Abstract:

Infant/toddler-directed DVDs have become commonplace in American homes, as research has shown that many parents believe these products are educational. Most of these DVDs carry direct claims or implied cues of educational benefit, despite complaints about their misleading nature. This experiment tested the impact of DVD brand name, educational claim specificity, and parents’ regulatory focus on parents’ perceptions of educational value and purchase intentions. Parents reacted similarly to specific and ambiguous educational statements, but were more likely to say that the DVD had educational value when the brand name had an educational cue. An interaction suggested that the effect of the claim outcome specificity depended on the claim verb specificity. Parents with a strong promotion focus had higher perceptions of educational value and stronger desires to purchase the DVD; these differences were especially pronounced with the DVD brand name was non-educational. Implications for policy and further research are discussed.