

Marketing techniques and power: Examining the 'grey zones' of child-targeted food packaging

*This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, please feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information. **The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study (REB19-1690).** Participation is completely voluntary.*

Study background and purpose

As part of its Healthy Eating Strategy, Health Canada has committed to restrict the marketing of unhealthy food and beverages to children under age 13. Packaging is included as part of these restrictions. However, determining what 'counts' as child-targeted food packaging is sometimes tricky. Even though most child-targeted packages are explicitly "child targeted" (such as Lucky Charms cereal, Dora the Explorer pasta and the Lion King fruit snacks), certain cartoon images, brand mascots and brand spokes-characters fall in a grey zone. The Pringles logo, M&Ms mascots and Smarties mini-cones packaging all have cartoonish elements—but do they 'count' as child-targeted packaging? **The purpose of this study is to examine the power of food packaging from a child's perspective, so as to clarify their views on packages in the 'grey zone'.** This has valuable policy relevance and provides insight into what resonates with children when it comes to food marketing appeals on packaging.

What will my child be asked to do?

Participation in this project will take approximately an hour. During this time, your child will be asked to participate in a mock shopping trip, during which they will be given a small shopping cart and asked to select packaged food products they think are specifically designed to appeal to children. At the end of the shopping trip, each child will have a short interview with a member of the research team, in which they will be asked to discuss the 'grey zone' products that they chose, and to explain why they think those products are child targeted (Is it the cartoon? Is it the lettering on the package or the colour, etc.)

What type of personal information will be collected?

The interview will be audio-recorded for later transcription and analysis. Your child's age and gender will be collected, so that we can document if older children choose different products than younger children, or if girls make different decisions than boys. However, all of the information in the reporting of the results will be anonymized – and starting from the transcription stage, your child will **only** be identified by participant number.

The audio-recordings will be available to the PI (Elliott) and the research team involved in the project and will not be used for any purposes other than transcription and confirming accuracy of the interview. A transcription service may also be used to transcribe the interviews, but the transcriptionist will sign a confidentiality agreement, binding her to the same rules of confidentiality as the study team, and will have no other identifying information. Transcribed interviews from those recordings will be entirely anonymized. The content of all interviews will be used in academic articles and presentations.

What are the risks and benefits of participation?

There are no risks involved in this study: children will be asked to describe what they think makes a package child-targeted. The benefits of this study are that children are asked to determine what they think makes food package child-targeted, which will help Health Canada in terms of creating effective policy in order to protect children from the marketing of unhealthy foods that may compromise their long-term health. Through this, children also have a voice in the policy process.

What happens to the information provided?

Note that child can choose to opt out of the study at any time. Should you wish to have your child withdrawn entirely from the study, you may also request that their data also be withdrawn. The request needs to be made within 48 hours of the study, however, because the data will be anonymized within 48 hours. No one except the researchers involved will see or hear any of the interviews, and they are bound by the same rules of confidentiality as the PI. All transcripts will be anonymized, and the recordings will be deleted upon completion of the data analysis. Consent forms with identifiable information will be stored in locked cabinet only accessible by the researchers, and shredded after 5 years (as per Master Records Retention Schedule policy). There is no set date to destroy the anonymized transcripts.

Signature

Your signature on this form indicates that 1) you understand to your satisfaction the information provided about the requested participation of your child in this research project, and 2) you are consenting to have your child participate. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw your child from this research project at any time. Both you and your child are most welcome to ask for clarification or new information at any point during the study.

Child's Name: (please print) _____

Child's Age: _____

Child's Gender: _____

Parent Name: (please print) _____

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____

Questions

If you have any further questions, please contact Dr. Charlene Elliott at charlene.elliott@ucalgary.ca or (403)220-3180.

If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact Research Ethics Administrators, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at (403) 220-6289/220-4283; email cfreb@ucalgary.ca.