



# Does talking about advertising make me recognize it better? Incidence of parental and social mediation on the advertising literacy of the Alpha generation

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** The research presented here addresses how children aged 7-10, belonging to Generation Alpha, perceive and manage the advertising content they are exposed to in digital environments. In addition, it focuses on analyzing how interactions with their parents/guardians and friends influence their ability to recognize persuasive formats and their perceived control over advertising. **Methodology:** This research uses a quantitative methodology with a sample of 1,304 children in Spain, applying a questionnaire that measures knowledge about advertising, the ability to recognize it and the degree of parental and social mediation. **Results:** The results show that children who discuss advertising with their parents have a better understanding of the advertising phenomenon and feel more able to identify advertisements. However, conversations with friends, although relevant, have less impact. In addition, children perceive greater control over digital advertising when they are more knowledgeable about it. In the end, conversations with parents about advertising not only increase children's perceived knowledge of advertising but also reinforce their confidence in their ability to identify advertising content. **Discussion:** One of the main conclusions of this work indicates that parental mediation is key to children's advertising literacy, while social mediation complements this process. **Conclusions:** These findings underline the need to design educational programs that involve parents in advertising literacy, fostering an environment that promotes enriching conversations about advertising.

**Keywords:** advertising literacy; Generation Alpha; digital advertising; persuasive formats; parental mediation.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the current digital age, children are increasingly exposed to a large amount of advertising content across multiple digital platforms. This early exposure raises important questions about how children perceive and understand advertising, as well as the influence that interactions with their immediate environment, such as parents and friends, may have on their ability to recognize and manage these persuasive messages.

Recognizing persuasive intent is a fundamental component of advertising literacy, especially in a context where digital advertising is becoming increasingly sophisticated and less obvious to young audiences. Minors must be able not only to identify when they are being persuaded, but also to develop a critical perception that allows them to exercise a certain degree of control over the advertising messages they receive. Children's ability to recognize advertising and their sense of control over it may be influenced by the conversations they have about these issues with their parents and friends, suggesting the importance of both parental and social mediation.

As De Pauw et al. (2019) point out, few studies focus on analyzing how children's environment affects their ability to cope with advertising. In this regard, the aim of this research is to analyze the ability reported by children between 7 and 10 years old to recognize persuasive content based on the interactions they have about advertising with their parents and friends. In addition, the study explores how the perception of control that children believe they have over advertising is related to their level of recognition of the persuasive phenomenon and the discussions they have with their close environment.

### 1.1. Generation Alpha

Generation Alpha is comprised of children born after 2010, the year in which the iPad was launched, Instagram was born and the word of the year was "app" (McCrindle, 2015). However, it is a generation that has not yet finished being born as this generation will end with children born in 2024 (ReasonWhy, 2024), although there is no definitive agreement on the exact dates marking the beginning and end of the younger generations (García-Rivero et al., 2022). Taking into account their birth dates (2010-2024), it is important to note that Generation Alpha is made up of 100% digital natives, having been born and raised among screens (Simental & Ríos, 2023).

Prior to presenting the generation, it is important to highlight the contributions of Gaitán (2006) and Pavez Soto (2012) since they mention the importance of understanding children as social individuals who interact with other social agents, such as family, school and peers, among others.

This paper focuses on children between 7 and 10 years old and, therefore, members of the Alpha generation. Thus, it is important to take into account the characteristics of these consumers. In this regard, it should be noted that children start shopping around the age of 6, and from the age of 8 onwards they do so more independently; moreover, these purchases become less impulsive and, therefore, more rational, from the age of 9 (Núñez-Gómez et al., 2020). However, it is also necessary to point out the role of minors as prescribers in household purchases; in this sense, children will not only become consumers and customers in their own right, but they will also influence the purchases made by the adults around them: from what products and brands to buy at home, to where to spend their vacations or what car to buy, among other issues (Aristizábal-García, 2016). In fact, “the role of the minor in consumer decision making has increased absolutely significantly in recent years”, so “it is very complicated to determine the purchasing power of Generation Alpha because their influence on consumption is indirect” (Núñez-Gómez et al., 2020, p. 395).

## **1.2. Socialization, branding and advertising**

It is important to bear in mind that “socialization processes and the need to communicate with their friends are the main reasons for children to bring brands into their universe”, which shows that brands and advertising are present not only in the daily lives of children, but also form part of their way of socializing (Rangel et al., 2021, p. 125).

Both the school and the home itself, and therefore friends and families, constitute elementary places of social interaction that must be taken into account when talking about the socialization of minors (Rangel et al., 2021). These same authors point out that the use of digital devices and mobile applications influence the socialization of this generation. In this regard, it is important to note that Alpha interact with their friends also through digital channels (Charuvila & Jnaneswar, 2021) and not only physically at school or other spaces. For this reason, it is important to take into account the importance of digital advertising aimed at this audience.

In addition, no member of the Generation Alpha has yet come of age, so their purchasing power is dependent on their parents. However, they do have access through their mobile devices to platforms and applications that offer paid services, such as downloads or subscriptions. In addition, they are exposed daily to commercial messages from several brands that seek to interact with them on platforms such as TikTok or YouTube, and also through content creators, who have become their new idols (ReasonWhy, 2024). In this sense, it is also important to consider the cell phone as an advertising medium (Feijoo et al., 2024) not only from a traditional approach where search engine advertising appears, but also more novel and innovative formats that favor social interaction (Martínez Martínez & Aguado, 2014) such as advergaming or advertainment, in addition to the presence of these content creators on different platforms. On the other hand, it is important to mention the transfer of characters, both real and animated, from the digital world to the physical world through licensed products. In this sense, the study by Gupta et al. (2022) shows the influence of cartoon characters on the behavior of the Generation Alpha when it comes to making the final purchase decision.

Linked to this, Núñez-Gómez et al. (2020) point out that the omnipresence of advertising, together with the early age at which children begin to consume entertainment content, has made children's consumers increasingly demanding. However, not all children are able to correctly identify commercial content. Thus, Zozaya et al. (2022) state that children need sponsored content to be marked as such in order to identify it, especially when it is influencers who are the protagonists of the advertising action. Indeed, children often consider influencers as peers or friends, which makes their recommendations much more credible and convincing (Sweeney et al., 2021). Brands know how to take good advantage of this, since as Smith et al. (2023) state, it is a method that brands are increasingly using to impact this part of the population. In fact, Charuvila and Jnaneswar (2021) argue that influencer marketing greatly impacts this generation as they are attracted to the visual representation that ends up influencing them.

### **1.3. Advertising literacy**

In this regard, it is important to talk about advertising literacy, defined as the abilities/skills that individuals have to cope with advertising; thus, advertising literacy implies being able to identify advertising, to understand the persuasive objective of advertising, to be able to evaluate the advertising of a product, etc. (Boush et al., 1994; De Jans et al., 2017). In fact, Rozendaal et al. (2013) classifies the aspects involved in advertising literacy into two dimensions: on the one hand, the conceptual dimension (it implies being able to recognize advertising, to understand the intention of advertising...) and, on the other hand, the attitudinal dimension, which has to do with the critical attitude towards this type of communication. In short, advertising literacy not only implies being able to recognize advertising, but also its intentions (Daems et al., 2017; Fernández-Gómez et al., 2023).

Thus, advertising literacy becomes especially relevant when, on the one hand, the audience is minors (with less capacity for identification) and, on the other hand, advertising formats appear that are difficult to identify, such as product placement or branded content, among others. These formats "pose a challenge when it comes to recognizing this type of content as advertising when combined with entertainment" (Fernández-Gómez et al., 2023, p. 2). Influencer marketing, for example, is one of the most complicated formats for children to identify, which makes them particularly susceptible to receive these messages (Boerman et al., 2023). Thus, in this type of formats aimed at children that combine information and entertainment, the challenge lies not only in identifying advertising, but also in training minors to be able to understand its persuasive and commercial intention (Feijoo & Fernández-Gómez, 2021). The work of An et al. (2014) exemplifies the above by demonstrating that, without advertising literacy training, around 75% of children do not recognize advergames as a type of advertising. Feijoo and Sádaba (2022) state that minors who are able to discern between entertainment and advertising consider the presence of these commercial messages in their leisure experiences as normal.

Indeed, advertising literacy education influences consumers' reactions to certain advertising materials, as in the case of publications sponsored by influencers; in this sense, in minors with this training, the intention to purchase the advertised product decreases, as well as electronic word-to-mouth (eWOM), among other issues (Lou et al., 2020). In this regard, there are authors who claim that training in advertising literacy would also be necessary for consumers to be able to identify when brands launch acceptable or misleading CSR messages, because when they are able to identify them, their attitude towards the messages and the brand or product itself changes (Fernandes et al., 2020).

It is worth noting that research on how minors process advertising is still at an early stage; at the same time, research linking advertising literacy to other important socialization agents for minors, such as school, parents or the industry itself, is scarce (Fernández-Gómez et al., 2023). In this regard, the research by Loose et al. (2023) takes into account parental influences and social development variables when talking about advertising literacy, while Hudders and Cauberghe (2018) consider parental advertising mediation as a variable, concluding that it increases attitudes towards brands in younger children.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

Taking into account what was presented in the previous section, the main contribution of this study lies in linking the advertising literacy of minors with other social agents such as their parents, guardians and friends. In this sense, the study addresses how children's conversations about advertising with their parents and friends can be considered influential factors in children's advertising literacy. Therefore, to address this work, the following research questions are posed:

- RQ 1: Is there a relationship between talking about advertising with parents or friends and minors' level of knowledge about the advertising phenomenon? And about their ability to recognize it?
- RQ 2: Is there a relationship between talking about advertising with parents or friends and the ability that children think they have to recognize different persuasive formats?
- RQ 3: Is there a relationship between children's level of knowledge about the advertising phenomenon and the level of control they feel they have over advertising, and their ability to recognize the phenomenon?
- RQ 4: Is there a relationship between the ability that minors believe they have to recognize the different persuasive formats and their level of control over the phenomenon?
- RQ 5: Is there a statistical relationship between talking about advertising with parents or friends and the level of control they feel they have over the phenomenon.

By examining these questions, this study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the factors that influence the advertising literacy of minors and how the family and social environment can play a crucial role in shaping a critical and autonomous attitude towards digital advertising.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

In order to collect information, a questionnaire was developed and applied to children between 7 and 10 years of age living in Spain.

The research used data from the National Statistics Institute (INE, for its acronym in Spanish) as a reference for the sample design. In this case, the sample size was set at 1,304 respondents. A survey was applied throughout Spain, with random sampling in cities according to age, sex, region of residence, and parents' level of education. According to data published by the INE (s.f.), the resident population of children and adolescents aged 7 to 18 years in Spain is 5,873,205 in 2022. The representative sample of children and adolescents was 1,304 subjects. Therefore, a sampling error of 3% is assumed at a 95% confidence level.

This study took the specific sample between 7 and 10 years of age (N=419) in order to study the attitudes of the Alpha generation regarding advertising. It should be noted that the sample size is similar to that used by Rangel et al. (2021) in their work on this generation and to that of Rozendaal et al. (2014) in their study on advertising literacy in minors. Table 1 provides a detailed description of the sample taken into account for this research.

**Table 1.** *Sociodemographic characteristics of the participants in the study.*

<b>Age</b>	7 years old: 81 (19.3%) 8 years old: 101 (24.1%) 9 years old: 115 (27.4%) 10 years old: 122 (29.1%)
<b>Gender</b>	Boy: 215 (51.3%) Girl: 204 (48.7%)
<b>Father's educational level</b>	University studies: 169 (40.3%) Higher Vocational Training: 74 (17.7%) General Secondary Education ( High School / Intermediate Vocational Training): 82 (19.6%)

	Compulsory General Secondary Education (1st cycle): 47 (11.2%) Primary education: 40 (9.5%) No studies: 7 (1.7%)
<b>Mother's educational level</b>	University studies: 228 (54.4%) Higher Vocational Training: 72 (17.2%) General Secondary Education ( High School / Intermediate Vocational Training): 67 (16%) Compulsory General Secondary Education (1st cycle): 36 (8.6%) Primary education: 14 (3.3%) No studies: 2 (0.5%)
<b>Technological equipment</b>	Smartphone: 213 (50,8%) Tablet: 330 (78.8%) Smart TV: 271 (64.7%) Desktop computer: 117 (27.9%) Laptop: 180 (43%) Smartwatch: 111 (26.5%) Smart speaker: 136 (32.5%)

**Source:** Elaborated by the authors.

The questionnaire was distributed through the online platform contracted for this purpose during the months of October and November 2023.

Once the quantitative fieldwork was completed, several statistical tests were developed using the SPSS statistical package (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences - version 25). In addition to frequency analysis and cross tables, which made it possible to observe the association of variables, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) were used to analyze detailed information on the differences in criteria and performances of the different population groups according to the selected variables. Linear regression analysis was also used as a procedure.

### 3.1. Measurement

In order to complete this research and answer the research questions, six variables were taken into account, which are presented below. Before doing so, it is important to emphasize that, bearing in mind the age of the individuals being surveyed, the language of the questions was adapted to simplify them as much as possible so that the children would not have any doubts about what they were being asked. For this reason, the following pages explain each of the variables used, the meaning of these variables and the questions that were asked to children to measure them:

- Children's perception of their level of knowledge about advertising (hereinafter, CON, for its acronym in Spanish). In this case, the knowledge that respondents say they have about the advertising phenomenon is measured. The following question was asked: "How much do you think you know about advertising?"
- Children's perception of their ability to recognize advertising (hereinafter, REC, for its acronym in Spanish). The purpose of this variable is to measure the self-perceived ability of minors to identify advertising when exposed to digital content. The questionnaire was posed as follows: "Do you think you know when something is an advertisement? Recognizing the message as advertising is the first necessary step (cognitive level) in the advertising literacy process (Wright et al., 2005; Spiteri Cornish, 2014; Rozendaal et al., 2011)
- Minors' perception of their ability to recognize different digital persuasive formats. To minors, questions were presented as follows: "Do you think any of the following would be advertising?" In this sense, the items included in Table 2 were presented. An et al. (2014) stress the importance of the minor perceiving these new formats as advertising in order to achieve effective message processing, hence this article focuses on this process of recognizing the advertising phenomenon.

**Tabla 2.** Understanding the variables on the child's perception of his or her ability to recognize different persuasive formats

	Understanding the variable	Format to which it refers	Acronym used in the study
1	The appearance of trademarks in a series or movie	Product Placement	PP
2	The appearance of trademarks in video games		PPV
3	The appearance of brands in Twitch livestreams		PPT
4	When an influencer you follow mentions brands in their content posted on their TikTok account	Influencer marketing on TikTok, Instagram and unboxing activity.	INFL_TIKTOK
5	When an influencer unboxes a brand's products		UNB
6	When an influencer you follow mentions brands in the content posted on his or her Instagram account		INFL_IG
7	When a story is told in an ad and a brand appears.	Branded Content	BC
8	An ad in the form of a storie on Instagram.	Social media advertising	STORIE
9	An ad in the form of a reel on Instagram		REEL
10	An ad in the form of a mobile game	Advergaming	MÓVIL

**Source:** Elaborated by the authors.

- Parental mediation (hereinafter, MEDP, for its acronym in Spanish). This variable seeks to measure the level of presence of advertising in parent-child conversations. It should not be forgotten that children's degree of acquaintance and experience with the medium in which the advertising is inserted also influences its persuasive effect. Thus, the following question was posed: "Do you talk to your parents about the advertising you see?"
- Social mediation (hereinafter, MEDS, for its acronym in Spanish). Similarly, it was also wanted to know how intensely children talk about advertising. To this end, the following question was asked in the questionnaire: "Do you talk to your friends about the advertising you see?"
- Children's perception of their ability to control the digital advertising they consume (CONTROL). The feeling of control over the advertising messages they receive especially through the cell phone is a key variable in the attitude and behavior of minors towards advertising messages (Feijoo & Sádaba, 2022), hence the aim was to measure the degree of control that respondents perceive they have over the advertising they are exposed to during their digital routine. The following question was presented in the questionnaire: "From 1 to 10, how capable do you feel to control what they advertise on the Internet?"

All variables, with the exception of the last one (6) which was treated as a quantitative variable, were designed as ordinals where answers were classified using a 6-point Likert scale where 1=Nothing at all; 2=Little; 3=Somewhat; 4=Quite a lot; 5=A lot; and 6=I don't know. To calculate the means and for the bivariate analyses, the value 6 was treated as a missing value so as not to distort the value of the scale.

Statistical analysis using the SPSS software package version 25.0 was used to perform the analysis. To answer RQ1, bivariate analyses were performed using Kendall's Tau b test; for RQ2, given the nature of the dependent variable, Spearman's Rho test was chosen. Non-parametric tests were chosen because the variables of analysis did not follow a normal distribution (normality was assessed by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test,  $p < 0.05$  indicating non-normality).

#### 4. RESULTS

The means of the variables under study in this research are described below.

With a mean of 2.65, children indicated that, on average, they perceive that they have limited knowledge about advertising (CON). This result suggests that, although some minors may feel informed, the majority have a perception of their knowledge closer to a basic or intermediate level. The mean of 3.24 reflects a moderate self-perception in the ability to identify advertising (REC). Although minors have some confidence in their ability to recognize advertising messages, this confidence is not particularly high, which could influence their vulnerability to covert advertising. However, it is interesting to note how their perception of recognizing the persuasive phenomenon is higher than their stated level of knowledge.

As for the child's perception of his or her ability to recognize different persuasive formats, Table 3 collects all the relevant data on this variable. However, the main findings for each of the persuasive formats taken into account in this analysis are explained below:

- The appearance of brands in series or movies (PP, for its acronym in English): The children being surveyed show an intermediate perception of their ability to identify advertising in series or movies, which could indicate a limited understanding of product placement strategies (mean of 3.53).
- The appearance of brands in video games (PPV, for its acronym in English): The mean of 3.72 suggests that children are slightly more confident in recognizing advertising in video games, which could be due to greater familiarity with this medium.
- The appearance of brands on live Twitch (PPT, for its acronym in English): With a mean of 3.28, minors seem less confident in their ability to identify advertising on live streaming platforms, possibly due to the more subtle and intertwined nature of advertising in this medium.
- Brand mentions by influencers on TikTok (INFL\_TIKTOK): The mean of 3.65 indicates a moderately high perceived ability to recognize brand mentions on TikTok, perhaps indicating the platform's popularity among young people and their familiarity with sponsored content.
- Unboxing of products by influencers (UNB, for its acronym in English): With a mean of 3.71, minors also feel relatively able to identify unboxing videos as advertising, which could be due to the clarity with which products are presented in these contents.
- Brand mentions by influencers on Instagram (INFL\_IG, for its acronym in English): The mean of 3.59 suggests that respondents have an intermediate perception in their ability to identify advertising on Instagram, a medium where sponsored content can be more subtle.
- Narratives in ads that include brands (BC, for its acronym in English): The mean of 3.73 shows that children are moderately aware of brands that are presented in advertising narratives, indicating an adequate perception in identifying narrative marketing strategies.
- Ads in the form of story on Instagram (STORIE): With a mean of 3.56, minors seem to have a moderate perception of their ability to identify advertising in Instagram stories, which could indicate the effectiveness of these formats in getting the attention without being overtly perceived as advertising.
- Reel ads on Instagram (REEL): The mean of 3.60 is similar to that of stories, indicating that minors perceive their ability to identify advertising in reels comparably.
- Ads in mobile games (MOBILE): The mean of 3.98 is the highest among the persuasive formats, suggesting that minors feel more confident identifying advertising in mobile games, probably due to the more explicit nature of these ads and the fact that they are used to seeing this type of commercial messages due to their exposure to this device.



On the other hand, regarding the discussion of advertising with their environment, the mean of 2.79 indicates that conversations about advertising between parents and children are relatively rare; likewise, with an even lower mean (M=2.35), it is observed that minors rarely discuss advertising with their friends, which may limit their ability to share and critically reflect on the advertising content to which they are exposed.

Finally, regarding minors' perception of their ability to control the digital advertising they consume (CONTROL), the mean of 4.07 suggests that minors feel moderately able to control advertising in their digital environment. This perception, although moderate, indicates that there is diversity in the degree of confidence that minors have in their ability to manage advertising content, with some children feeling more empowered than others.

**Table 3.** *Descriptive statistics of the variables under study*

	<b>N</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>DT</b>
CON	395	2.65	1.003
REC	395	3.24	1.022
PP	386	3.53	1.156
PPV	380	3.72	1.156
PPT	299	3.28	1.499
INFL_TIKTOK	343	3.65	1.323
UNB	359	3.71	1.284
INFL_IG	340	3.59	1.342
BC	381	3.73	1.173
STORIE	327	3.56	1.353
REEL	334	3.60	1.292
MOVIL	396	3.98	1.144
MEDP	416	2.79	1.174
MEDS	414	2.35	1.195
CONTROL	419	4.07	2.794

**Source:** Elaborated by the authors.

#### **4.1. Relationship between talking about advertising and advertising knowledge/recognition (RQ1)**

There is a moderate and significant positive correlation between perceived knowledge about advertising (CON) and parental mediation, i.e., talking about advertising with parents (MEDP) ( $r = 0.320, p < 0.001$ ). This suggests that minors who perceive themselves to have greater knowledge about advertising tend to have more frequent or higher quality conversations with their parents on this topic. Similarly, perceived knowledge about advertising is also positively correlated with social mediation, i.e., talking with friends about advertising (MEDS) ( $r = 0.323, p < 0.001$ ), which may indicate that minors who consider themselves to be more aware of advertising also tend to discuss advertising more frequently with their peers.

As in the previous case (although with less intensity), the perceived ability to recognize advertising (REC) is positively correlated with parental mediation ( $r = 0.295, p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that conversations with parents may be associated with greater confidence in minors' ability to identify advertising content. The ability to recognize advertising also shows a positive correlation with social mediation, although this correlation is weaker ( $r = 0.209, p < 0.001$ ). This could indicate that social interactions contribute to a lesser extent than parental interactions to the self-perception of advertising recognition ability.

As for persuasive formats (RQ1b), there is a weak but significant positive correlation ( $r = 0.109$ ,  $p = 0.009$ ) between minors' perception of their ability to recognize the appearance of brands in series or movies (PP) and talking about advertising with parents. This suggests that minors who talk more with their parents about advertising are also somewhat more able to recognize this type of persuasive format.

Perceived ability to recognize brands in video games (PPV, for its acronym in English) is also weakly correlated with parental mediation ( $r = 0.106$ ,  $p = 0.012$ ), suggesting that being exposed to conversations about advertising in the family setting might slightly influence the ability to identify brands in this format.

Finally, the ability to recognize brands on live Twitch (PPT) has a weak correlation with talking about advertising with parents ( $r = 0.129$ ,  $p = 0.006$ ), indicating that dialogue with parents may contribute modestly to the identification of advertising on live streaming platforms.

The significant correlations described show that talking about advertising with parents or friends has a positive impact on minors' perception of their knowledge and abilities to recognize advertising. However, parental influence seems to be more influential than social influence, especially on the perception of knowledge and ability to recognize different advertising formats. Table 4 shows the bivariate analyses carried out to answer the first research question (RQ1), showing the crosses of parental mediation (MEDP) and social mediation (MEDS) with the rest of the variables considered in the study. Thus, significant correlations at the 0.01 level (bilateral) are marked with \*\* and significant correlations at the 0.05 level (bilateral) are marked with \*.

**Table 4.** Correlations between the variables under study

		Parental Mediation (MEDP)	Social Mediation (MEDS)
CON	Correlation coefficient	.320**	.323**
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.000	0.000
	N	394	392
REC	Correlation coefficient	.295**	.209**
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.000	0.000
	N	395	393
PP	Correlation coefficient	.109**	.122**
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.010	0.004
	N	384	382
PPV	Correlation coefficient	.106*	0.055
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.012	0.200
	N	378	376
PPT	Correlation coefficient	.129**	0.075
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.006	0.113
	N	298	298
INFL_TIKTOK	Correlation coefficient	.089*	0.053
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.047	0.241
	N	341	341
UNB	Correlation coefficient	0.060	-0.021
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.169	0.633
	N	357	357
INFL_IG	Correlation coefficient	0.065	0.059
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.145	0.190
	N	338	337
BC	Correlation coefficient	0.068	0.076
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.108	0.076
	N	379	378
STORIE	Correlation coefficient	0.066	0.068
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.148	0.136
	N	326	324
REEL	Correlation coefficient	0.082	0.072
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.069	0.111
	N	332	331

MOVIL	Correlation coefficient	0.027	0.011
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.529	0.793
	N	394	392
**. The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (bilateral).			
*. The correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (bilateral).			

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

#### 4.2. Relationship between perceived control over advertising, recognition of the phenomenon and parental and social mediation (RQ2)

There is a moderate and significant positive correlation between minors' perception of their ability to control digital advertising (CONTROL) and perceived knowledge about advertising (CON) ( $r = 0.268, p < 0.001$ ). This suggests that minors who feel more able to control the advertising they see online also tend to consider themselves more knowledgeable about the advertising phenomenon.

Perceived ability to control digital advertising is also positively correlated with ability to recognize advertising (REC), although the correlation is weaker ( $r = 0.143, p < 0.01$ ). This indicates that minors who perceive greater control over the advertising they consume also have slightly greater confidence in their ability to identify advertising content.

Regarding the recognition of different persuasive formats, the correlations with the dependent variable were not significant.

On the other hand, there is a significant positive correlation ( $r = 0.143, p < 0.01$ ) between the perceived ability to control digital advertising and discussing advertising with parents. This result suggests that minors who discuss advertising with their parents tend to feel more able to manage and control the digital advertisements to which they are exposed. However, the positive correlation between minors' ability to control the digital advertising they consume (CONTROL) and social mediation (MEDS) is the strongest of those observed ( $r = 0.285, p < 0.001$ ), indicating that minors who discuss advertising with their friends tend to feel significantly more able to control digital advertising. This finding highlights the importance of the social environment in the perception of control over advertising content.

All these findings on the relationship between the perception of control over advertising, recognition of the phenomenon and parental and social mediation are presented in Table 5, where the bivariate analyses performed to answer RQ2 can be consulted.

**Table 5. Correlations between the variables under study**

		CON	REC	PP	PPV	PPT	INFL_TI KTOK	UNB	INFL_I G	BC	STORIE	REEL	MOVI L	MED P	MED S
CONTRO L	Correlati on coefficient t	.268 **	.143 **	- 0.06 0	- 0.09 9	0.00 1	-0.069	-0.081	-0.096	- 0.06 8	-0.011	0.02 3	- 0.073	.205* *	.285* *
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.00 0	0.00 4	0.24 3	0.05 4	0.98 8	0.202	0.126	0.077	0.18 7	0.847	0.67 1	0.147	0.00 0	0.00 0
	N	395	395	386	380	299	343	359	340	381	327	334	396	416	414
**. The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (bilateral).															
*. The correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (bilateral).															

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The results of this research provide a comprehensive view on the role of parents and peers in children's perception of their knowledge and abilities to recognize advertising in different digital formats (RQ1). Talking about advertising with parents was found to have a moderate and significant influence on children's perception of their knowledge of advertising (CON) and their ability to recognize advertising (REC). These correlations suggest that conversations with parents about advertising not only increase children's perceived knowledge of advertising, but also strengthen their confidence in their ability to identify advertising content. This finding is consistent with previous studies that have highlighted the crucial role of the family in media education and the development of critical skills in the face of digital advertising (Rozendaal et al., 2011; Wright et al., 2005). In this case, Loose et al. (2023) also confirm that the family environment is related to advertising literacy, although not by analyzing parent-child conversations, but rather children's media consumption: in this case, the more restrictive parents are with respect to media use, the less advertising literacy their children seem to have.

In this regard, it should be noted that the child consumer is very demanding and has become “more critical of advertising than the adults with whom they live”, which will pose a great challenge in terms of communication and advertising for brands (Núñez-Gómez et al., 2020).

On the other hand, accompanying friends also showed significant correlations, although in general weaker than those observed with parents. Minors who discuss advertising-related topics with their peers tend to perceive themselves as more informed and slightly more able to recognize advertising, something also confirmed by De Pauw et al. (2019) when they point out that children's cognitive and attitudinal advertising literacy is determined, partially, by the processes at school (mainly by peers). However, the influence of social mediation is minimal in comparison to parental mediation, suggesting that, although the peer environment plays a role in the development of advertising skills, it is the family environment that provides a stronger foundation for these competencies. Hudders and Cauberghe (2018) confirm in this regard that parental mediation influences advertising literacy and even helps to increase attitudes towards brands in younger children.

In relation to specific persuasive formats, parental mediation was found to be weakly correlated with the perceived ability of minors to recognize advertising in different contexts, such as series, movies, video games and streaming platforms like Twitch. This finding highlights the importance of conversations about advertising in the home, not only in a general sense, but also in the specific ability to identify different advertising formats. The correlation, while weak, may reflect the complexity of these formats and the need for more targeted dialogue to improve recognition of such forms of advertising among minors.

The fact that correlations with social mediation are generally weaker could indicate that, although minors share experiences about advertising with their peers, these interactions are not as formative as conversations with parents. This result could be related to the superficial or sporadic nature of discussions among friends, compared to the more structured and educational guidance that parents can provide.

In terms of how minors perceive their ability to control digital advertising and how this perception relates to their knowledge about advertising, their ability to recognize ads, and parental and social mediation (RQ2), one of the most significant findings is the positive correlation between perceived control over digital advertising (CONTROL) and perceived knowledge about advertising (CON). This result suggests that respondents who consider themselves more informed about advertising tend to feel more able to control the digital ads to which they are exposed. This relationship may reflect a mutually reinforcing cycle, where greater knowledge provides minors with the tools necessary to manage digital advertising, which in turn increases their self-confidence and perception of control. This is consistent with existing literature highlighting the importance of knowledge in media literacy and its impact on minors' autonomy in the face of persuasive messages (Livingstone & Helsper, 2006).

The correlation, although weaker, between children's perception of their ability to control the digital advertising they consume (CONTROL) and the ability to recognize advertising (REC) supports the idea that children who feel more able to identify ads also perceive greater control over digital advertising. This finding is relevant because as minors become more proficient at identifying different forms of advertising, they are also likely to develop greater confidence in their ability to filter and manage the information to which they are exposed.

The results also reveal the significant influence of parental mediation (MEDP) and, to a greater extent, social mediation (MEDS) on the perception of control over digital advertising. The positive correlation between CONTROL and parental mediation indicates that conversations with parents about advertising contribute to strengthening minors' confidence in their ability to control digital ads. However, in this case it is social mediation that shows the strongest correlation with perceived control. This suggests that peer interactions play a vital role in how minors perceive their ability to control digital advertising. This finding highlights the importance of social dynamics in building minors' self-confidence in digital contexts, suggesting that shared experiences and peer discussions can be a significant source of learning and support in managing advertising. In short, the family context has more weight in the conceptual section, while peers are key in the feeling of confidence of minors to deal with persuasive content.

These results have important implications for the design of advertising literacy programs for children. The findings suggest that such programs should not only focus on increasing children's knowledge and skills in recognizing advertising, but also on fostering an environment where both family and social discussions about advertising are enriching for all. Doing so can strengthen minors' perception of control over digital advertising, better equipping them to navigate an increasingly complex media environment. Furthermore, given that social mediation appears to have a particularly strong impact on perceptions of control, educational interventions could benefit from including components that promote peer-to-peer discussion and collaborative learning.

All in all, the findings of this research highlight the interconnection between advertising knowledge, ad recognition, family companionship, and perception of control over digital advertising among minors. With this in mind, the following conclusions from this work are presented:

- C.1. Interconnection between advertising knowledge and ad recognition. This research shows that there is a direct relationship between the advertising knowledge that children perceive and their ability to recognize different advertising formats in the digital terrain. The greater their understanding of how advertising works, the more critical and skillful children are in identifying it.
- C.2. The central role of parental mediation. Parents play a crucial role in their children's advertising literacy. Not only by enhancing their knowledge about advertising, but also their ability to recognize and interpret different ads in an increasingly complex digital environment. This parental mediation is key to a greater understanding and critical capacity in the face of advertising.
- C.3. Complementary impact of social mediation. Although social mediation (through friends, siblings and other adults, such as teachers and educational leaders) is relevant, its impact on the advertising literacy of minors is complementary and less significant. Thus, it is possible to underline the importance of the immediate family unit in the development of this learning process.
- C.4. Perceived control over digital advertising. Minors who feel more control over their exposure to digital advertising tend to show better recognition and understanding of ads.
- C.5. Educational implications for improving advertising literacy. This research highlights the need to design educational interventions that actively involve parents. It is essential to equip parents with adequate tools and knowledge that facilitate more effective and appropriate conversations about advertising with their sons and daughters. Thus, a continuous and contextualized learning about the digital advertising environment can be promoted.

One of the main limitations of this study lies in the fact that the data obtained are based on minors' self-perceptions of their abilities to identify advertising. This approach may introduce biases, since subjective perceptions do not always accurately reflect actual skills. Likewise, it is important to bear in mind that the study does not explore qualitative aspects of parent-child and peer dialogue, which could represent a methodological limitation by focusing exclusively on the quantitative approach.

Thus, future research could focus on qualitative studies that analyze in depth the content of family conversations related to advertising. This approach would enable the analysis of how parents or other household members deal with the presence of advertising in these environments. Furthermore, this study opens the door to further research exploring how these dynamics vary in different cultural contexts and age groups, and how more effective and culturally tailored interventions can be designed to improve advertising literacy among minors. It also lays the groundwork for possible future research aimed at highlighting to parents the importance of parental mediation in children's advertising literacy.

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