Very often. Materialism represents children’s fixation over material objects and values (1 = No, not at all, 4 = Yes, very much). Consumer orientation reveals children’s susceptibility to involvement in consumer culture (statements to answer to with 1 = Strongly disagree, 4 = Strongly Agree). Life satisfaction is concerned with the subjective well-being of children and overall happiness (1 = Not happy, 4 = Very happy). Advertising literacy reflects on children’s capabilities to understand advertising’s intents (Conceptual advertising literacy; 1 = Yes, for sure, 4 = No, certainly not) and their attitudes toward advertising (Attitudinal advertising literacy; 1 = Very often, 4 = Never)

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

4.2. Testing of the theoretical model

As discussed in the previous chapter, a combination of preliminary, linear regression and independent t-test analyses were carried out, in order to test the assumptions established by the theoretical framework.

4.2.1. Effects of television advertising exposure on children's materialism (H1)

In order to determine whether exposure to television advertising led to increase in materialism among the studied children and test H1, a standard linear regression analysis was carried out. The amount of viewing of the pre-selected television channels - the *Television Advertising Exposure* variable - served as a predictor variable, while the role of a criterion variable was overall taken by the *Materialism* index. The analysis showed that this regression model could be used to predict children's materialism - $F(1, 271) = 13.64$ ($p = .000$). More precisely, 4.8% of the variance in materialism could be attributed to exposure to television advertising. The standardised and unstandardised coefficients ($\beta = .22$ and $B = .26$, respectively, $p = .000$) indicated that an increase in television advertising exposure was associated with an increase in materialism (β). The effect of this association, explained by the B , revealed that an increase of a point in the score on television advertising exposure was associated with an increase of .26 in the score on materialism. A prior to running the analysis inspection of the histogram and scatterplot graphs ensured that all conditions for linearity and normality of the variables tested were met. Based on the aforementioned, it could be concluded that a significant effect of television advertising exposure on children's materialism was found. Hence, H1 was supported.

4.2.2. Effects of television advertising exposure on children's involvement in consumer culture (H2)

Testing of the assumptions outlined in H2, namely that increased exposure to television advertising would lead to increased consumer orientation, was undertaken in a similar manner to examining H1. A standard linear regression analysis was executed where *Television Advertising Exposure* remained as the predictor variable, while the overall *Consumer Orientation* index served as a criterion variable. Following a confirmation that the assumptions of normality and linearity of the variables were not violated, by observing the histogram and scatterplot graphs, the statistical regression test was run. The suitability of using the regression model to predict

children's involvement in consumer culture was verified - $F(1, 271) = 12.76$ ($p = .000$). More specifically, 4.5% of the variance in children's consumer orientation could be attributed to exposure to television advertising through the model. This was further confirmed by the value of the standardised coefficient ($beta = .21$, $p = .000$). It indicated that the more exposed to television advertising children became, the more their involvement in consumer culture increased. The exact increase volume, as informed by the unstandardised coefficient ($B = .24$, $p = .000$), indicated that for every unit increase of the variable measuring television advertising exposure, an increase of .24 in the consumer orientation score would occur. The results from the analysis revealed a significant effect of television advertising exposure on the involvement in consumer culture of children. Therefore, H2 was confirmed.

4.2.3. Effects of television advertising exposure on children's life satisfaction (H3)

As suggested by H3, exposure to television advertising exposure of children would lead to a decrease in their life satisfaction. This assumption was tested through a standard linear regression analysis. The *Television Advertising Exposure* variable served as a predictor, while *Life Satisfaction* played the role of the criterion variable. The analysis showed the regression model's inability to predict decrease in children's life satisfaction, and attribute it to increase in their television advertising exposure - $F(1, 271) = 1.89$ ($p = .170$). Observing the histogram and scatterplot graphs, a violation of the assumptions of linearity and normality of the variables was identified, supporting the established unfitness of the model. Despite the insignificant effect ($p > .05$), the standardised ($beta = .08$) and unstandardised ($B = .06$) coefficients demonstrated that the relationship between predictor and criterion variables was in the expected direction.. In other words, if significant, the regression model could have served as a predictor for decreased life satisfaction. More precisely, life satisfaction would have been decreasing by .06 for each unit increase of television advertising exposure. Although revealing a trend in the expected direction, the model did not allow for the assumptions to be confirmed. Since no significant effect of television advertising exposure on decreasing life satisfaction was established, H3 was rejected.

As the theoretical framework discussed, in addition to expecting a direct relationship between television advertising exposure and decrease in life satisfaction, indirect relationships between television advertising exposure and decrease in life satisfaction through materialism (H3a) and television advertising exposure and decrease in life satisfaction through consumer involvement (H3b) were predicted. In order to test the hypotheses, two conditions had to be fulfilled. For the first part of the indirect relationship test, significant direct relationships between the predictor and criterion variables had to be secured. For H3a, this condition was fulfilled by

the supported H1 – a significant direct effect of television advertising exposure on the growth of children’s materialism was established. For H3b, the criterion was met by the supported H2 - a significant direct effect of television advertising exposure on children’s consumer orientation was confirmed. In order to meet the second requirement, additional analyses had to be carried out. For H3a the analysis had to determine whether there was a significant direct relationship between materialism and life satisfaction. Similarly, for H3b, the analysis had to identify whether there was a significant direct relationship between consumer orientation and life satisfaction.

4.2.3.1. Indirect effects of television advertising exposure on children’s life satisfaction through materialism (H3a)

In order to test H3a and determine whether materialism mediated an indirect relationship between television advertising exposure and life satisfaction of the children who participated in the study, the required steps mentioned above were taken. As discussed above, step one had already been completed. To accomplish the second step, a standard linear regression analysis was carried out. The *Materialism* variable, measuring children’s susceptibility to material possessions and values, served as a predictor, while the criterion variable was the overall *Life Satisfaction* index. The undertaken preliminary analyses revealed that the assumptions of normality and linearity of the variables were violated. The regression model could not attribute any decrease in children’s life satisfaction to materialism - $F(1, 271) = 0.27$ ($p = .605$), since the effect was insignificant. Even though, the standardised and unstandardised coefficients ($\beta = .03$ and $B = .02$, respectively, $p = .605$) indicated a slight trend in the expected direction, no conclusion could be drawn due to the insignificance of the expected effect. As a result, H3a was denied.

4.2.3.2. Indirect effects of television advertising exposure on children’s life satisfaction through consumer orientation (H3b)

H3b aimed to investigate whether involvement in consumer culture mediated an indirect relationship between television advertising exposure and life satisfaction. To do so, the aforementioned criteria had to be met. The first point of the set of requirements was accomplished by proving that television advertising exposure led to increase in children’s consumer orientation. A standard linear regression analysis was undertaken to fulfill the second requirement. The *Consumer Orientation* variable measuring children’s consumer culture participation was considered a predictor; the *Life Satisfaction* variable served as a criterion. Breach of the assumptions of normality and linearity of the variables was evaded by inspecting

the histogram and scatterplot graphs. What the regression test demonstrated, was the model's usefulness to significantly predict a decrease in children's life satisfaction based on their consumer orientation - $F(1, 271) = 4.13$ ($p = .043$). The variance in life satisfaction that could be attributed to consumer orientation was of 1.5 %. The standardised and unstandardised coefficients ($\beta = .12$, $B = .02$, $p = .043$), indicated a rather weak association between increased consumer orientation and decrease in the life satisfaction of children. Still, H3b was supported.

4.2.4. Effects of school background on children's level of advertising literacy (H4)

The purpose of H4 was to determine whether the level of advertising literacy of the surveyed children depended on the school they attended and activities they had in class. More precisely, the hypothesis sought to reveal whether a difference in the level of advertising literacy of the children would be observed, based on where they studied. As the previous chapters outlined, the children enrolled in a standardised form of education, provided by regular state schools, were expected to appear less advertising literate than their peers, who attended a private acting school and were involved in the advertising industry. To test H4, an independent t-test analysis was carried out for each type of advertising literacy, by taking into consideration the school background of the children.

Following the already established structure of this research, conceptual advertising literacy was examined first. The independent t-test was undertaken to compare the levels of conceptual advertising literacy between the two groups of children. As discussed in the methods chapter, a recoding of items from the conceptual advertising literacy scale took place, causing a reversed interpretation of the response categories. As a result, lower scale scores indicated higher levels of conceptual advertising literacy, and vice versa. The findings of the carried out analysis revealed that the children, attending the private acting school and participating in the advertising industry ($M = 1.39$, $SD = 0.35$) demonstrated a significantly higher level of conceptual advertising literacy compared to the children, enrolled in regular schools [$M = 2.19$, $SD = 0.80$; $t(266) = -11.51$, $p = .000$]. The effect size of the difference between the two groups was large ($\eta^2 = .33$).

Similarly to the executed comparison of the levels of conceptual advertising literacy between the two groups of children, an independent t-test was carried out to examine whether there was a difference in the levels of attitudinal advertising literacy among the children. Recoding of items occurred for the attitudinal advertising literacy scale, as well. The response categories were reversed so that higher scoring on the scale signified higher levels of attitudinal

advertising literacy, and vice versa. The group that demonstrated superiority in terms of level of attitudinal advertising literacy was once more that of the children, attending the private acting school ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 0.46$). However, since the difference between theirs, and the scores of the children, studying in regular schools ($M = 2.98$, $SD = 0.56$) was marginally significant [$t(271) = 4.90$, $p = .061$], the results were to be interpreted with caution. The effect size of the difference between the groups was moderate (eta squared = .08).

The carried out tests revealed that the children, enrolled in the private acting school demonstrated a higher level of advertising literacy as a whole, compared to the children, attending regular schools. Hence, H4 was affirmed.

4.2.5. Effects of television advertising exposure on children's materialism depending on their school background (H5)

While the purpose of H1 was to establish whether television advertising exposure had an effect on children's materialism by studying the whole sample, H5 sought to examine whether this effect would vary depending on the school background of the children. In essence, it was expected that the effect would be stronger for the children, enrolled in a regular form of education, provided by state schools. On average, these children demonstrated higher scores on television advertising exposure and materialism ($M = 2.41$, $SD = .48$ and $M = 2.07$, $SD = .61$, respectively) than the children, attending the private acting school ($M = 2.36$, $SD = .54$ and $M = 1.76$, $SD = .51$, respectively), thus justifying the direction of the discussed assumption.

In order to test the hypothesis, a multiple linear regression analysis was carried out. The *Television Advertising Exposure* and *School* variables served as predictors, while the overall *Materialism* index - as criterion. Additionally, an *Interaction* variable was constructed, as such was believed to allow for the better understanding of the relationship between the predictor variables and their relative importance (Pallant, 2010). The new variable represented the interaction between the *Television Advertising Exposure* and *School* variables, hence why it was also considered a predictor variable ($M = 1.60$, $SD = 1.21$).

The regression analysis revealed that overall, the constructed model could act as a statistically significant predictor of materialism - $F(3, 269) = 10.24$ ($p = .000$). Moreover, the results indicated that the model could account for 9.2% of the variance of the materialism index. The fit of the model was further confirmed by inspecting the histogram and scatterplot graphs, which indicated that the assumptions of linearity and normality were not breached. What the analysis results also revealed was that no direct effect of school belonging and form of education on children's materialism could be observed, since the test results were insignificant

($\beta = .18$, $B = .14$, $p = .609$). On the other hand, the amount of television advertising exposure of children demonstrated to have a significant direct effect on their materialism ($\beta = .22$, $B = .18$, $p = .049$), further supporting H1. Finally, no significant direct effect on children's materialism caused by the interaction between the predictor variables could be verified, since no such interaction was found ($\beta = .05$, $B = .10$, $p = .730$). Since the interaction effect was insignificant ($p > .05$), no difference in the effect of television advertising exposure on children's materialism, taking into consideration their school background, could be observed. The results demonstrated that only the main effect of television advertising exposure on materialism could be supported. Therefore, the assumption that the effects of television advertising exposure on materialism would be stronger for the children attending regular schools than for those, enrolled in the private acting school, could not be confirmed. Hence, H5 was rejected.

4.2.6. Effects of television advertising exposure on children's involvement in consumer culture depending on their school background (H6)

The aim of H6 was to compare the magnitude of the effect television advertising exposure had on children's involvement in consumer culture depending on their school belonging. More accurately, it was expected that children who attended regular state schools would appear as affected stronger than the children, enrolled in the private acting school. The two groups' average scores on television advertising exposure and consumer orientation explained why such a tendency was expected. As previously mentioned, the children attending regular schools demonstrated higher levels of exposure to television advertising than the children from the other school belonging group. In addition, they also scored higher on consumer orientation ($M = 3.07$, $SD = .53$), compared to the children, attending the private acting school ($M = 2.92$, $SD = .58$).

Similarly to testing H5, a multiple regression analysis was carried out. The *Television Advertising Exposure*, *School*, and *Interaction* variables were allocated as predictors, leaving the criterion role to the *Consumer Orientation* variable. An inspection of the histogram and scatterplot graphs demonstrated a normally distributed criterion variable and linearity of the regression, which indicated of a good fit of the regression model. This was further confirmed by the results of the analysis. They revealed a model, capable of significantly predicting involvement in consumer culture - $F(3, 269) = 6.15$ ($p = .000$), and explaining 5.4% of the variance. Although the test results presented an overall fitting model, no significant direct effects of the predictor over the criterion variables were demonstrated. The school background of children appeared as not affecting their involvement in consumer culture ($\beta = -.17$, $B = -.20$, p

= .538). No direct effect of television advertising exposure on children's consumer orientation was found, either ($\beta = .14$, $B = .13$, $p = .181$). Furthermore, an insignificant interaction effect was established ($\beta = .32$, $B = .15$, $p = .280$), hence no difference in the effect of television advertising exposure on children's consumer orientation, caused by their school background, could be found. Since no validation of the suggestion that the effect of advertising exposure on involvement in consumer culture would be stronger among the children attending regular schools than among those enrolled in the private acting school could be provided, H6 was denied.

4.2.7. Effects of television advertising exposure on children's life satisfaction depending on their school background (H7)

The main goal set for H7 was to examine whether the two groups of children would differ in the levels of impact the exposure to television advertising would have on decreasing their life satisfaction. As with H5 and H6, it was expected that the impacts would be more severe for the children attending regular schools, than for the ones, studying in the private acting school. The foundation of this assumption was laid based on how children scored in terms of their exposure to television advertising and life satisfaction. As already known, the children attending regular schools appeared to be more exposed to television advertising than the ones, studying in the private acting school. The same group also showed as better satisfied with their lives ($M = 3.66$, $SD = .39$) than the other ($M = 3.63$, $SD = .35$). To check whether these results could indeed be supportive of the assumption, a multiple linear regression analysis was carried out.

As previously clarified, the *Television Advertising Exposure*, *School*, and *Interaction* variables served as predictors, while the *Life Satisfaction* variable was used as a criterion. The executed analysis demonstrated the incapability of the regression model to predict life satisfaction - $F(3, 269) = 1.51$ ($p = .212$), since the effect was insignificant. The unfitness of the model was further confirmed by the histogram and scatterplot graphs, which revealed a violation of the assumptions of linearity and normality. No significant direct relationship between children's school background and whether that would lead to a decrease in their life satisfaction was found ($\beta = .46$, $B = .36$, $p = .114$). Even though the presence of a significant direct effect of television advertising on the decrease of life satisfaction was established ($\beta = .19$, $B = .15$, $p = .047$), the overall insignificance of the regression model did not allow for this expectation to be verified. The interaction effect also showed as insignificant ($\beta = -.44$, $B = -.14$, $p = .140$), further confirming that no associations between the effects television advertising exposure had in decreasing children's life satisfaction, and where children studied, could be made. Although, if

significant, the negative values of the standardised ($\beta = -.44$) and unstandardised ($B = -.14$) coefficients of the interaction would have proven the aforementioned assumption. Yet, since significance of the model was not reached, no difference in the effects of television advertising exposure between the two groups could be established. In other words, the assertion that the impacts of television advertising exposure on decreasing the life satisfaction of children would be larger for the regular school attending group, compared to the private acting school enrolled one, could not be certified. Therefore, H7 was disproved.

What was of particular interest was that H5, H6, and H7 were built on the assumptions that the children enrolled in the private acting school would have a higher level of conceptual and attitudinal advertising literacy than the others, because they were immersed in the advertising industry. The expectations outlined in the aforementioned hypotheses were formulated so also because regular schools did not provide any advertising literacy training for their pupils, hence why the children were believed to fall behind in their development of advertising literacy skills. However, the asserted differences in the effects of advertising exposure on materialism, consumer orientation, and life satisfaction between the two groups turned out to be insignificant. This indicated that school background, and indirectly advertising literacy, did not play such an important predicting role, after all. Yet, by revealing a significant effect of school belonging on both conceptual and attitudinal advertising literacies, the supported H4 contradicted to this indication.

To validate whether advertising literacy, conceptual and/or attitudinal, had mediating effects on the impacts of television advertising exposure on children's materialism, involvement in consumer culture, and life satisfaction, additional regression analyses were to be carried out. If such effects were established, an overall reduction of the impacts television advertising exposure had on the assessed children was to be expected.

4.2.8. Additional analyses

To be able to examine the mentioned above, whether advertising literacy interacted with television advertising exposure had to be established first. Identically to the procedure of testing H5, H6, and H7, additional interaction variable was to be constructed. However, since this research was interested in studying conceptual advertising literacy and attitudinal advertising literacy individually, two separate interaction variables were computed. The variable *Conceptual Interaction* ($M = 4.61$, $SD = 2.13$) demonstrated the synergy between the *Television Advertising Exposure* and *Conceptual Advertising Literacy* variables, while the *Attitudinal Interaction* one (M

= 7.35, $SD = 1.93$), presented the relationship between the *Television Advertising Exposure* and *Attitudinal Advertising Literacy* variables.

Initially, conceptual advertising literacy's impact over the effect of television advertising exposure on materialism, involvement in consumer culture, and life satisfaction was examined. To construct the regression model, the *Television Advertising Exposure*, *Conceptual Advertising Literacy*, and *Conceptual Interaction* variables were appointed as predictors, while the *Materialism*, *Consumer Orientation*, and *Life Satisfaction* variables, respectively, served as criterions.

The first analysis carried out, including the interaction, showed that the regression model could significantly predict materialism - $F(3, 269) = 8.01$ ($p = .000$), explaining 7.2% of the criterion's variance. The results indicated that there was a direct significant effect of television advertising exposure on materialism ($beta = .61$, $B = .73$, $p = .000$), further supporting H1. A direct significant effect of conceptual advertising literacy was also established ($beta = .91$, $B = .69$, $p = .003$). As apparent from the $beta$ coefficient values, the effect of conceptual advertising literacy on materialism was stronger than the main effect of television advertising exposure. Furthermore, a significant direct effect of the interaction on materialism was revealed ($beta = -.95$, $B = -.26$, $p = .006$). The negative values of the $beta$ and B coefficients suggested that as the levels of children's conceptual advertising literacy increased, the effects television advertising exposure had on children's materialism decreased.

The second analysis that was undertaken, inclusive of the *Conceptual Interaction*, presented a regression model capable of significantly predicting involvement in consumer culture for children - $F(3, 269) = 4.94$ ($p = .002$), explaining 4.2% of the variance in the criterion variable. The results, however, demonstrated that television advertising exposure ($beta = .15$, $B = .17$, $p = .330$), conceptual advertising literacy ($beta = -.11$, $B = -.02$, $p = .914$), and the interaction ($beta = .13$, $B = .03$, $p = .702$) could not serve as predictors of children's consumer orientation, since the reported effects were insignificant. Although insignificant ($p > .05$), the standartised coefficient of conceptual advertising literacy ($beta = -.11$) demonstrated that the relationship of the predictor and criterion variables was in the expected direction. This was also supported by the unstandartised coefficient ($B = -.02$). To elaborate further, if significant, this relationship would confirm the expectation that better conceptual advertising literacy would lead to a decrease the involvement in consumer culture of children. Since the effects were insignificant, though, these assumptions remained unsupported.

The third analysis carried out revealed a regression model inconclusive of whether conceptual advertising literacy affected the impact television advertising exposure had on

children's life satisfaction - $F(3, 269) = 1.26$ ($p = .288$). The unfitness of this model was to be expected since H3 also demonstrated an incapability of the regression model to act as a predictor of life satisfaction. Nevertheless, if it was significant, as well as the effects on life satisfaction caused by television advertising exposure ($beta = .16$, $B = .12$, $p = .319$), conceptual advertising literacy ($beta = .24$, $B = .12$, $p = .438$), and the interaction ($beta = -.19$, $B = -.03$, $p = .588$), it could support the outlined expectations. Namely, if significant, the $beta$ and B coefficient values of the interaction ($-.19$ and $-.03$, respectively) would confirm the assumption that with an increase in the levels of conceptual advertising literacy, a decrease in the effects of television advertising exposure over children's life satisfaction would follow.

After examining whether conceptual advertising literacy could mediate the effects of television advertising exposure on materialism, involvement in consumer culture, and life satisfaction of children, identical tests were carried out to establish the role of attitudinal advertising literacy. The undertaken analyses revealed regression models, capable of significantly predicting materialism - $F(3, 269) = 8.91$ ($p = .000$) and consumer orientation - $F(3, 269) = 8.32$ ($p = .000$), and marginally significantly predicting life satisfaction - $F(3, 269) = 2.58$ ($p = .054$). The models explained 8%, 7.5%, and 1.7% in the variance of materialism, involvement in consumer culture, and life satisfaction, respectively.

Although the significant regression models indicated of attitudinal advertising literacy's capability to mediate the overall impacts television advertising exposure had on children, no direct effects between predictor and criterion variables were established. No significant direct effects on children's materialism, caused by television advertising exposure ($beta = .13$, $B = .15$, $p = .684$), attitudinal advertising literacy ($beta = -.26$, $B = -.28$, $p = .351$), and the *Attitudinal Interaction* variable ($beta = .07$, $B = .02$, $p = .850$) were found. Moreover, no significant direct impacts of television advertising exposure ($beta = .16$, $B = .17$, $p = .620$), attitudinal advertising literacy ($beta = -.22$, $B = -.23$, $p = .425$), and the *Attitudinal Interaction* variable ($beta = .03$, $B = .01$, $p = .938$) on children's consumer orientation were revealed, either. Finally, children's life satisfaction also showed as unaffected by their exposure to television advertising ($beta = -.12$, $B = -.16$, $p = .617$), attitudinal advertising literacy ($beta = -.23$, $B = -.34$, $p = .242$), and the *Attitudinal Interaction* variable ($beta = .05$, $B = .28$, $p = .484$).

Despite the insignificance of the aforementioned results, a clear trend became apparent, which was in line with the stated expectations. If significant, the assertions that attaining better attitudinal advertising literacy would make children less materialistic and involved in consumer culture, and more satisfied with their lives, could be confirmed. This was indicated by the negative values of the $beta$ and B coefficients – for materialism – values of $-.26$ and $-.28$,

respectively; for consumer orientation – values of -.22 and -.23, respectively; and for life satisfaction – values of -.23 and -.34, respectively. Also in line with the expectations and findings of H3, if significant, the negative values of the *beta* and *B* coefficients (-.12 and -.16, respectively) would have indicated that increased exposure to television advertising led to a decrease in children's life satisfaction.

The fifth and final chapter – Discussion and Conclusion - will first present the discussion and interpretation of this study's results, in relation to previous research outlined in the theoretical background section. In addition, the research questions posed in the introduction will be answered. Next, the limitations of the study will be communicated, and suggestions for future research will be provided. Finally, the academic and practical implications of the research will be discussed, and a conclusion will be drawn.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Following the structure outlined in the previous section, this chapter will open by presenting the main research findings and answers to the research questions.

5.1. General discussion

The main aim of this research was to determine whether exposure to television advertising could foster materialism, involvement in consumer culture, and lower life satisfaction among Bulgarian children aged 8-11 years. Additionally, the study was interested in establishing the importance of children's school belonging. This was approached in two ways. The first sought to examine whether children's school background served as a predicting factor of their advertising literacy skills. The second attempted to identify whether children's school background had a mediating role on the relationship between their television advertising exposure and materialism, involvement in consumer culture, and decreased life satisfaction, respectively.

In order to simplify the complexity of the outlined assumptions and ensure feasibility of the analysis process completion, five sub-dimensions to the overall research aim were constructed. An individual, subordinate to the main research, question was allocated to each of the sub-dimensions. The first sub-question aimed to identify whether an increase in the amount of children's exposure to television advertising would have an enhancing effect on how materialistic children would be. It was tested by the means of hypothesis H1, which sought to establish whether there would be an association between the two constructs. The results from the carried out linear regression analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between the predictor *Exposure to television advertising* and criterion *Materialism* variables, such that indeed, as expected, an increase in the exposure to television advertising of children was associated with an increase in their materialism levels. The confirmation of H1 was in line with the findings of previous research (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2003 a,b; Young, 2010; Vega & Roberts, 2011). However, it only supported the existence of an association effect, and not of a causal relationship, as indicated by the study of Oprea, Buijzen, van Reijmersdal, and Valkenburg (2014). Still, the confirmation of H1 for an affirmative answer to first sub-question to be provided.

Similarly to the first sub-question, the second aimed at establishing whether an increase in the amount of children's exposure to television advertising would incur an increase in children's involvement in consumer culture. The sub-question was tested by the means of the second hypothesis, H2, which sought to establish whether there would be an interaction between the two concepts. The results from the carried out linear regression test revealed a

significant positive relationship between the predictor *Exposure to television advertising* and criterion *Consumer Orientation* variables, and as hypothesised, a raise in children's exposure to television advertising was affiliated with a boost in their consumer involvement. This finding was in accordance with prior academic evidence on the subject (Schor, 2004; Wilkinson, 2007; Piachaud, 2008; Pugh, 2009) and met the proposed expectations. Based on the aforementioned, a supportive answer to the posed sub-question could be given.

The third sub-question was focused on establishing whether an increase in television advertising exposure would be linked to a decrease in life satisfaction of children. The sub-question was examined by the means of hypotheses H3, H3a, and H3b. While H3 aimed to establish whether there was a direct effect between the two constructs, H3a and H3b sought for an indirect link between the two constructs, initiated by materialistic stimulus and consumer culture immersion, respectively. All three hypotheses were tested using linear regression analyses. The results for H3 revealed a statistical insignificance of the regression model, which did not allow for the further examination of the assumption. Whether there was a direct effect of television advertising exposure on children's unhappiness could not be determined. Although this finding was not entirely surprising, due to the fact that other authors have also been unable to distinguish such a relationship (Buijzen and Valkenburg, 2003a), the majority of studies pointed in the opposite direction. And indeed, if the effect of this regression model was statistically significant, the findings would be in line with the academic claims that television viewing, and in particular exposure to television advertising, would be a reason for a decrease in the subjective well-being of children. Yet, this insignificant result did not allow for the third sub-question to be firmly answered. What the results from executed regression analyses in terms of H3a showed, was a failure of the regression model to statistically predict materialism's role in the relationship between children's television advertising exposure and decreased life satisfaction. Again, if the model was statistically significant, the findings would have fit with the majority of theoretical underpinnings, although not entirely. If H3a was supported, it would have indicated that television advertising exposure indirectly relates to a decrease in children's life satisfaction through materialism, which is in complete breach with the findings by Oprea, Buijzen, and Valkenburg (2012). What the authors revealed was that it is the decreased life satisfaction of children, which caused them to become more materialistic, because of their extensive television advertising exposure. In terms of the expectations outlined by H3b, the statistical significance of the regression model allowed for the confirmation of the assumption. Just as previous research demonstrated the mediating role of consumer involvement on the effect of television advertising

exposure on the decreased happiness of children (Bottomley, Nairn, Kasser, Ferguson, & Ormrod, 2010), the results of the regression analysis indicated the same.

In terms of the failure of H3 and H3a to affirm the existence of direct/indirect relationships between the aforementioned variables, as well as confirm the postulated assumptions, an investigation of the correlations between these variables on a simple bivariate level, indicated the same results. What table 4.4 demonstrated, was that no statistical evidence of the expected relationships existed. A possible explanation for the aforementioned results could be the scope of television advertising exposure this research studied. The fact only 4.8% of the variance in materialism and 4.5% of the variance in consumer involvement could be attributed to exposure to television advertising indicated that there were other factors, which had stronger predicting abilities, i.e. other types of media. Moreover, exposure to television advertising was measured based on children's viewing of six television channels, broadcasting child related content only. In their survey responses, children indicated that they extensively watched television shows and programmes aired on other, non-child oriented networks, such as the Bulgarian version of Endemol's "Your face sounds familiar", Master Chef, and X-factor, to name a few. These television programmes showed the maximum allowed by the EU length of advertisement breaks per hour - twelve minutes. Compared to the six minutes of advertising children encountered while watching the child related television channels, this amount was double. This meant that a substantial part of the potential effects television advertising exposure could have had on children went unexplored.

The forth sub-question was interested in establishing whether the studied children would differ in their levels of advertising literacy as a result of their school background. More specifically, it sought to find out whether the children who attended the private acting schools would demonstrate better advertising literacy skills. The sub-question was tested by the means of H4, which expressed the expectation that indeed the children-actors will show as better advertising literacy equipped than the other. The results of the executed independent sample t-tests confirmed the expectations – the children-actors scored higher both in terms of conceptual advertising literacy and attitudinal advertising literacy. Despite this result, assuming that the education in media and advertising these children have received was the only reason for them to appear as more literate than the other children, would be wrong. As previous research has indicated, parents and peers play a role in the advertising literacy advancement of children (Oates, Blades, & Gunter, 2002; Rozendaal, Buijzen, & Valkenburg, 2009; Priya, Kanti Baisya, & Sharma, 2010). Moreover, as children grow up, so does their level of advertising literacy (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2012). Even though these are important factors that could affect the

advertising literacy development of children, this research did not take them into consideration. Theoretically speaking, the children-actors might have demonstrated higher advertising literacy not because of their media education, but because of parental and peer influence, or simply because on average, they were older than the other children. Since the following was not tested statistically, no such assumptions can be made. Although important insights regarding the true cause for the advertising literacy superiority of children attending the private acting school over those, enrolled in general state schools, were not investigated, a confirmative answer to the fourth sub-question was still provided.

The fifth sub-question was a result of the building up of assumptions and expectations. Since the children attending the private acting school and being involved in the advertising industry were expected to show as more advertising literate, it was assumed that they will also be less susceptible to the negative effects of television advertising. In other words, their school belonging, being responsible for their better advertising literacy skills, was expected to mediate the effects television advertising exposure would have on their materialism, consumer involvement, and decreased life satisfaction. Contrary, if the children who attended the general state school were expected to be the group with poorer advertising literacy, then the effects television advertising exposure would have on their materialism, consumer involvement, and decreased life satisfaction, were expected to be much stronger. The final sub-question was tested by means of H5, H6, and H7. H5 dealt with the effects of television advertising exposure on materialism, H6 – with the effects on involvement in consumer culture, and H7 – with the effects on unhappiness. The results of the undertaken regression analyses including an interaction between the independent *Television Advertising Exposure* and *School* variables, indicated insignificant interactions between the predictor and criterion variables for all three hypotheses, thus disproving them. As a result, no affirmative answer to the fifth sub-question could be given.

5.1 Limitations and recommendations for future research

5.1 Academic and practical implications

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