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DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA | LUND UNIVERSITY 2017

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Targeting children online: Young internet users and producers in the commercial media environment

Abstract

Children's daily internet usage takes place to a large extent in a commercial environment, where advertising and the sale of virtual goods are ever-present parts of the online experience. The overall goal of this thesis is to contribute to a critical understanding of children's commercial online environment as spaces for children's everyday life activities and participation, and as spaces for commercial interests that seek to target children and monetize their internet usage. Two papers analyze the perspectives of children, namely, how children view and engage with online advertising. Two papers explore the perspectives of producers involved in advertising to children online, with a focus on how these producers represent themselves, their practices and the child audience. In addition to this, one paper analyzes what participatory opportunities are provided to users in children's virtual worlds, and how participation is constrained by the commercial strategies (the sale of virtual goods and VIP membership). This paper also looks into the ways in which the producer discursively represents the virtual world, and how the users relate tactically to the commercial strategies. The empirical material includes 20 individual interviews with 9-year-old children, 12 group interviews (in total 46 participants) with 9- and 12-year-old children, as well as interviews with 18 marketers and advertising agency professionals. The case study of the virtual world Habbo Hotel includes online observations, one producer interview and document analysis. The thesis combines different theoretical perspectives that mainly are productive for understanding the subjectivities and practices of children and producers. Michel de Certeau's (1984) theory on practices in everyday life is of special importance in the thesis and is used in three of the papers.

The results show the mulitiplicity and ambivalence of children's practices with regard to online advertising; the children engaged tactically with advertising through different forms of avoidance tactics and "tactics of the mind" (such as critique), and the children also expressed how they engaged non-tactically with advertising, such as sitting and watching advertisements without wanting to. They primarily considered advertising as an intruder that obstructed their internet usage, and which introduced moments of struggle, deception, confrontation and resignation. However, advertising was also engaged with as entertainment and information. These results suggest that the commercial online environment, particularly advertising-based mobile games, is a demanding environment for children. The case study of the virtual world Habbo Hotel reveals, among other things, how the producer's main strategy was to provide rather unrestricted opportunities for social participation, and based on that market virtual goods and VIP membership through methods that, for instance, took advantage of children's need to gain status in the peer group. The producer-oriented study shows how the advertising producers discursively evaded the power relationship existing between them and the child audience; they either refuted or distanced themselves from the subject position "producer of child-directed advertising" and legitimized their practices by arguing that their advertisements were directed to, for instance, parents and the family, or by downplaying the marketing dimension of branded entertainment. Children were constructed in ambivalent ways, as both vulnerable and incompetent, and as competent and dependent. These results contribute to our understanding of how cultural context shapes the notion of the child audience among producers.

Key words: online advertising, internet, mobile games, children, advertising professionals, marketers, virtual worlds, tactics

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Targeting Children Online

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Till Anton och Samuel

Content

Paper I-V

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Starting my doctoral studies at the Department of Communication and Media in 2011, I thought that I knew a lot about academic life and writing. But I did not. I have learned so much during these years, and I will be forever grateful to all those people that have made this dissertation possible, that have supported me with friendship and constructive comments on my work along the way. First I want to thank my supervisors Helena Sandberg and Gunilla Jarlbro for encouraging me, believing in me, and for asking those critical questions when I most needed them. Thank you for being open to new directions and ideas, for seeing possibilities and not closing doors. I feel very fortunate that I got the opportunity to write my dissertation within the project "Children, Advertising and the Internet," which was funded by the Swedish Research Council (Grant 421-2010-1982) and the Crafoord Foundation (Grant 20100899).

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Lund, November 21, 2016

List of papers

Paper I

Martínez, C., Jarlbro, G. & Sandberg, H. (2013). Children's Views and Practices Regarding Online Advertising: An Interview Study with Swedish Nine-Year-Olds. *Nordicom Review*, 34(2), 107–121.

Paper II

Martínez, C. (2016). The struggles of everyday life: how children view and engage with advertising in mobile games. Article manuscript, submitted to *Convergence – The international Journal of Research into New Media*.

Paper III

Martínez, C. (2014). 'This One's for VIP Users!': Participation and Commercial Strategies in Children's Virtual Worlds. *Culture Unbound*, 6, 697–721.

Paper IV

Martínez, C. (2016). 'We don't advertise to children': Subject positioning and interpretative repertoires among Swedish online advertising producers. Article manuscript, submitted to *International Journal of Communication*.

Paper V

Martínez, C. (2016). 'They Are Totally Unfiltered': Constructions of the Child Audience among Swedish Advertising Producers. *Television & New Media*, 17(7), 612–628.

Papers I, III and V are reprinted in this thesis with permission of the publishers.

1 Introduction

This thesis is about children's commercial online environment, and the social actors connected to this environment: the child internet users and the commercial media producers. Through the integrated frameworks of audience research, media production research and textual analysis in the form of online observations and document analysis, the present thesis contributes to a critical understanding of this media environment as spaces for children's everyday life activities and participation, and as sites for commercial interests that seek to target children online and monetize their internet usage. Two papers in the thesis explore the perspectives of children, namely, how children view and engage with advertising on the internet, and what consequences the advertising-based revenue model has for children's media experiences and usage. Two other papers analyze the perspectives of producers involved in advertising to children on the internet, with a focus on how these producers represent themselves, their practices and the child audience. In addition to this, one paper focuses on what participatory opportunities are provided to children in children's virtual worlds, and how the revenue model based on the sale of virtual goods and VIP membership in different ways constrains children's participation. This paper also looks into the ways in which the producer discursively represents the virtual world, and how the users relate tactically to the commercial strategies. On a more general level, combining the different studies, the thesis also critically discusses how the children and the producers discursively position themselves in the power relationship existing between them.

The ongoing integration of commercial interests and children's everyday lives has been described as "one of the most pressing and controversial issues of our times" (Buckingham, 2011: 4). One area in which this integration is particularly evident today is in children's daily internet usage, where advertising and the sale of virtual goods are present parts of the online environment. To get a better and more multifaceted understanding of children's internet usage, and the role of the internet in children's lives, it is important to learn more about what it is like for children to navigate a commercial online environment. Previous research has paid little attention to children's views of and engagement with online advertising; most research has focused on the effects of advertising on children, and how children in different ages are able to identify and understand the intent of advertising (see further literature review chapter). As part of the research project "Children, Advertising and the

Internet,"[1] the present thesis contributes to media and communication studies by providing new insights and a deeper understanding of children's views of and engagement with advertising on the internet. Research on children and advertising has also to a large extent lacked a production perspective, as few studies have paid attention to the professionals involved in producing child-directed advertising. Hence, the present thesis also contributes to media and communication studies by directing its attention to the producers, and in particular by advancing our understanding of advertising producers' self-representational practices and audience constructions.

My hope is that the present thesis can be relevant also in a wider societal context, and that the results can be used to inform policy and regulatory development and in this way contribute to improving the commercial online environment so that it better serves the interests of children and children's well-being. By giving room for children's views of advertising online, this thesis, in line with the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, acknowledges children's rights to express their views on matters that concern them (CRC, 1989, article 12). Knowledge about children's own perspectives, for instance what aspects of online advertising bother them most, may be of interest for policy-makers and regulators, but also other stakeholders such as teachers and parents. Knowledge about how online media, such as virtual worlds, operate to monetize children's internet usage can provide the basis for reflections about the kind of environment children spend large amount of their leisure time in.

This thesis may also be of relevance for the industry, in the sense that it can lay the foundation for and encourage critical self-reflection and discussion among marketers and advertising agency practitioners. An ongoing discussion about what are fair and unfair marketing practices on the internet is needed as new advertising strategies are developing at a fast pace in the online landscape. This examination ought to include not only researchers, policy-makers and regulators, but also producers involved in marketing to children online.

This introductory chapter further discusses and specifies the focus of the thesis, the societal context and the motivations behind the research. Initially, the chapter focuses on children's commercial online environment, where I discuss children's internet usage and also theorize the online environment as part of *consumer culture* (Hovland & Wolburg, 2010; Lury, 2011; Turow & McAllister, 2009), as a *new marketing ecosystem* (Montgomery, 2012), and as an *attention economy* (Crogan & Kinsley, 2012; Davenport & Beck, 2001; Roberts, 2012). After "setting the scene" for the objects of research, I present the aims and research questions of the thesis, and in

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[1] The project "Children, Advertising and the Internet" was established at Lund University in 2011. The project has had a multi-method approach to studying children and online advertising, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. The research leader is Helena Sandberg. The project was funded by the Swedish Research Council (Grant 421-2010-1982) and the Crafoord Foundation (Grant 20100899).

relation to this also a short summary of each paper. Thereafter, in the theoretical framework, I position the thesis within the fields of audience research and media production research, and discuss the theoretical perspectives used in the papers. The cultural theorist Michel de Certeau's (1984) theory on practices of everyday life is introduced and discussed most thoroughly here, as this perspective is employed in three of the papers.

After this introductory chapter follows the literature review where I examine previous research, and further specify how the thesis contributes to media and communication studies. Thereafter follows the method chapter where the methodological underpinnings of the research and the research process around each paper are discussed. In the results and discussion chapter I present and discuss the results of the papers, and reflect on them in light of previous research. In the concluding chapter I discuss the main results of the papers on a more general level and make suggestions for future research. Finally, before a summary of the thesis in Swedish, I discuss the policy and regulatory implications of the research findings. The five papers are included in the last part of the dissertation.

1.1 Children's commercial online environment: Setting the scene

The internet has become an integral part of many children's everyday lives, and children's daily internet usage has increased substantially during the last few years. In 2011, the average time spent on the internet among Swedish 9–14-year-olds was around one and a half hours daily (Nordicom, 2012: 116). A few years after this, in 2014, Swedish children in the same age group used the internet on average about two and a half hours daily (Nordicom, 2015: 125).[2] During these years there has also been a technological shift where children's internet usage, like the population in general, has gone mobile, and children now access the internet to a large extent through tablets and mobile phones (Swedish Media Council, 2015; Swedish Press and Broadcasting Authority, 2015: 14). When using the internet, children commonly play digital and mobile games, such as Hay Day and Moviestarplanet, and watch video clips on YouTube (Findahl & Davidsson, 2015: 56; Findahl, 2014: 47–48;

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[2] More recent statistics regarding children's time spent on the internet would have been useful here, but the latest report from Nordicom (2016: 14) only includes time spent online using "traditional" media, time spent using social media, and time watching video clips. These numbers do not include, for instance, digital game play, something which makes these numbers of little use to compare with. Looking at the report from the Swedish Media Council (2015: 27), it can be said that in 2015 40 percent of children aged 9–12 years spent 1–2 hours on the internet in their spare time daily, 35 percent spent less than an hour on the internet daily, while 15 percent spent 3–4 hours on the internet daily.

Swedish Media Council, 2015: 10, 20, 44). To socialize with friends children use various forms of social media platforms, and popular sites among 9- to 12-year-olds are Instagram, Kik and Facebook (Swedish Media Council, 2015: 49). Children's everyday lives take place both in online and offline spaces, and online media is today important spaces for children's social relations, identity formation and learning, as well as for everyday life play, enjoyment and relaxation (Holm Sørensen, 2010: 54).

Websites and apps that are popular among children, as well as adults, are often so-called "free-to-use," and utilize revenue models based on commercial surveillance, targeted advertising, and sale of virtual goods and premium memberships.[3] With these revenue models, commercial media platforms adapt to the culture of "free content" that exists on the internet where internet users are reluctant to pay for media content and services (Cha, 2013: 60; Dijck, 2013: 40), and by providing free content can more easily attract new users. For media users in general, and child media users in particular, the ability to download and use free content and services is attractive (Nairn, 2008: 239), and can give a sense of freedom and control. However, this also means that children's internet usage takes place to a large extent in a commercial environment, where advertising and the sale of virtual goods are ever-present parts of the online experience.

Several different commercial media producers utilize the internet as an arena for targeting children online. On the one hand there are the website and app producers that create content and spaces for children's social interaction and entertainment, such as producers of virtual worlds and game apps. On the other hand there are the advertisers and marketers that utilize the internet as an arena for targeting children with promotional messages to enhance brand and product awareness. In Sweden, almost 13 billion Swedish crowns were invested in internet and mobile advertising in 2015, and this is the media where most advertising investments are made (IRM, 2016).[4] How much of this is child-directed advertising is not known, and newer forms of advertising such as *advergames* (a digital game that promotes a product or a brand), which are often placed on corporate websites, are not included in these numbers. Important to point out in this context is also that much advertising that

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[3] A revenue model is one part of a company's business model, and has to do with how incomes are generated and how a firm makes money (Cha, 2013: 61). There are different forms of revenue models that can be used by producers of online digital content; social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter generate revenue primarily through advertising (ibid.: 77), while, for instance, LinkedIn and virtual worlds such as Habbo Hotel have a "freemium" revenue model where substantial parts of the platforms are made available for free, while additional content and services, such as VIP memberships, can be purchased for real money (Martínez & Sandberg, 2016, forthcoming). The freemium model is also commonly combined with advertising as revenue stream (ibid.). A revenue model can also be based on a one-time purchase, such as paying for a mobile game app.

[4] For instance, nearly five and a half billion crowns were invested in television advertising in 2015. Investments in internet and mobile advertising increased 20 percent compared to 2014, which was by far the largest increase compared to other media (IRM, 2016).

children encounter online is not directly targeted at them, such as advertising for dating sites and gambling (Nairn, 2008; Slater et al., 2012).

One underpinning assumption in this thesis is that the ways of organizing the media, such as the revenue models used to monetize internet usage, have implications for media content, and also for media usage and media experiences. Hardy (2014) states that "different ways of organising and financing communications have implications for the range and nature of media content, and the ways in which this is consumed and used" (p. 7). Similarly, Turow and McAllister (2009) argue that advertising as "support system is not neutral. It affects what the media offer us. It ties media to the spread of consumer culture in the interests of marketers and the advertising, public relations, event-marketing, and other industries that help them" (p. 5). From this follows that the revenue models of online media have consequences for children's media usage and media experiences. Advertising strategies, and strategies to make children purchase virtual goods, are not marginal aspects of commercial online spaces; they have an impact on the ways in which media content is structured and can be used. However, *how* the revenue models structure media content and in this way affect media experiences differs between online media, as there are different strategies for drawing attention to advertisements, and different strategies for trying to make users pay for content and services.

The presence of advertising, and the use of strategies to make children purchase virtual goods and premium memberships, visualize the commercial dimension of websites and apps and contribute to the sense of being in a commercial environment. The concept of *commercial* in this context denotes "concerned with earning money," and is "related to or used in the buying and selling of goods and services" (Merriam-Webster, 2016a). Children's commercial online environment can be seen as part of consumer culture. The notion of consumer culture involves many different dimensions that have to do with the centrality of consumption and consumer logics in everyday life and in different societal spheres (Hovland et al., 2007: xiii; Lury, 2011: 1–7). Lury (2011) asserts that one of the essential dimensions of consumer culture is "[t]he pervasiveness of advertising in everyday life" (p. 3). Hovland and Wolburg (2010) describe advertising as the most "visible" part of consumer culture, and write that "[a]lthough it's by no means the only institution emblematic of our consumer culture, it is certainly one of the most visible" (p. 3).

Turow and McAllister (2009) also point to the central position of advertising in consumer culture, and include individuals' meaning-making as part of the concept: "Consumer culture also involves how people make meaning from these messages: how we understand ourselves and our lives through consumer messages" (p. 4). Consumer culture, thus, can be said to include both a "material" and a "subjective" dimension; the commercial messages, and how people, such as child internet users, make meaning in relation to these messages. In line with this, it can be argued that advertising producers' meaning-making and subjectivities related to their advertising practices also can be seen as part of consumer culture.

Children's commercial online environment has been described as a new marketing "ecosystem" (Montgomery, 2012). Montgomery (2012) writes that: "powerful commercial forces are … shaping this new interactive media culture, where advertising is not restricted to discrete commercial messages but, rather, woven through the online experience" (p. 632). In this new marketing environment, more traditional advertising formats, such as banner and video advertising, exist alongside new advertising forms such as advergames, where promotional messages are integrated in interactive games. The convergence between advertising and entertainment is an important feature of this new "ecosystem" (ibid.: 636). McDonald's advergame Happy Studio serves as a paradigm example in this context. In this promotional online world children can play games and view trailers for new movies, in a milieu permeated with the ever-smiling Happy Meal-box "Happy" (McDonald's, 2015). Branded entertainment in general and advergames in particular are meant to be seen as entertainment, and not advertising, in order to bypass the well-known consumer skepticism toward advertising (Cicchirillo, 2014: 85; Faber et al., 2012: 20), and make people interact and engage with brands.

Montgomery (2012: 639–640) also includes three-dimensional virtual worlds in the new digital marketing environment. Virtual worlds often have the selling of virtual goods and VIP memberships as main income, together with incomes from third party advertising. Promotion of virtual goods inside virtual worlds often involves presenting messages to the user which resembles traditional advertising (Black, 2010: 20). Messages used to promote virtual goods in virtual worlds, and in other digital games, are under-theorized as a category of advertising. This has probably to do with the blurring lines between advertising and entertainment in these online spaces, and according to Hamari and Lehdonvirta (2010) it is difficult to distinguish between content and advertising within virtual worlds: "in games and online services that utilise the virtual good sales revenue model, it may be conceptually impossible to distinguish between 'innocent' game mechanics and content that has a marketing purpose" (pp. 26–27). This quotation illustrates the difficulties when it comes to defining the concept of advertising in the online media landscape.

Advertising has traditionally been defined as "*paid* communication, from an *identified sponsor* using *mass media* to *persuade* an audience" (Thorson & Rodgers, 2012: 4). However, in the digital media landscape, the idea of "paid" must be problematized as, for instance, advergames that are placed on corporate websites, or advertising messages for virtual goods in virtual worlds, are not "paid" media placement in the traditional sense. McMillan (2012: 20) has developed a typology for online advertising that includes both traditional "paid" advertising and newer forms of advertising online. This typology makes a distinction between two different locations of internet advertising: advertising on *nonadvertiser sites* (such as banners and video ads) and advertising on *advertiser-controlled sites* (such as advergames on corporate websites) (ibid.: 20). McMillan (ibid.: 31) states that internet advertising is continually expanding and evolving, however, there are some common characteristics,

such as interactivity, personalization and intrusiveness. An inclusive definition of advertising, which includes both traditional paid advertising and newer forms of advertising in virtual worlds and on corporate websites, is to define advertising as any content with a persuasive goal promoting a product, service or brand (Bucy et al., 2011: 1253).

The commercial online environment can be understood as an attention economy. The attention economy is defined as an economy in which "information is plentiful and attention is the scarce resource" (Crogan & Kinsley, 2012: 3). Davenport and Beck (2001) propose that "[u]nderstanding and managing attention is now the single most important determinant of business success" (p. 3). The concept of attention economy applies particularly well to the commercial online environment (Roberts, 2012: 2), where producers compete to catch and keep the attention of media users. In the case of advertising, gaining attention is the basic purpose of all advertisements; without attention, advertising cannot reach the subsequent goals of, for instance, influencing brand attitudes and purchase behavior (McQuarrie & Phillips, 2012: 235). Advertising can be said to have a more difficult situation when it comes to capturing the attention of users, as watching adverts is usually not the main reason for using the media (McQuarrie & Phillips, 2012: 229; Yeu et al., 2013: 243). A plethora of attention-grabbing strategies have therefore been developed, such as personally targeted advertising, color and motion, the use of celebrities, integrating commercial messages with entertainment, i.e. branded entertainment, and forced-exposure mode, such as advertisements before YouTube videos and in digital games.

Concerning the regulatory framework for the commercial online environment, it is relevant to stress that child-directed online advertising has almost no specific legal regulation in Swedish law.[5] This contrasts to television advertising, which is banned to children below the age of 12 in television channels broadcasting from Sweden. The law, which was established at the beginning of the 1990's, says that "[a]dvertising in television broadcasting … must not seek to capture the attention of children below the age of 12" (Swedish Parliament, 2016a: Chapter 8, 7§; my translation). In contrast to this, advertising to children on the internet has not been banned.[6] In Sweden, child-directed internet advertising, like advertising in general, is mainly regulated in the Marketing Practices Act (Swedish Parliament, 2016b), and in the EU Unfair Commercial Practices Directive (European Commission, 2016b). Children are

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[5] However, there are policy documents developed by the Nordic Consumer Ombudsmen which include recommendations on marketing to children on the internet (Swedish Consumer Agency, 2015a; 2015b). More specific recommendations concerning marketing to children online can also be found in industry self-regulation, primarily the international ICC Code on advertising and marketing communication practice (International Chamber of Commerce, 2011). This code is implemented in Sweden by the Swedish advertising ombudsman. For a deeper discussion and analysis of the Swedish regulatory framework regarding children and advertising, see Sjöberg (2013).

[6] Relevant to mention in this context is that the ban on child-directed television advertising applies to television streaming services, such as SVT Play (Swedish Consumer Agency, 2015c).

not specifically mentioned in the Marketing Practices Act. However, the law dictates general rules, for instance that all market communication has to be easily identified as such, and that market communication must not be aggressive or misleading (Swedish Parliament, 2016b). Children are specifically mentioned in the EU directive, which prohibits the inclusion in an advertisement "a direct exhortation to children to buy advertised products or persuade their parents or other adults to buy advertised products for them" (European Commission, 2016b: Annex 1: 28). Consequently, with the advent of the internet, Swedish marketers and advertising agency professionals have been given new arenas for targeting children with advertising. These online advertising practices take place in a cultural context where child-directed advertising is considered controversial and morally questionable, manifested in, for instance, the ban on child-directed television advertising. This development prompts the question of how Swedish advertising producers discursively orient themselves in this "new" situation and how they wish to present themselves and their practices to the surrounding society.

1.2 Aims and research questions

The overall goal of this thesis is to contribute to a critical understanding of children's commercial online environment as spaces for children's everyday life activities and participation, and as spaces for commercial interests that seek to target children and monetize their internet usage. Connected to this overall goal, the thesis has three main aims. *First*, based on the observation that children's online activities to a large extent take place in a commercial environment, this thesis aims to explore and critically discuss how children view and engage with online advertising, and what consequences the revenue models (advertising and the sale of virtual goods) have for children's participation and media experiences. *Second*, the thesis aims to analyze and critically discuss how producers of commercial online media represent themselves, their practices and the child audience, and how these constructions are used for legitimizing purposes. *Third*, on a more general level, combining the audience- and producer-oriented studies, the thesis also aims to critically discuss how the child internet users and the commercial media producers discursively position themselves in the power relationship that exists between them.

In order to achieve these aims the following research questions are investigated:

Paper I: *What are 9-year-old children's views and practices regarding online advertising?*

This paper is based on individual interviews with 20 Swedish 9-year-old children, conducted in 2011. The paper focuses broadly on banner and video advertising in different online spaces such as YouTube and digital game sites, based on what the children brought up during the interviews. Michel de Certeau's theory on practices of everyday life (1984) is used as theoretical framework in the paper.

Paper II: *How do 9- and 12-year-old children view and engage with advertising in mobile games, and what consequences does in-game advertising have for children's game experiences?*

This paper is based on group interviews with 46 Swedish 9- and 12-year-old children, conducted in 2015. During the interviews, which concentrated broadly on internet advertising, the children particularly brought up their experiences from advertising in mobile games on touchscreen devices. The focus in this paper is therefore on in-game advertising. The theoretical framework builds on de Certeau (1984) but also introduces the concept of *non-tactics*, which aims to capture how children sometimes succumb to the pressures put on them online (Livingstone, 2009: 32). Research on motivations for playing digital games, and digital game experiences, are also parts of the theoretical framework in this paper.

Paper III: *What participatory opportunities are provided to children in virtual worlds, and how is children's participation constrained by the commercial strategies? How do virtual world producers represent their practices to different audiences, and how do the users engage tactically with the commercial strategies?*

Paper III is based on a case study of the virtual world Habbo Hotel conducted in 2012, and includes online observations as well as document analysis and one producer interview. This paper combines participation theory (Carpentier, 2011) with a political economy approach. De Certeau's (1984) theory on practices of everyday life is also used in the paper. Wasko (2010) has described children's virtual worlds as "the latest commercialization of children's culture" (p. 113). In light of this, it was considered relevant to include an analysis of this online space in the context of the present thesis.

Paper IV: *How do Swedish producers of child-directed online advertising represent themselves and their practices, and what interpretative repertoires do they draw upon to legitimize their work?*

This paper is based on interviews with 18 Swedish marketers and advertising agency practitioners conducted in 2013. These producers were involved in producing child-directed banner advertising on websites popular among children, and branded entertainment, mainly "advergames," placed on corporate websites. The theoretical framework draws mainly on the discourse analytical approach developed by Margareth Wetherell (1998; 2007), and Jonathan Potter and Margareth Wetherell (1987; 1992), as well as John Caldwell's (2008; 2014) approach to media production research.

Paper V: *How do Swedish producers of child-directed online advertising construct children as an advertising audience, and how are these constructions shaped by cultural context and industry interests?*

This paper builds upon the same interview study as paper IV. The paper focuses on how the producers construct children as an advertising audience and how the Swedish cultural context contributes to shaping the notion of the child audience among producers. The theoretical framework is based on an extended discussion regarding constructions of children as media audiences, and how these constructions connect with broader cultural ideas about children and childhood. The discourse analytical approach developed by Potter and Wetherell (1987; 1992) is employed in this paper as well.

In these short descriptions of the five papers I have briefly mentioned the theoretical perspectives that are used in the studies, and in the following I discuss and contextualize the main theoretical perspectives in more detail. However, I start by introducing the cultural theorist Richard Johnson's (1986/87) cultural circuit model, which can be used to illustrate the connection between the different papers. The theoretical framework will show that I have found inspiration in cultural studies perspectives, which is common in qualitative media studies. Cultural studies is characterized by its interest in "the relationships between particular cultural practices and broader processes of social power" (Buckingham, 2008: 220), and by its focus on asymmetric social relations and relational inequalities between "addresser and addressee" in the cultural domain (Hartley, 2011: 76–77). In the present thesis I argue that there exists an asymmetrical power relationship between children and producers in the commercial online environment. This asymmetry has to do with differences in age and economic resources, as well as the producers' ability to be

present in children's everyday lives through the commercial messages that are shown on websites and apps.

1.3 Theoretical framework

To critically analyze children's commercial online environment, and the social actors connected to this environment, this thesis focuses on three dimensions: the media users, the text and the producers. Papers I and II center on the media user, paper III combines a focus on the text, the users and the producer, while papers IV and V focus on the media producers. The idea is that a holistic approach which combines different perspectives enables a deeper and more multifaceted analysis and understanding. Several "cultural circuit" models have been proposed to illustrate the relationship between these different dimensions, and one of the most influential, which has served as inspiration for several subsequent models (Buckingham, 2008; D'Acci, 2004: 429; Scherer & Jackson, 2008), was developed by Richard Johnson (1986/87). In this model, Johnson (1986/87) extracts four moments for analysis in the cultural process: production, texts, readings and lived cultures. Johnson (ibid.) explains that the circuit is "at one and the same time, a circuit of capital and its expanded reproduction *and* a circuit of the production and circulation of subjective forms" (p. 47). Hence, the subjective side of cultural forms, the subjective form, is central in Johnson's perspective. It is not the text in itself that is of main interest, but how the text takes on different meanings in the different moments of the circuit:

> More generally, the aim is to decentre "the text" as an object of study. "The text" is no longer studied for its own sake, nor even for the social effects it may be thought to produce, but rather for the subjective or cultural forms which it realises and makes available. … But the ultimate object of cultural studies is not, in my view, the text, but *the social life of subjective forms* at each moment of their circulation, including their textual embodiments. (Johnson, 1986/87: 62)

The concept of subjective form is not clearly defined in Johnson's article. However, in my view, it highlights the need to understand the text in its social context and from the point of view of the different social groups that have a relation to the text. Understood from this perspective, advertising as subjective form is central in the present thesis, as the dissertation analyzes what children do with advertising, what it means to them in the context of their internet usage, and how the advertising producers discursively represent their advertising practices. The importance of the subjective dimension in this thesis is further shown in the producer-oriented papers with their focus on producers' self-representation and audience constructions.

As I pay attention to various moments in the cultural circuit, the thesis can be situated in different research fields in media and communication studies. These fields are, on a general level, chiefly audience research and media production research.[7] In the following I briefly introduce and position the thesis within these two fields, and in connection with this I discuss the main theoretical perspectives that are used in the papers. These perspectives primarily focus on the social actors – the audience and the producers – and their subjectivities and practices. Michel de Certeau's (1984) theory on practices of everyday life is of special importance in the thesis, as it is used in three of the papers (Papers I, II and III), and will therefore be discussed most thoroughly in this theoretical framework.

1.3.1 Audience research, everyday practices and media engagement

The present thesis can be situated, partially at least, within the field of audience research, and has most in common with qualitative studies that focus on audiences' media-related practices and meaning construction. A scholarly interest in the media as an integrated part of everyday life, and in audiences' subjectivities and meaning-making practices emerged during the 1980's and 1990's (Barker, 2012: 339–340; Barker & Galasiński, 2001: 7; Livingstone, 2008: 51; Stevenson, 1995: 75–76). Described as the "cultural tradition" (McQuail, 1997: 18–21; see also Dahlgren, 1998), this audience research questions the idea of the all-powerful text, and the idea of a manipulated audience present in, for instance, some media effects research (Barker, 2012: 339–340; Dahlgren, 1998: 299; Livingstone, 2000; McQuail, 1997: 18–19). It also opposes the view that meaning and reading can be deduced, or "read off," from a detailed analysis of texts (Barker, 2012: 339). A qualitative approach based on ethnographic methods and reception studies is central to this tradition of audience studies, and through these methods researchers have been able to identify the multiplicity and creativity of audiences' meaning-making practices (Livingstone, 2008: 51; McQuail, 1997: 19–21).

Audience research within the cultural tradition has commonly had an interest in exploring issues related to power (Seiter, 2004: 463), and has drawn on cultural theory where the question of power is essential. One of the most central theories, which also marks a starting point for culturally oriented audience studies, is the Encoding/decoding model, developed by the sociologist and cultural theorist Stuart Hall. In this model Hall (1980) outlines different positions the audience can adopt in

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[7] The producer-oriented papers do not analyze actual processes of media production. However, the focus on media producers and their subjectivities is an established strand of research in media production studies (see further section "1.3.2 Perspectives on media production"). Hesmondhalgh (2010) states that media production studies focus on both people and processes: "the study of media production examines the people (producers) and processes (production) that cause media to take the forms they do" (p. 146).

relation to the dominant ideology and the power interests that, according to Hall, are inscribed in mediated messages.[8] With the advent of the internet and social media, audience studies has in more recent years turned its attention to the concept of *participation*, where the question of power also is important. The media scholar Sonia Livingstone (2013) even suggests that this is a new "paradigm" in audience research. The turn toward participation is reflected in paper III of this thesis, where the media researcher Nico Carpentier's (2011) theoretical perspective is used. The notion of participation is here defined as the ability to *co-decide* on, for instance, media content, and is distinguished from having *access* to or *interacting* with media content (ibid.: 130). By defining participation as the possibility to co-decide on/with the media, a focus is put on power, which is the "main defining component" of the concept, Carpentier argues (ibid.: 129).

Michel de Certeau and everyday practices

Michel de Certeau is another cultural theorist that has influenced audience studies within the cultural tradition, much due to the fact that his theory on practices in everyday life (1984) is in line with the idea of the "active" audience present in culturally oriented audience studies. This theory is mainly presented in *The practice of everyday life* (1984), which I draw on in this dissertation. There is also a second co-authored volume, *The practice of everyday life. Volume 2: Living and Cooking* (Certeau, Giard & Mayol, 1998), which mainly comprises case studies of everyday life practices. De Certeau's (1984) theoretical perspective has been used to analyze, for instance, fan culture (Jenkins, 2006: 41–42) and mobile phone usage among teenagers (O'Brien, 2009). De Certeau has also influenced disciplines such as geography and urban studies (Crang, 2000: 136; Crang, 2010). However, de Certeau's theoretical framework has not, to the best of my knowledge, been used in research on children and advertising, or for analyzing practices in children's virtual worlds. In the following I introduce de Certeau's theory of practices in everyday life, and I also explain why I found this perspective relevant in the context of the present thesis, and in an analysis of today's media landscape.

Most previous research on children's relationship with online advertising focuses on advertising effects and children's advertising literacy (the ability to identify and understand the purpose of advertising, see Gunter et al., 2014: 3–4; see further literature review chapter). This research gives limited space for children's own perspectives. In the present thesis I seek to understand children's views on online advertising, and understand children's engagement with online advertising in the

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[8] In the Encoding/decoding model Hall (1980) proposes that mediated messages (such as a television program) are inscribed with the dominant ideology and represent the dominant societal order. However, audiences' readings are not determined by the structure of the texts, and Hall outlines three hypothetical audience positions: the dominant-hegemonic position where the viewer fully accepts the message, the oppositional position where the viewer fully opposes the dominant meaning of the text, and the negotiated position which is a mixture of the two former positions.

context of their internet usage. Michel de Certeau's theoretical perspective (1984) is fruitful for making such an analysis. De Certeau (ibid.) proposes that: "users make (*bricolent*) innumerable and infinitesimal transformations of and within the dominant cultural economy in order to adapt it to their own interests and their own rules" (pp. xiii–xiv). When analyzing the interview data for the first paper, based on individual interviews with 9-year-old children, I thought that this was precisely what the children communicated in the interviews. Children use the internet for various goal-directed purposes, such as playing mobile games or watching YouTube videos, and when involved in their preferred activities they also have to handle the presence of advertising. Engagement, thus, has to do with children's different practices in relation to advertising, that is, what children *do* with and how they relate to advertising while surfing on the internet, which comprises moments of both attention and avoidance.

De Certeau uses the concept of *tactics* to capture how individuals actively engage with and appropriate cultural representations and artifacts in their everyday lives, such as television images, the urban space or advertising. Tactics are defined based on *difference* (ibid.: xiii, xxii), rather than similarity to the representations:

> The presence and circulation of a representation … tells us nothing about what it is for its users. We must first analyze its manipulation by users who are not its makers. Only then can we gauge the difference or similarity between the production of the image and the secondary production hidden in the process of its utilization. Our investigation is concerned with this difference. (Certeau, 1984: xiii)

De Certeau further stresses the importance of difference when it comes to defining tactics by stating that everyday practices open up a "gap of varying proportions" (ibid.: 32) between the individual and the representations.

Cultural representations are conceptualized as *strategies*. Strategies are characterized by their access to a *proper place*, where relations with defined targets can be established:

> I call a "strategy" the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an "environment." A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as *proper* (*propre*) and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it (competitors, adversaries, "clientèles," "targets," or "objects" of research). Political, economic, and scientific rationality has been constructed on this strategic model. (Certeau, 1984: xix)

In this quotation, de Certeau relates the strategies to "a subject of will and power." This connection between the cultural representations and the agents behind the

strategies is one of the strengths of de Certeau's framework. Behind media texts there are producers with specific intentions who seek to target individuals through their access to "a proper place." In the context of the present thesis, advertisements that appear on children's websites and apps can be understood as strategies, produced by marketers and advertising agency practitioners who aim at generating "relations with an exterior" (ibid.: xix). Different ways of trying to make children purchase virtual goods and VIP membership in virtual worlds can also be understood as strategies. The concepts of strategies and tactics, thus, enable a dynamic understanding of children's commercial online environment as an arena for various social actors with different interests and agendas.

Using the concepts of strategies and tactics as a lens to understand children's commercial online environment also enables a focus on power relations and power struggles, which manifest themselves during children's daily internet usage. De Certeau writes that a tactic is "inseparable from the everyday struggles and pleasures that it articulates" (ibid.: xx). In de Certeau's framework, power is located with the strategies, due to their access to a proper place: "a tactic is determined by the *absence of power* just as a strategy is organized by the postulation of power" (ibid.: 38). The power of a strategy is based on its ability to generate relations with an exterior through its proper place. Related to the media one can say that power in de Certeau's meaning is a form of symbolic power; the power to produce visibility. The sociologist John B. Thompson (2005) defines symbolic power as "the capacity to intervene in the course of events and influence the actions of others by means of the production and transmission of symbolic forms" (p. 50). While Thompson speaks of symbolic power as influence on events and actions, de Certeau can be said to speak of influence in a wider sense, that is, the power of the strategies to be present in and a part of individuals' everyday lives. This symbolic form of power is, in turn, closely connected to economic power, as visibility and economic possibilities often are interconnected (Fuchs, 2013: 27; Hackley, 2002: 223).

However, despite their lack of "a place of power" (Certeau, 1984: 38), users with their tactics manage to make their own space within the structures. De Certeau contrasts his analytical focus with that of Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*, and writes:

> If it is true that the grid of "discipline" is everywhere becoming clearer and more extensive, it is all the more urgent to discover how an entire society resists being reduced to it, what popular procedures (also "minuscule" and quotidian) manipulate the mechanisms of discipline and conform to them only in order to evade them. (Certeau, 1984: xiv)

De Certeau argues that Foucault's analysis "privileges the productive apparatus (which produces the 'discipline')" (ibid.: xiv), and writes that he (Certeau) takes the opposite perspective: "Pushed to their ideal limits, these procedures and ruses of

consumers compose the network of an antidiscipline which is the subject of this book" (ibid.: xv). In this context, de Certeau (ibid.: 205) explicitly states that the Marxist philosopher and sociologist Henry Lefebvre also has served as a source of inspiration. De Certeau's and Lefebvre's works on everyday life share both similarities and differences; both theorists stress the presence of consumer society in everyday life, but Lefebvre puts emphasis on "the extension of capitalist logic into the everyday" (Highmore, 2002: 150), while de Certeau focuses on the logic of everyday life practices, a logic which is based on individuals' resistance and creativity in their dealings with the strategies.

At several instances, de Certeau describes users' practices with a sense of optimism and celebration, for instance, tactics are described as "an art of manipulating and enjoying" (Certeau, 1984: xxii). However, tactics are also described as part of the everyday struggles (ibid.: xx). The present thesis does not aim to produce a one-sided celebratory discourse on children's possibilities for agency and resistance. On the contrary, as shown throughout the different papers, de Certeau's framework is useful also for capturing the structural constraints of the commercial online environment, and how the strategies have consequences for children's internet usage. In paper II I also highlight the limitations of de Certeau's perspective, and introduce the concept of *non-tactics* to capture other dimensions of children's engagement with advertising. Children are not always engaged in active resistance, or engaged in making transformations within the cultural economy. Sometimes children give in to the pressures put on them online, and act in line (creating sameness) with the intentions of strategies (see results and discussion chapter).[9]

One issue that is important to address here is why de Certeau's theoretical framework, published in the 1980's, is relevant more than 30 years later in an analysis of today's media landscape and in what respects it has become outdated. In de Certeau's framework there are several claims that do not work in the present online environment:

> Marginality is today no longer limited to minority groups, but is rather massive and pervasive; this cultural activity of the non-producers of culture, an activity that is unsigned, unreadable, and unsymbolized, remains the only one possible for all those who nevertheless buy and pay for the showy products through which a productivist economy articulates itself. (Certeau, 1984: xvii)

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[9] The concepts of *tactics* and *non-tactics* bear some resemblances to Stuart Hall's (1980) concepts of the *oppositional position* and the *dominant-hegemonic position* (preferred reading), that viewers can adopt in relation to media texts. However, there are also important differences; the model developed by Hall focuses on meaning structures of mediated messages, for instance a television program, and meaning-making in relation to the semiotic codes. The concepts of tactics and non-tactics, in line with de Certeau's focus on practices in everyday life, take a wider grip on audience engagement. This engagement includes not only "meaning-making" but also bodily and haptic practices which are performed in both online and offline space (see further results and discussion chapter).

In this quotation, de Certeau describes individuals as "non-producers of culture." In the digital media environment, particularly on social media, individuals are able to produce and share media content. Media users, in light of this, cannot be generally positioned as "non-producers of culture." However, even though media users have the possibility to produce and share media content, they are not "producers" *all the time*. In the digital media landscape, individuals shift from being "audiences" and "users," to sometimes occupy the position as "producers" (Burgess & Green, 2009: 82). By way of example, statistics show that 61 percent of 9- to 14-year-olds watch video clips an ordinary day, while only three percent create and publish their own videos, proportions which are almost the same regarding young adults (Nordicom, 2015: 131). Individuals are, thus, also to a large extent audiences and users online. In relation to professionally produced advertising, children can be said to occupy the position as "users" and "audiences."[10] This is why de Certeau's framework is still relevant in an analysis of today's media landscape, and this is why it is appropriate, in this particular context, to work with the dichotomy of strategies and tactics.

Another thought that has to be problematized is the idea that tactics are "unsymbolized" (Certeau, 1984: xvii) and "hidden" (ibid.: xii). Media users can in the online landscape, for instance, in a chat or in a YouTube comment show the ways in which they relate to cultural representations (see also Manovich, 2009). This is discussed in the analysis of the virtual world Habbo Hotel, where observations of the chat were used to analyze children's tactics. In addition to this, users of social media can produce visibility. It could, hence, be argued that social media is the "proper place" of the users. This is discussed in paper III, where I argue that one must not forget that these platforms are owned and controlled by commercial corporations, and that virtual worlds are mainly the proper place of the producer (Paper III: 703–704). Hence, de Certeau's (1984) view of the relationship between tactics and strategies is still relevant in the online landscape: "The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it [the tactic] must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power" (p. 37).

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[10] With the advent of the internet there has been a discussion in media and communication studies on how to understand the "audience" in the new media landscape, where individuals also can produce, publish and share media content. Different concepts have been proposed such as *produser* (Bruns, 2008) and *prosumer* (Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010). Other conceptualizations distinguish between different types of media producers; for instance, Olsson (2010: 101) makes a distinction between *organized producers* and *disorganized producers*. In light of this, children could be described as disorganized producers and commercial media producers as organized media producers. However, in this thesis I choose to define children as audiences and users, as they mainly occupy this position in relation to professionally produced advertising. In the context of the present thesis I do not find it relevant to make a further conceptual distinction between the notions of *audience* and *user* (in line with, for instance, Livingstone, 2008: 51–52, and Nightingale, 2011: 1–4).

The concept of media engagement

In paper II, and in the contextualizing part of this thesis, I use the concept of *engagement* as an umbrella term for children's different practices in relation to advertising, that includes both tactical and non-tactical engagement and both voluntary and involuntary engagement. Important to address here is that this understanding of media engagement differs in some aspects from definitions made by media theorists such as Peter Dahlgren (2009: 80) and John Corner (2011: 91), where the concept of engagement is delimited to denote more focused and voluntary attention to media content. Corner (2011) makes a distinction between different intensities in people's encounters with the media: exposure, engagement and involvement. Exposure denotes mere contact with the media, engagement involves motivated and purposive selection of media content, and involvement denotes "more sustained cognitive and affective work" (ibid.: 91). Hence, in this view, the concept of engagement refers to voluntary, motivated and focused attention to the media. In contrast to this, I also include practices that have to do with avoidance and involuntary attention to the media. In a study of media users' engagement with advertising, avoidance becomes an important part of the analysis, and the will to avoid advertisements sometimes results in more focused engagement with them, such as when children struggle with advertisements on the touchscreen (see results and discussion chapter).

Important to accentuate here is that the concept of engagement, as employed in this thesis, also differs from industry definitions of the concept. For instance, the sector organization for digital advertising, IAB, defines advertising engagement as: "A spectrum of consumer advertising activities and experiences – cognitive, emotional, and physical – that will have a positive impact on a Brand" (IAB, 2016: 6). The concept of engagement is used in a wider sense in this thesis, and includes activities and experiences that can have both positive and negative consequences for the advertisers.

1.3.2 Perspectives on media production

As described above, the present thesis can also be situated within the field of media production studies. A systematic and focused analysis of media industries and their professionals emerged in the 1970's (Hesmondhalgh, 2010; Whitney & Ettema, 2003: 157). Two theoretical approaches have dominated the study; on the one hand organizational sociology with a focus on close analysis of media organizations, and on the other hand critical political economy with a macro-level focus on ownership and how "powerful institutions shape media content" (Whitney & Ettema, 2003: 171). In more recent years media industries have also been studied from a cultural studies perspective, with attention to everyday production practices and media producers' viewpoints, ideas and discourses (Hesmondhalgh, 2010: 148). The producer-oriented

papers in this thesis can be situated within the cultural studies approach to media production. The analytical focus is on the individual level, in contrast to the organizational or institutional level (Whitney & Ettema, 2003). However, in the papers I connect the micro-level with the macro-level as my ambition is to understand the producers' discourse as part of the wider cultural context.

In *Production studies: Cultural studies of media industries*, Mayer et al. (2009) write that one central research question within production studies is: "How do media producers represent themselves given the paradoxical importance of media in society?" (p. 4). This interest in producers' self-representation is reflected in paper IV of this thesis, which analyzes how the advertising producers represent themselves and their advertising practices. A central theme in media production research in general, and cultural studies inspired production studies in particular, is also the interest in producers' views and assumptions about their audiences (Havens et al., 2009: 237; McDonald, 2013: 149). Production scholars commonly emphasize that the idea of the audience among producers is socially constructed (Turow & Draper, 2014: 644; Zafirau, 2009: 190), and, for instance, speak of the audience as an invisible fiction (Hartley, 1989: 227), a useful fiction (McRobbie, 1998: 152), or an imagined audience (Caldwell, 2008: 223). Paper V in this thesis, which analyzes how advertising producers construct the child audience, connects with this research interest in media production studies.

In the producer-oriented papers I do not claim that I am able to reach these producers' inner sense of the self, thoughts and perceptions (Ganti, 2014: 18) (see also further method chapter 3.1). These producers' subjectivities are understood from a social-constructivist perspective where aspects of subjectivity such as identity, versions of reality, and social categorization are seen as situated and constructed in social contexts for different purposes (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). The papers center on how the producers construct "versions of reality" within the interview situation, and how these constructions are shaped by cultural context and industry interests. In paper V I argue that the producers' constructions of children as an advertising audience must be understood in the interview context and the wider cultural context.

The media production scholar John Caldwell's (2008; 2014) perspective on media production research has served as a source of inspiration in this thesis. Caldwell discusses how producers represent themselves and their practices in their encounters with scholars, and conceptualizes these encounters as "cross-cultural interfaces" and as "contact zones" (ibid.: 735–736) in which media producers are highly selective and manage the information they provide researchers. Due to this, media production researchers need to be reflective in the research process:

> Researchers usually get only managed, official or top-down interpretations or explanations about what is going on in production. This makes "from the ground-up" research or fieldwork difficult, but not impossible, in the proprietary world of commercial media. Para-industry's managed shadow academy and buffers mean that production studies research itself must be self-reflexive and transparent in acknowledging and factoring in how the data in our studies have been managed, organizationally pre-edited and selectively parsed out to us in the first place. (Caldwell, 2014: 735)

Caldwell further argues that these cross-cultural interfaces are interesting cultural phenomena, and, thus, relevant to focus on in production studies: "My argument, of course, is that these contact zones and cross-cultural interfaces are actually more real and significant than industry's mythological centres. These interfaces are also as important to those industries as their centres" (ibid.: 736).

Caldwell's perspective is one way of approaching media producers and media production that has been productive in the present thesis. However, this approach has also been criticized. Hesmondhalgh (2013) argues that the focus on representation and narratives among producers "leaves us wondering how we are ultimately supposed to *evaluate* what is being observed" (p. 56). This is a problem that applies to many forms of research that centers on discourse and representation. However, despite the fact that a focus on representation does not tell us much about what goes on in actual production, it tells us something about the producers' ways of relating to the surrounding society, and which arguments they find relevant when legitimizing their practices. Producers' discourse within the cross-cultural interface (Caldwell, 2014) should be understood as public discourse (Buckingham et al., 1999: 151), and that producers in this public discourse strive to present themselves in a favorable light and legitimize their practices to the broader public.

To further theorize and analyze the producers' representational practices I draw on the discourse theoretical perspective developed by the social psychologists Jonathan Potter and Margareth Wetherell (1987; 1992). This perspective was first outlined in their seminal book *Discourse and social psychology* (1987) where the authors introduced a new qualitative approach to social psychology which focuses on analysis of actual speech. Inspired by, for instance, post-structuralism, conversation analysis and ethnomethodology, this approach came as a reaction toward traditional methods used in social psychology, primarily laboratory experiments (Potter, 2012: 436–437). The basic assumption in this approach is that language is used in social interaction to fulfill specific purposes, such as blaming, justification and self-representation (Potter & Wetherell, 1987: 2–8). This perspective also stresses the importance of context for understanding why "reality" is constructed in certain ways (ibid.: 2).

In Paper IV I use the concepts of *subject position* and *interpretative repertoire* to analyze how the producers represent themselves and their practices. Here I focus on the more local character of subject positions, that is, how individuals position

themselves in actual speech (Wetherell, 1998: 394). This contrasts to, for instance, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) which have a more "top-down" perspective and center on how discourses create certain subject positions. According to Wetherell (1998), individuals actively draw on interpretative repertoires to position themselves, rather than being positioned by the discourses. The concept of interpretative repertoire is defined in *Discourse and social psychology* as "recurrently used systems of terms used for characterizing and evaluating actions, events and other phenomena. A repertoire … is constituted through a limited range of terms used in particular stylistic and grammatical constructions" (Potter & Wetherell, 1987: 149). The concept of interpretative repertoire shares similarities with the more commonly used notion of "discourse" in discourse analysis. There is no general agreement on what discourses are; however, they can be thought of as "*a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)*" (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 1). The concept of interpretative repertoire is used to stress that individuals actively draw on cultural resources for specific purposes in social interaction, and to create a distance to the idea of discourses "as abstract, reified phenomena" (ibid.: 107).

2 Literature review

In the theoretical framework I situated the thesis in two main fields in media and communication studies; audience research and media production research. I have shown how these fields consist of several different approaches, or "sub-fields," and that the papers in this thesis most closely align with culturally oriented audience and production studies. In this literature review I narrow and deepen the focus, and discuss empirical research that is related to the objects of study, and I specify how the present thesis contributes to existing knowledge. The literature review is divided into four main sub-sections. The first sub-section discusses previous research on children and advertising, with particular focus on children's relationship with online advertising, which is primarily relevant for papers I and II. The second sub-section discusses previous research on children's virtual worlds, which is most relevant for paper III. The third sub-section discusses previous research that is relevant for papers IV and V, with special attention to existing research on advertising producers. The chapter ends with a conclusion where I make clear the contribution to media and communication studies of the thesis as a whole.

Important to stress is the fact that research on children, advertising and virtual worlds, as well as research on advertising producers, is multidisciplinary. The literature review includes previous research irrespective of discipline, and much research reviewed here comes from other disciplines than media and communication studies, such as marketing, psychology, anthropology, and medicine. The literature review is based on systematic searches in the major databases for academic research, primarily Academic Search Complete, Web of Science and Google Scholar, as well as extended reading and searches during the whole research project.

2.1 Research on children and advertising

The papers on children and online advertising, as well as the paper on children's virtual worlds, can be situated within the research area "children and the media." With the advent of the internet scholars in this research area have turned their attention to the role of the internet in children's everyday lives, and how the internet can create opportunities for, among other things, learning, creativity, social interaction and participation (Livingstone, 2009: 30). Researchers have also been

interested in analyzing the potential risks with the use of online media, and online advertising has here been categorized as one of the risks (Livingstone, 2009: 159). In research focusing on children and the internet limited attention has been paid to advertising, compared to other themes. For instance, the large and ambitious project "EU kids online" has mainly focused on risks such as pornography, bullying and meeting strangers online (Livingstone et al., 2011). While most studies conducted within this cross-country European project to a large extent have neglected the issue of online advertising, there is one qualitative study on children's experiences of problematic content online that does include some discussion on children's views of advertising (Smahel & Wright, 2014). This study is based on interviews with 9- to 16-year-old children in nine European countries, and found that children primarily viewed violent and sexual content on the internet as problematic (ibid.: 8). Advertising is included in the category of "other problematic situations" (ibid.: 3). The report, which primarily includes a few quotations from the interviews and little analytical depth, shows that children have negative experiences from advertising on the internet and are annoyed and bothered by it (ibid.: 35). Researchers within the "EU kids online" project accentuate that more research is needed on children's exposure to commercial content online (Stald et al., 2014: 20).

As previously mentioned, research that does center on children's relationship with advertising focuses primarily on the effects of advertising and measurements of children's advertising literacy. This research gives little space for children's perspectives, and rarely seeks to understand advertising engagement within the context of children's internet usage. To make my point clear about how the present thesis gives space to children's own perspectives, in contrast to most previous research, I initially in this section provide a short overview of the effect and advertising literacy studies. After this I discuss existing studies on children's views and engagement with online advertising, as well as television advertising.

2.1.1 Effect and advertising literacy research

The scholarly interest in investigating advertising effects and children's advertising literacy has to do with societal concern about children's vulnerability to the effects of advertising. It is commonly believed that young children are less able to defend themselves against advertising effects due to their less developed advertising literacy, that is, the ability to distinguish between advertising and other media content, and the ability to understand the persuasive intent of advertising (Rozendaal et al., 2011). Most of the current effect and advertising literacy studies focus on advergames, as this is a new advertising format in the online landscape which integrates promotional messages and gaming activities. These studies predominantly investigate how advergames affect children's brand attitudes, brand memory and (unhealthy) food consumption (e.g. Folkvord, et al., 2013; Harris et al., 2012; Redondo, 2012; Rifon

et al., 2014), they analyze children's abilities to identify advergames as advertising and understand the persuasive intent, sometimes in comparison with television advertising (e.g. An et al., 2014; Owen et al., 2013), or focus on the relationship between advertising effects and children's advertising literacy (for instance, if advertising literacy moderates the effects of advergames), and comparisons are sometimes made with television advertising (e.g. An & Stern, 2011; Panic et al., 2013; Reijmersdal et al., 2012; Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2016; Verhellen et al., 2014; Waiguny et al., 2012, 2014).

Some effect and literacy studies deal with other forms of online advertising, such as brand placement in social virtual worlds, and banner advertising (Ali et al., 2009; Blades et al., 2013; Freeman & Shapiro, 2014; Pettigrew et al., 2013; Reijmersdal et al., 2010; Rozendaal et al., 2013; Shin et al., 2012). Holmberg et al.'s study (2014), also produced within the project "Children, Advertising and the Internet," focuses on how visually salient advertisements affect children's task-oriented web usage. In this study Holmberg et al. conclude that visually salient advertisements distracted children during task-oriented activities on the internet, and that this distraction had a marginal effect on their task performance. In another study, Holmberg et al. (2015) find that luminance and motion in adverts attracted children's visual attention during free internet usage.

Effect and advertising literacy studies are, almost exclusively, based on experimental design, or comprise some form of test, and are quantitative in nature. Most commonly, in these studies children are instructed to play an advergame, or shown pictures or a film of an advergame (or other forms of online advertising), and in relation to this the children answer standardized and mostly closed questions. When questions are open-ended the answers are coded and quantified (e.g. An & Stern, 2011: 49). In some studies children are shown pictures to test their brand memory or test their advertising literacy, and observations of children's food choice are also made (e.g. Panic et al., 2013: 270; Verhellen et al., 2014: 243). Children's participation is part of a controlled design and the research is entirely top-down and controlled by the researchers (e.g. Verhellen et al., 2014: 243). Due to this strict design and the methods used, children's own experiences of advertising online are not taken into account.

Important to address here is also the view of children that is present in many of these studies. Advertising literacy and effect studies commonly depart from the assumption that children have difficulties identifying and understanding advertising in the new media landscape, particularly advergames, and therefore are more vulnerable to advertising effects (see references above). Studies commonly refer to consumer socialization theories which put focus on children's cognitive development, and in particular how children through certain developmental stages gradually acquire an adult's understanding of advertising. In these theories and lines of arguments the focus is put on children's difficulties, inabilities, incompetencies and lack of understanding, and children are commonly measured against a "standard adult" (Lee,

2001: 8–9), which becomes the norm of rationality to strive for. However, some studies also discuss the inadequacies of the developmental perspective, arguing that the integration of advertising and entertainment can make it difficult also for older children and adults to critically evaluate advertising (e.g. Reijmersdal, 2010: 1789). The following quotation illustrates the view of children that is often present in these studies. Descriptions of children that stress their inabilities and incompetencies are highlighted in the quotation:

> The question remains as to whether brand prominence has the same effect on children as adults. From the extensive literature on the effects of traditional advertising targeted at children, it is apparent that children process persuasive information in a fundamentally different way in comparison to adults because of their **immature social and cognitive development** … Both the landscape model and problem solving theory assume an adult level of cognitive abilities. However, children's **limited working memory capacities and attention directing skills** may affect the way they process prominent placements. Keeping track of the narrative by focusing on relevant information assumes that attention is deliberately directed toward important information. However, children may **lack the ability to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information**. (Reijmersdal et al., 2012: 34, emphasis added)

As shown in this quotation, children are described in relation to what they lack, and are compared to a "standard adult." These descriptions construct children as less competent, and define children as "becomings" that are progressing toward adult competence, instead of "beings" in the here and now. The use of the word "may" in some of these sentences suggests some uncertainties when it comes to defining children as cognitively immature, but in the discussion of the results the authors further stress children's inabilities (Reijmersdal et al., 2012: 39–40). The developmental perspective is not only present in research on children and advertising, but has been influential in research on children and the media in general (Krcmar, 2013: 39).

I do not mean to argue that these studies are irrelevant, or that the developmental perspective that often accompanies these studies is wrong. Research on children's advertising literacy and the effects of advertising on children is important, shedding light on processes that the present thesis does not capture. However, I do claim that the view of children in this research is not the only possible view on children, and that these studies do not sufficiently take into account children's own voices. I also argue that effect and advertising literacy research does not give the full picture of children's relationship with advertising, as it one-sidedly focuses on children and the media in terms of effects and learning. In contrast to the focus on children as *becomings*, in the present thesis I view children (as well as adults) as both *beings* and *becomings* (Sparrman & Sandin, 2012: 14). Both children and adults are social actors in the here

and now, and at the same time both children and adults are continually developing and changing. In their role as research participants, I regard children (in this case 9- and 12-year-olds) as competent social actors that are capable of expressing and interpreting their experiences (Freeman & Mathison, 2009: vii), and that children are experts in their own lives (Clark & Statham, 2005). This is in line with the view on children present in sociology of childhood (Harcourt & Sargeant, 2012: 1–2), and is also consistent with the view of the active meaning-making audience present in the cultural tradition of audience studies (Buckingham, 2008: 221–222; Livingstone, 2008: 51; McQuail, 1997: 19–21).

2.1.2 Children's views of and engagement with advertising

There are few studies that analyze children's relationship with advertising online beyond the effect and literacy approach, and these studies are discussed in the following. After discussing previous research on children and online advertising I extend the review to include also qualitative studies on children and *television* advertising, as these studies provide interesting findings which are relevant in the context of the present thesis.

Two of the studies that deal with children's views of online advertising are based on surveys. These studies, naturally, do not give much room for children to bring up their own experiences, but they nevertheless give some indications regarding how children view advertising in the online environment. Tanyel et al. (2013) investigate the attitudes of "Millennials" (in this study, individuals aged 11–31 years) toward ethics in advertising, and how the attitudes differ in relation to different media, including the internet. The study shows that "Millennials" have negative attitudes toward internet advertising, and that they are more negative toward advertising on the internet than advertising in traditional media, such as television. One possible explanation for the negative views on internet advertising, argue the authors, is that internet usage is more goal-directed than television viewing (ibid.: 667). These results point to some general attitude toward advertising on the internet, compared to other media, but the age span is too broad to say anything meaningful specifically regarding the viewpoints of younger children, and, surprisingly, no comparison is made between the different age groups in the study.

Andersen et al.'s (2008) survey study on Danish and Hong Kong "tweens'" (10- to 12-year-olds) responses to television and internet advertising shows similar findings. The results indicate that the children had "complex attitudes towards TV advertising, at the same time both appreciative and skeptical" (ibid.: 198). In contrast to this, the children reported negative views on internet pop-up advertisements (ibid.: 197). Despite the fact that this study focuses on both online advertising and television advertising, it is the latter form of advertising that is given most attention in the study. For instance, the children were asked to describe their favorite television

commercials, but not their favorite internet commercials. These authors probably assumed that this question was irrelevant in relation to advertising on the internet. However, as this thesis shows, children have much to say about advertising they remember from the internet, including advertisements they find entertaining (see results and discussion chapter).

Brady et al.'s study "Beyond television: Children's engagement with online food and beverage marketing" (2008) uses individual semi-structured interviews to conduct a questionnaire with children aged 7- to 13 years in order to investigate "children's awareness of and engagement with online marketing and its effects on their food requests" (p. 3). The results show that the children in general were more aware of food and beverage advertising on television than on the internet, and that one fifth of the children reported having shared a branded food website with a friend. Based on the data the study also discusses "[t]he potential impact of online advertising on children's food requests or purchases" (ibid.: 5), and concludes that "only a third of participants indicated that they desired a branded product previously learned about online" (ibid.: 7). In addition to this, the article also contains a discussion on children's recognition of branded websites and brand logos. This reveals how studies on children's "engagement" with advertising tend to slide over into discussions on literacy and effects (see also below).

Based on observations of children's websites, in-home observations, and focus groups with children (7- to 15-year-olds) and their parents, Nairn's (2008) study analyzes "the commercial activity on the favorite web sites of UK children and report the views of a sample of parents and children" (p. 239). The study focuses more specifically on children's and parents' views of harmful and deceptive content in advertising on the internet. One of the major findings is that "children in our research were particularly disturbed by the sexual content [of internet ads]" (ibid.: 246). Parents were more concerned about advertising for loans and gambling. When discussing deceptive advertising (deceptive in the sense that ads are not clearly distinguishable as advertising) the study, like the study discussed above, slides over into a discussion on children's advertising literacy: "The seven and eight year olds … identified advertising by its physical position on screen ('I get them at the bottom of the page.') or by its movement" (ibid.: 247).

Sandberg et al. (2011) and Ekström and Sandberg (2010) analyze, based on the same empirical study, how Swedish 15-year-olds view advertising on the internet. The results show that the interviewed teenagers were negative toward online advertising: "Most of the students experienced the advertising online as a nuisance. They were irritated, annoyed and some also upset about it for various reasons" (Sandberg et al., 2011: 41). Some children also showed their indifference toward advertising on the internet, as the subject did not provoke many reactions and feelings (Ekström & Sandberg, 2010: 112). In the interviews the teenagers also discussed some of the practices they performed to avoid advertising online, such as holding their hands in front of the advertisements on the screen, or clicking to another webpage (Sandberg

et al., 2011: 43). In the present thesis, I further investigate these kinds of practices that children perform in relation to advertising, which illuminate how they try to adapt the commercial online environment to their own interests and rules (Certeau, 1984: xiv).

While the studies discussed above focus broadly on advertising on the internet, the study by Saunders-Uchoa-Craveiro and Araújo Cysne Rios (2013; see also Marti-Pellón & Saunders-Uchoa-Craveiro, 2015) focuses on children's views of advertising on digital game sites. The semi-structured interviews with children from Spain and Brazil, aged 9 to 11 years, reveal that the children perceived advertising on these websites as irritating and as interrupting their gaming activities. The study also analyzes differences and similarities between children in the two countries, and concludes that children discussed similar experiences which, according to the authors, reveal a global children's culture (ibid.: 508). In addition to this research, children's views of advertising in online games have also been touched upon in a research report which was produced under the EU Consumer Programme (European Commission, 2016a). Beside experimental studies, this report includes focus groups with 9- to 12-year-old children conducted in eight European countries. These focus groups show that children had strong negative views of advertising in online games as they interfered with the children's gaming activities (ibid.: 73–74). However, this report includes few quotations from the interviews, and provides limited analytical depth.

As this review has shown, there are few studies that deal with children's views of and engagement with online advertising. The studies that exist are either based on surveys, focus narrowly on "unethical" aspects of online advertising, or primarily investigate children's views of advertising in webpage designs on "traditional" computers. Previous research also unanimously highlights children's negative views of online advertising. Children's engagement with online advertising is not analyzed in-depth and is not discussed in a more systematic and theoretically informed way. Further studies are thus needed that more thoroughly analyze children's views of and engagement with advertising online, and particularly in mobile media and mobile games on touchscreen devices, which are an important part of children's internet usage today.

In the following, the section discusses qualitative research on children and television advertising which takes into account children's own perspectives. Some of these studies have a similar point of departure to the present thesis in the sense that they emphasize the limitations of effect and advertising literacy research. These studies criticize effect and literacy studies for being positivistic and behavioristic, and for presenting a view of children as incompetent and passive (Bartholomew & O'Donohoe, 2003; Buckingham, 1993; Lawlor, 2009).

In Bartholomew and O'Donohoe's (2003) study on 10- and 12-year-old children's experiences of television and print advertising they conclude that: "The children shared a drive to obtain and demonstrate power in their everyday lives, and this led them to seek mastery, control and critical distance in their dealings with

advertising" (p. 433). The authors argue that children used advertising to present themselves as powerful agents, for instance, by showing their interpretive competence, such as understanding the "point" of the ads (ibid.: 443). The children constructed themselves as powerful also by presenting themselves as "ad avoiders," and by stating that they engaged with advertising selectively, for instance, by walking out of the room or turning off the television. Power in relation to advertising was also demonstrated, according to the authors, by claiming that advertising had no effect on them, and by criticizing the representation of social reality in advertisements (ibid.: 447–448).

Similarly, Buckingham (1993), in an interview study with 7- and 12-year-old children, finds that children were skeptical and highly reflective in their engagement with television advertising. For instance, the children in different ways discussed advertising as deceptive, and they also said that advertising did not affect them, but other people. Buckingham argues that this discourse has to be understood in the group interview context; by being critical the children positioned themselves as capable and wise consumers (ibid.: 250). In this study, the children also reported on different practices in relation to advertising on television; they said that they sometimes stayed and watched the ads, but that they also switched channel during the ad breaks, fast-forwarded the video, went to the toilet, grabbed something to eat, practiced gymnastics, or "beat up their brother" (ibid.: 258). Likewise, Andersen's study, discussed in two book chapters (2007; 2011), also shows that children aged 10 to 12 years were skeptical and negative toward television advertising; advertising was perceived as annoying and children claimed that they avoided ads by switching channels or leaving the room. Online pop-up advertising is also briefly discussed, and was perceived as more annoying than television ads by the children. Both forms of advertising were experienced as "intrusive communications that are forced upon you" (Andersen, 2007: 227).

While the negative and skeptical views of advertising dominated among the children, the studies discussed above also find that television advertising was attended to as entertainment. Bartholomew and O'Donohoe (2003) show how children constructed themselves as "performance masters" and that "the children derived great pleasure from acting out ads, singing jingles, and repeating catchphrases" (p. 445). Buckingham (1993: 258–259) finds that the children attended to advertising as entertainment, singing along with music in ads and discussing comic incidents in advertisements, and that children commonly engaged with advertisements as entertainment regardless of the product advertised.

Andersen (2007; 2011) discusses how children found humor in advertising particularly amusing, and concludes that children had a love-hate relationship with television advertising. In line with these observations, Lawlor (2009), in an interview study with 7- and 9-year-olds, discusses how the children used advertising as a source of enjoyment. Children for instance liked humor, music, catchphrases, special effects, animated characters and animals with human qualities. However, Lawlor's study

contrasts to the above discussed studies in that children's liking of television advertising is stressed. The break in between programs was described as something positive by most of the children, as an opportunity to do other activities such as discussing dinner plans with their parents. Lawlor writes that: "Forty-six of the fifty-two children negatively viewed a scenario whereby advertising was removed from television" (ibid.: 31).

Among the studies on children and online advertising discussed in this section, only one was performed in Sweden (Ekström & Sandberg, 2010; Sandberg et al., 2011). With regard to television advertising, Jarlbro (1992) carried out an interview study with Swedish 7- and 9-year-old children. One of the findings in this study is that children engaged differently with advertisements directed to children, compared to advertisements directed to adults; children engaged more critically with the adult-directed ads, while child-directed advertising was attended to as information (ibid.: 141). In a Swedish context, hence, previous research on children's engagement with online advertising in the more recent mobile app ecology is practically non-existent.

2.2 Research on children's virtual worlds

Research on children's virtual worlds is also multidisciplinary, with studies published in media and communication journals as well as in medicine and psychology journals. This review mainly focuses on children's virtual worlds as commercial spaces, but also includes research on virtual worlds and participation as this research is relevant for paper III.

Children's virtual worlds are studied from many different perspectives. One common approach is to study virtual worlds as spaces for children's literacy and learning (Black, 2010; Marsh, 2011; Marsh, 2014; Merchant, 2010). This echoes the focus in research on children and advertising described above, where much attention is paid to children's advertising literacy. Some studies also center on the commercial dimensions of children's virtual worlds. Wasko (2010) and Grimes and Shade (2005) apply a political economy approach in their studies of the virtual worlds NeoPets and Webkinz. Wasko (2010) points out that the political economy perspective often is ignored by researchers and that "it is necessary to incorporate forms of critical political economic analysis, especially for new products and media forms that have incorporated marketing and advertising strategies targeted at children" (p. 113). Wasko concludes that the virtual world NeoPets with its immersive advertising, trading of virtual goods, and merchandising can be considered "a training ground for capitalist consumer culture" (ibid.: 119), which support consumer ideology and make natural the commercial practices of capitalism (ibid.: 127). Grimes and Shade (2005) also discuss the immersive nature of advertising where products and brands are incorporated into the games, and where the gaming activities revolve around

obtaining virtual items. The authors state that: "NeoEconomics is thus based on a strong ethos of exchange value as entertainment. Embedded throughout NeoPets is a strong culture of consumerism and acquisition" (ibid.: 185).

Grimes (2015) also undertakes a political economy analysis of six virtual worlds for children. This analysis goes deeper than the two studies mentioned above and looks into some of the ways in which the commercial dimensions structure the users' possibilities to engage in the virtual worlds. Grimes finds different promotional practices within the virtual worlds, where "self-promotion" was particularly salient. One important part of self-promotion was the various strategies used for directing the user toward purchase of premium memberships, which is called "velvet rope self-promotion" (ibid.: 117). Grimes also discusses the use of cross-promotion, particularly of media products, such as DVDs, the use of third-party advertising, and how children's play can be seen as affective labor, where sociality produces "an enormous amount of surplus value" (ibid.: 126).

Using Habbo Hotel as a case, Ruckenstein (2011) goes further into the analysis of children as "prosumers" and producers of user-generated content within the "creationist capitalism" of children's virtual worlds, and sets out to explore "how corporate aims and practices shape children's experiences online" (p. 1061). However, what initially seems to be a critical analysis turns out to be a celebratory discourse on the benefits of commercial virtual worlds for children. Ruckenstein in many ways takes the opposite perspective compared to the studies discussed above, and describes the sale of virtual goods as something positive for children: "[c]hildren need digital objects for creating meaningful relations and action" (ibid.: 1069). Ruckenstein argues that the corporation Sulake supports children's participation in the "child-friendly environment" (ibid.: 1074) Habbo Hotel. The author further suggests that commercial media may better serve the interests of children than any other agent in society: "Such recognition raises further questions about children's participation: if child-friendly environments are created by companies, are corporate agents, in fact, more readily claiming recognition and empathy with children than the rest of the society?" (ibid.: 1074).

This idea that Habbo is a child-friendly environment, proposed by Ruckenstein, is criticized in the present thesis (Paper III: 718). Ruckenstein's idea that children are empowered within the virtual world has also been critiqued by Buckingham and Rodríguez (2012). These authors analyze power relations within Habbo Hotel, more specifically how the producers dictate the rules for playing, and what children learn about citizenship in the virtual world. Buckingham and Rodríguez conclude that: "It would perhaps be an exaggeration to describe it as an online police state, but it certainly bears comparison with real-life authoritarian regimes and 'total institutions' such as prisons" (ibid.: 56). Buckingham and Rodríguez further conclude that what children learn about citizenship in the virtual world is that they learn to function in an environment where powerful agents dictate all the rules (ibid.: 57).

Opportunities for civic participation in virtual worlds are also analyzed by Lund (2013). In an analysis of the virtual world The Stable, Lund criticizes a one-sided view of commercial media as only promoting capitalist interests (ibid.: 187). Lund concludes that The Stable has civic potentials as it functions "as a platform for social criticism and democratic integration. The members respect each other's statements although they do not always agree" (ibid.: 197). It is, consequently, the discussions among the users and the quality of these discussions that constitute the civic potential of the site. Similarly, Tuukkanen et al. (2010) analyze opportunities for civic participation in virtual worlds. Based on a survey the authors conclude that children were primarily interested in social participation and engaging with the avatar, while civic participation was not common in virtual worlds.

As this review has shown, research on children's virtual worlds has in different ways analyzed commercial dimensions and possibilities for participation in these online spaces. The contribution of the present thesis to this research area is the combination of studying both participatory opportunities and commercial constraints in virtual worlds, namely, how participation is constrained for commercial purposes. The thesis also contributes to the understanding of how virtual world producers represent their practices, and how the users relate tactically to the commercial strategies. These dimensions have not received sufficient attention in previous research.

2.3 Research on advertising producers

Considering the amount of effort put into studying children and advertising, and the importance given this topic within advertising research (see Taylor, 2014: 427), it is surprising that, to my knowledge, there exist no in-depth studies on producers of child-directed advertising and their subjectivities. Hence, the present thesis makes a contribution to the field of media production studies in general and research on advertising producers in particular.

Media production studies have mainly focused on film and television. Mayer (2013) writes that: "[S]cholarship on media production has tended to focus on the media with the greatest reach – for instance film and television … and on professionals such as journalists" (p. 3). In contrast to this, marketers and advertising agency professionals have attracted less research attention within production studies. Whitney and Ettema's observation from 2003 that "practitioners and the organizations in the advertising and public relations industries are rarely studied under the rubric of professional mass communicators" (p. 178), is still relevant today. However, advertising producers have gained more attention within disciplines such as advertising, marketing and economics, as well as within anthropology (Cook, 2006). Several of these studies point to the fact that most research on advertising and

marketing has concentrated on consumers and the marketing "output," while the actors involved in producing marketing artifacts have gained substantially less attention:

> Despite decades of research into their activities, outputs, and relationships, the subjectivity of marketing practitioners remains little understood. This stands in contrast to the extensive investigations of brand and consumer identities in extant marketing research. In recent times, an emerging body of research has turned to the question of "who is the marketer?," taking an "inside view" of marketing practitioners. (Gurrieri, 2012: 784–785)

Similarly, Zwick and Cayla (2011) write:

> In comparison to the impressive amount of resources, time, and energy funneled into researching the inner life of consumers, a rather minor effort has been made to study the growing army of economic actors whose work it is to define markets and give shape to the consumer culture as we know it. (Zwick & Cayla, 2011: 5)

Despite the fact that most research has paid attention to the consumer there are, as these authors also note, studies that deal with the subjectivities of marketers and advertising agency practitioners. Some of these studies focus on practitioners' views of creativity and how advertising works (Nyilasy & Reid, 2009; Nyilasy et al., 2013), and some research focuses on producers and their views on moral and ethical issues. One of these studies is a doctoral dissertation that deals with Swedish advertising agency practitioners' relationship with moral issues (Larsson, 2006). Based on interviews and observations, Larsson shows how producers prioritized economic motives (profit) before esthetic and moral issues, due to the fact that one cannot afford to prioritize moral issues in a competitive market. In an interview study with advertising agency practitioners in the US, Drumwright and Murphy (2004) show similar findings, and conclude that most producers did not prioritize moral reflection, while some producers were ethically sensitive. This lack of ethical reflection among most producers is conceptualized as "moral myopia":

> Many of our informants reported few ethical concerns in their own work or in advertising in general. They exhibited "moral myopia," a distortion of moral vision that prevents moral issues from coming into focus, and "moral muteness," meaning that they rarely talk about ethical issues. … There were, however, "seeing/talking" advertising practitioners who demonstrated "moral imagination" when responding to ethical problems. (Drumwright & Murphy, 2004: 7)

Drumwright and Murphy (2004: 11–12) further explain that the practitioners made rationalizations, such as claiming that consumers are smart and are therefore not fooled or misled by unethical advertising messages, or by "passing the buck," that is, arguing that other agents, such as parents, have to take responsibility for negative effects. In the producers' discourse the legal was also equated with the moral (ibid.: 12). In another article by Drumwright and Murphy (2009), analyzing practitioners' views of advertising ethics in the new media landscape, one of the findings is that these practitioners viewed the internet as an unregulated "Wild West": "new media were characterized as 'The Wild West' – a rough and tough, no-holds-barred context in which the regulations, guidelines, and controls of traditional media are absent" (p. 87). Some of these results are relevant for the present thesis, and will be further considered in the results and discussion chapter.

In the following, this section focuses on research that deals with advertising producers' self-representation (or identity construction), and how producers construct the child audience. Most attention in this review is, naturally, paid to producers of advertising; however, for contextualizing purposes the review also refers to relevant studies on other media producers. Important to put forward here is that I use the concept of "advertising producers" to refer to both advertising agency professionals and to marketers more broadly, such as workers within marketing departments of the advertising corporations (see further method chapter).

2.3.1 Producers' self-representation

Research on advertising producers' self-representation has to a large extent centered on advertising agency professionals, and has analyzed how these professionals construct their identities in opposition to the clients (the advertisers), and how demarcations are made within the advertising agency (Alvesson, 1994; Galli, 2012; Hackley & Kover, 2007). This focus on how identities are constructed by creating boundaries, and how professionals position themselves against other actors within the industry, is relevant for the producer-oriented papers in this thesis and will therefore be discussed in more detail in the following.

In an ethnographic study of a Swedish advertising agency, Alvesson (1994; see also Alvesson & Köping Olsson, 1993) focuses on how agency practitioners describe themselves and their work. Alvesson shows how the practitioners constructed their professional identities by positioning themselves against the clients; the practitioners constructed themselves as competent by describing the clients in pejorative terms and also by stressing the clients' inabilities and lack of knowledge about advertising work (Alvesson, 1994: 552). One reason for this need to create boundaries in relation to clients, and in this way construct one's own competence is, argues Alvesson, because advertising as a profession is based on uncertain grounds. It is difficult to specify what constitutes the work and it is difficult to evaluate the outcome, and because "the

boundaries between the advertising agencies' competence and that of the client companies are not clearcut" (ibid.: 545). Therefore, it is of considerable importance for the advertising agency professionals to stress their own superior competence when it comes to advertising (ibid.: 545), and through this identity work "market" their own profession (ibid.: 552–553).

Research has also shown how boundaries are created within the advertising agency, between "creatives" engaged in the creative process, and "suits" that handle the more business-oriented parts of the work, such as planning and management. Drawing on interviews with New York advertising agency creatives, Hackley and Kover (2007) show how creatives distanced themselves from the more commercial and strategic aspects of advertising work, how they identified themselves solely with the creative work, and how "[t]hey carved out self-respect by setting their values *at odds* with those of the employer" (p. 68). The creatives were further suspicious of "the account people" and their ways of measuring consumer reactions with statistical methods. Hackly and Kover (ibid.) write that: "In more than one interview, 'hate' was the operant word when discussing relations between creative and account-planning people or account management" (p. 69).

Galli (2012), in an ethnographic study of a Swedish advertising agency, also points to the divisions that exist between different roles within the advertising agency. This analysis is part of the wider ambition of the thesis to analyze how advertising professionals strive for recognition internally within the industry, and recognition in society at large. While Alvesson (1994) points to the uncertain status of advertising work and hence the need to construct expertise in relation to clients, Galli (2012: 9) argues that producers also need to gain recognition from the surrounding society, as the wider public has low trust in advertising professionals. This need, among advertising producers, to gain societal recognition is important for understanding how the producers interviewed in the present thesis represented themselves and the child audience.

Gurrieri (2012) also shows how marketers, in this case so-called "coolhunters," represented themselves by constructing boundaries. These "coolhunters" positioned themselves as rebels, in opposition to corporate culture, "organization man" and the clients. However, the marketers also stressed their professionalism as marketers. Gurrieri (ibid.) argues that this can be understood as a "chameleon-like" identity work: "For coolhunters, a conflict between reconciling being renegade and professional arose. They engaged in chameleon-like identity work – one moment seeking to present themselves as creative and original rebels of commerce, the next striving to construct themselves as rigorous professionals" (p. 800).

Somewhat in contrast to Gurrieri (2012) and Hackley and Kover (2007), Svensson (2007) shows how marketers in a meeting between an advertising agency and a client primarily positioned themselves within a commercial narrative. Svensson (ibid.) describes how the marketers navigated a "narrative archipelago" and how the

marketers mainly positioned themselves within the narrative of "instrumental reason." The narrative of instrumental reason is described as a narrative in which:

> [H]uman beings, their needs, dreams and wishes, become objects to control and manipulate through the use of various sophisticated socio-technologies, e.g. psychology and marketing … Fellow human beings become instruments that are useful for the fulfilment of other goals, e.g. higher revenues or market shares. (Svensson, 2007: 284)

Other narratives that were drawn upon by the marketers in the meeting were the narratives of postmodernity and neo-liberalism. The narrative of postmodernity was present in the marketers' "emphasis on signs, surface, simulacra, hyperreality and image" (ibid.: 284), while the narrative of neoliberalism revealed itself in the focus on the sovereign consumer which "is the one deciding who is to remain on the market and who is to exit" (ibid.: 258). In the narrative of neo-liberalism the producers took "the servant's role, feeding the hungry market whenever it calls" (ibid.: 285).

The literature has also discussed how marketers and advertising professionals represent themselves in encounters with academic researchers. In a literature review, Cook (2006: 542–543) shows how marketers within the research interview are constantly engaged in "pitching" and marketing themselves in front of the researcher. This is in line with Alvesson (1994), discussed above, arguing that agency practitioners in their self-enhancing talk market themselves as professionals.

2.3.2 Producers' constructed child audiences

As discussed in the theoretical framework, one important part of media production studies is to study producers' constructed audiences. One motivation behind this research interest is the assumption that constructed audiences, or "imagined" audiences (Caldwell, 2008: 223), play an important role in the production process and influence the media content produced (Turow, 2005: 106; Zafirau, 2009: 190). However, research has also focused on how audience constructions can have a more instrumental function among media professionals; studies on producers of film, television and advertising have shown how audiences are used instrumentally for self-promotional purposes and to construct expertise (Cronin, 2004: 349), to justify editorial decisions (McRobbie, 1998: 152), and to justify authorial choices (Caldwell, 2008: 223). Audience constructions are, consequently, used instrumentally within the industry for certain purposes. In addition to this, scholars have also shown how audience constructions can be used instrumentally to legitimize practices to the public (Buckingham, 2007; 2011). This perspective, how constructed audiences can have legitimizing functions, is central in paper V which analyzes producers' constructed child audiences.

Furthermore, research on producers' constructed audiences has highlighted how producers often have a vague image of their audiences and feel a certain distance to them (Lien, 2004: 49; Zafirau, 2009: 193). This vague image arises because, despite access to audience research producers pay little systematic attention to it in their work, according to some studies (Cronin, 2004: 347–348; Lien, 2004: 50; O'Boyle, 2009: 572), or because little audience research is actually done (Cottle, 1993: 229; Turow, 1982: 95–96). Researching television producers, Cottle (1993) writes: "Based on little, if any, serious audience research beyond ratings … the imagined audience of the programme makers and its popular interests is based on the flimsiest of foundations" (p. 229). Research has also shown how producers often draw on their own experiences and their own everyday life when "imagining" their audiences (O'Boyle, 2009: 572; Ross, 2014: 162; Zafirau, 2009: 196–197).

Most research on constructed audiences focuses on the constructed adult audience, while little attention in production studies is paid to constructed child audiences (Buckingham, 2008: 225; Lemish, 2013: 2). Among the studies that do focus on media producers' constructed child audiences there is a dominant focus on producers of television programs, including both entertainment programs and news (e.g. Buckingham et al., 1999; Lemish, 2010; Matthews, 2008; Seiter & Mayer, 2004). In a study on British television producers, Buckingham et al. (1999) identify four main constructions of the child audience: the protectionist discourse of the vulnerable child, the "child-centered" discourse, the child as an active and powerful consumer, and children as citizens. Among these constructions, the idea of the active consumer was particularly important among the producers, while the idea of the vulnerable child was less prevalent. Lemish's (2010) study on television producers from around the world also identifies these four constructions, and, likewise, stresses the dominance of the construction "children as active media consumers" among the producers (p. 107).

In this literature review it is also relevant to address one Swedish dissertation that, based on textual analysis, investigates constructed child audiences. In a doctoral dissertation, Pettersson (2013) analyzes "[h]ow Swedish public service television imagines a child audience" (which is the subtitle of the thesis). This dissertation focuses on how children (understood as individuals up to 18 years) are constructed in public service television programming (SVT 1 and SVT 2) from the years 1980, 1992 and 2007, and also in television policy documents (ibid.: 34–35). Pettersson concludes that within legislation concerning television children are defined as "a category that must be protected from the risks associated with messages of consumption" (ibid.: 213). In public service television programming, particularly in relation to nature programs, children are constructed in a more multifaceted way as both vulnerable and competent: "children are viewed as scared, in need of help, in need of teaching but also knowledgeable, capable as well as agentive and that these representations co-exist over time" (ibid.: 214). Pettersson furthermore concludes that the idea of the competent, knowledgeable and active child is given more space during

the time period, as a consequence of, for instance, new technology which increases children's possibilities to participate in programs and be shown on the screen (ibid.: 215). In addition to this focus on the competent child "which becomes the image of the audience that the TV institution imagines and desires" (ibid.: 215), education and learning is also accentuated and related to the child (ibid.: 216). Hence, this study shows clear similarities to Buckingham et al. (1999) and Lemish (2010), presented above, arguing that the idea of the active and powerful child dominated among the television producers.

Relevant to mention here is also the Swedish doctoral thesis by Sjöberg (2013), which examines how children are constructed in relation to consumption. This dissertation includes four empirical studies; how children are constructed as consumers in the regulatory framework concerning children, consumption and advertising, how children are constructed in advertisements directed to adults, how children are constructed in direct marketing to parents, and finally, how children are constructed as target groups in children's magazines. Most relevant to highlight here are the results from the study of how children are represented in magazine advertisements aimed at adults. In this analysis Sjöberg finds that children are closely connected to the family and are "not expected to be agents in themselves" (ibid.: 316). Sjöberg concludes that the representation of children is ambivalent "as it simultaneously and ambiguously represents children as both vulnerable and competent, as well as competent and incompetent" (ibid.: 316).

How advertising producers discursively construct the child audience has received little attention in previous research. Exceptions to this are Buckingham (2007; 2011: 19, 85) and Cook (2000: 502; 2007: 42; 2011) who argue that marketers commonly construct children as competent, in order to legitimize their own advertising practices. If children are considered competent and if advertising is considered to have little influence on them, it is less problematic to direct advertising to children, goes the chain of argumentation. However, this research draws mainly on marketing and trade literature, such as best-selling books written by famous marketers, thus neglecting more "ordinary" professionals. This research also takes its point of departure in an Anglo-American context, something which reflects the Anglo-American bias in production research (Curran & Park, 2000). In paper V I distance myself from the generalizing idea of a "marketers' logic" where marketers are considered to be "bound" (Buckingham, 2011: 21) to construct children as competent to legitimize their practices. I argue that by analyzing how Swedish advertising producers represent the child audience we further our understanding of how child audiences are constructed in different cultural contexts.

2.4 Contribution of the thesis to media and communication studies

As this literature review has shown, there are few studies that deal with children's views of and engagement with online advertising. Existing studies are either quantitative, have a narrow focus on specific "problematic" aspects of online advertising, provide limited insights into the topic, or lack more systematic analysis which leaves the subject undertheorized. In addition to this, these studies do not have much to say about children's advertising engagement in the context of their internet usage, or engagement with advertising on touchscreen devices and in mobile games. By analyzing children's engagement with advertising with the point of departure in Michel de Certeau's (1984) theory on practices in everyday life, and with special attention to advertising in mobile games on touchscreen devices, the present thesis advances our understanding of children's views of and engagement with advertising online, and what consequences advertising has for children's media experiences.

As this literature review also has shown, previous research has paid little attention to producers of child-directed advertising, and how they represent themselves, their practices, and the child audience. This is surprising considering the amount of research attention given the topic of children and advertising, particularly in effect and advertising literacy research. Hence, the present thesis makes a contribution to media production studies and research on advertising producers, and also contributes a production perspective to the research on children and advertising. Furthermore, as this review has highlighted, the present thesis adds to the understanding of children's virtual worlds as commercial spaces, regarding how these spaces in different ways both provide opportunities for children's participation and constrain these opportunities for commercial purposes.

3 Method

This chapter discusses the research process of the different papers in the thesis. The chapter starts with some general methodological reflections that concern the thesis as a whole. Thereafter, the chapter follows the same structure as the literature review, hence, starting with the research process around papers I and II. Table 1 below provides an overview of the methods used in the papers and some basic facts about the interview participants. As shown in the table, the central method used in this thesis is different variants of the qualitative interview, such as individual interviews, group interviews and e-mail interviews. The qualitative interview can also be divided into "child interviews" and "elite interviews," which have their specific characteristics and raise different issues. In addition to this, the case study of the virtual world Habbo Hotel includes online observations, document analysis and one producer interview. The inclusion of different methods and research participants in this thesis has enabled me to see similarities and differences between the research processes, and comparisons, between for instance interviewing children and interviewing adult producers, are made throughout the method chapter.

Table 1. Summary of methods and interview participants.

Paper	Methods	Data collection year	Interview participants
Paper I	20 individual interviews	2011	10 nine-year-old girls 10 nine-year-old boys
Paper II	12 group interviews (in total 46 children)	2015	24 nine-year-olds (12 girls and 12 boys) 22 twelve-year-olds (13 girls and 9 boys)
Paper III	Online observations, document analysis, 1 producer interview	2012	Designer employed by Sulake Corporation
Papers IV & V	13 individual interviews, 1 group interview, 3 e-mail interviews (in total 18 producers)	2013	10 marketers (6 women and 4 men) 8 advertising agency practitioners (1 woman and 7 men)

3.1 General methodological reflections

In line with a critical realist approach (Maxwell, 2012: vii), this thesis combines a realist ontology with a constructivist epistemology. This means that I share the idea that there exists a real world which is independent of our thoughts and perspectives. However, our knowledge and understanding of reality is not a direct mirror of it. We cannot have an objective or complete understanding of reality; all knowledge and theory is constructed from some particular vantage point. Thus, our understanding can never be all-encompassing and fully neutral. A critical realist perspective holds that our knowledge does *refer* to reality in some way (Burr, 2015: 108; Maxwell, 2012: vii). This combination of a realist ontology with a constructivist epistemology is consistent with moderate forms of social constructivism (Burr, 2015: 2–5, 108–109). In contrast to this, a radical social constructivist approach would argue that there is nothing outside of our discursive constructions, namely, that the only existing reality is the one that is symbolically constructed through language (Burr, 2015: 94).

This thesis combines different methods for investigating children's commercial online environment, and the social actors connected to this environment. What these methods have in common is that they are qualitative in nature. A qualitative approach was considered relevant in the context of the present thesis as the aim has been to gain an in-depth understanding of the studied phenomena, particularly regarding the experiences and perspectives of children and producers (Hennink et al., 2011: 10). Inductive reasoning has been central through the whole research process, as is common in qualitative research (Hennink et al., 2011: 4; Maxwell, 2012: 76). This underlying inductive approach concerns the research process as a whole, as described by Maxwell (2012): "Qualitative research is necessarily inductive in its approach to design, and this inductive strategy means that the research plan itself is constantly changing in response to new information or changing circumstances" (p. 76). In the data analysis of all papers there has been a constant oscillation between the empirical data and theory, where theory has been used to understand the data, and where the empirical material also has prompted the need for new concepts and development of the theoretical framework. Abductive reasoning has, consequently, also been an important part of the research process (Bazeley, 2013: 336).

This sensitiveness to circumstances and new information through the research process is evident in how the qualitative interview data is used in the different papers of this thesis. Or put differently, what knowledge claims are made based on the interview data. In the papers focusing on children's views of and engagement with online advertising I use individual interviews and group interviews as a *resource* (Seale, 1998) to gain knowledge about children's views and everyday life experiences. In contrast to this, in the producer-oriented papers the focus is on the interview data as a *topic* (ibid.), where attention is paid to how the producers represent themselves, their practices and the child audience as part of the interview situation, and the larger

cultural context surrounding the interview. Hence, the focus is on the interview as "social event" (ibid.: 204). In these papers I do not claim that the interview data can be used to gain knowledge about the producers' work practices. The reason for using the interview data as a "topic" in the producer-oriented papers has to do with new information and changing circumstances during the research process. My idea was to interview producers to gain a better understanding of how they work with advertising to children on the internet, and also to gain insight into how they define the child audience. However, after a few interviews it became evident that the producers did not speak openly about their work, probably due to the sensitiveness of the research topic, and the interests at stake for themselves as employees and for their corporations. It became clear that the information provided by the producers was highly selective and managed. This could, for instance, be judged by comparing the interview data with my own observations of their advertisements. Hence, the empirical data was not particularly useful as a resource to gain knowledge about their work. I therefore decided to concentrate on the producers' representational practices and audience constructions in more depth. From this follows that validity and quality cannot be connected in a simple manner to the methods used in research; validity is tied to what kind of data is generated in a particular context, and this determines what can be concluded based on the empirical data (Maxwell, 2012: 132).

One last issue to address here, which concerns the thesis as a whole, is the issue of generalizability. As is common in qualitative research, the present thesis does not claim that the results are statistically generalizable in a strict sense, that is, that the results apply to the population at large across many settings, events and contexts (Maxwell, 2012: 141). Other procedures can be used to judge the relevance and generalizability of qualitative research findings. One of these procedures is called *transferability* (Polit & Beck, 2010: 1453) and puts focus on the communicative process around the research. Through thick descriptions of the empirical data, and through the logics of the argumentation and interpretations of the data, the receiver (the reader of the research) can make a reasonable judgment as to whether the conclusions are transferable to a similar, not studied, setting (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009: 261–262; Polit & Beck, 2010: 1453–1454; Seale, 1999: 108). Another way to generalize in qualitative studies is through *analytical generalization*. The ambition here is to show how findings inform certain concepts and theories, and in this way the findings become generalizable to other similar situations not included in the research (Yin, 2010: 100).

3.2 Researching children and online advertising

3.2.1 Selection of participants, participant characteristics and recruitment

Two empirical studies – the first in 2011 and the second in 2015 – were conducted to gain insight into children's views of and engagement with online advertising. The aim in both studies has been to gain variation among research participants regarding gender, socio-economic and ethnic background. Therefore, schools that had children with different backgrounds were selected in order to recruit research participants. In the first study, a school in a small town in the south of Sweden was chosen and 20 children in third grade (10 boys and 10 girls) participated in the individual interviews. In the second study, two schools in two small towns in the south of Sweden were chosen, and in total 46 children in third and sixth grade (25 girls and 21 boys) participated in the study.

The aim has also been to achieve a variation among children in terms of age. Children aged 9 were selected as children in this age generally have learned to distinguish between advertising and other media content (Gunter et al., 2014: 4–5), which is important when interviewing children about their everyday experiences of online advertising. Studies have shown that children have difficulties identifying advertisements in a webpage design compared to advertising on television (Li et al., 2014). To get further insight into this, and to give trustworthiness to the study, I asked the children in the first study in 2011 to identify advertisements on three different screenshots from popular children's websites (see paper I: 110). This showed that the children could easily identify banner advertisements on webpages. The interviews also showed that most children could talk without difficulty about advertising, at least well-defined advertisements such as banner ads and video ads, and had much to say about this media content. To obtain variation in terms of age, children aged 12 were included in the second study. The age of 12 was selected in order to include children over 9 years, but still not adolescents. Not including teenagers in the study is one of the limitations of the present thesis, and future research could focus on adolescents to get further insights into young people's views of and engagement with online advertising.

In both studies, the children were asked about time spent on the internet, and about their favorite websites and apps. In the 2011 study, the 9-year-old children spent on average 43 minutes daily on the internet, which is consistent with national survey data at that time (see paper I: 111). In the 2015 study, the average time spent on the internet in their spare time (internet usage at school is not included in these numbers) was one hour and 56 minutes daily among the 9-year-olds, and two hours and 15 minutes among the 12-year-olds. This is also consistent with national survey data on 9- to 12-year-olds' internet habits in 2015 (see paper II: 6). Hence, children's

time spent on the internet had increased substantially during these four years. Important to stress here is that there were large differences among the children; some children reported using the internet for several hours a day, while some reported on using the internet less than an hour. The numbers discussed here are based on self-reported data, and it may be the case that some children overestimated or underestimated the time they spend on the internet in their spare time. No matter the exact amount of time spent on the internet, these numbers indicate that internet usage was an important part of these children's everyday lives.

Image 1. This photo shows one of the group interviews with the 9-year-old children. Both the children and their parents have given their permission to publish this photo.
Photo: Carolina Martínez

In 2011, the most popular online activity among the children was playing online games, followed by listening to music and watching video clips. The most popular unique website was YouTube. In 2015, digital game sites and mobile game apps were listed as most popular among all children. YouTube was also mentioned in 2015 as the most popular unique site. Hence, the children engaged in similar activities on the internet in 2011 and 2015. Among the 12-year-olds, social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat and Kik were also listed as popular. These platforms, except Facebook, were also mentioned by some of the 9-year-olds. Based on the apps

and websites listed by the children, both in 2011 and in 2015, it is evident that most of the popular sites were commercial, containing some form of advertising.

Image 2. This photo shows one of the group interviews with the 12-year-old children, where they fill in a questionnaire about their internet habits. Both the children and their parents have given their permission to publish this photo.
Photo: Carolina Martínez

Along with differences regarding time spent on the internet between 2011 and 2015, there were also other changes during these years that became evident in the research process. In 2011, the children accessed the internet primarily through computers, and in the school classroom there were some older computers that, according to the teachers, were used only occasionally. In 2015, the children listed tablets as the most common way to access the internet. Almost all children used tablets to access the internet, and all children had their own tablets at school that were used for school work. At home they commonly had another tablet. In the room where the group interviews were conducted with the 9-year-olds there was a special shelf where the children charged their tablets. At several occasions during the interviews these tablets made funny sounds, which came from mobile game apps that updated the players on new events and activities that needed to be done in the games. This is only one example of how mobile technologies and the internet had become an ever-present

part of the children's lives in 2015. Another example is illustrated in the photo below (Image 3), which shows how children treated their tablets like any other personal objects, such as boots and jackets. In addition to tablets, mobile phones were also commonly used by the children. Mobile phones were most commonly used by the 12-year-old boys and girls, and the 9-year-old girls. Fewer 9-year-old boys reported using mobile phones to access the internet. Computers were the least common way to access the internet, apart from the 9-year-old boys who used computers more than mobile phones.

Image 3. In 2015, mobile technologies had become an integrated part of children's everyday lives. The photo shows how the tablets were treated like any other personal object by the children.
Photo: Carolina Martínez

In both 2011 and 2015 the recruitment process was conducted together with a colleague from the research group "Children, Advertising and the Internet," except when I recruited the 12-year-old children in 2015. The recruitment process started by contacting the schools' principals and presenting the research project. When given permission by the principals to contact the teachers, we contacted the teachers and asked if they wanted to participate in the study. Several schools, particularly in the recruitment of the older children, had to be contacted in order to find teachers that were interested and felt that they had time to participate. When we visited the schools

we described the project to the children and asked if they wanted to participate. The children were given an informed consent sheet to take home to their parents, and all children that received permission from their parents could be included in the studies. Most children got permission from their parents to participate. However, some children did not receive their parents' permission, and a few children did not want to participate. It is difficult to know why some of the children did not get permission as we did not ask the parents or the children about this, but it is a highly relevant question to reflect upon as it has to do with who is included in research and who is not.

3.2.2 Individual interviews and group interviews

As described above, individual interviews (Paper I) and group interviews (Paper II) have been used in this thesis to gain insights into children's views of and engagement with online advertising. The qualitative interview was considered a suitable method for the purpose of the study as it, in particular contexts (see discussion above 3.1), is useful for gaining insights into people's experiences of everyday life, and how people give meaning to these experiences (Freeman & Mathison, 2009: 88; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009: 24). The concept of experience is widely discussed in the social sciences and humanities (Kaun, 2012: 29), and can refer to both the past and to ongoing perceptions in the here and now. In the context of the present thesis the concept of experience refers to "something personally encountered, undergone, or lived through" (Merriam-Webster, 2016b).

The qualitative interview should not be seen as a direct "window" into individuals' everyday life experiences. In line with a critical realist approach that stresses a constructivist epistemology (Maxwell, 2012) the researcher cannot gain a direct understanding of "reality" as all knowledge is partial and constructed from a certain perspective. The idea of giving children "voice" and representing children's views in research must also be problematized. The research process in different ways affects children's accounts and it is the researcher who finally decides on how to interpret and frame children's descriptions when reporting the findings (Spyrou, 2011). However, I argue that the interview data does refer to and say something meaningful about children's everyday life experiences of online advertising. To enhance the validity of the interview data, different strategies were used in the research process, including careful probing during the interviews, as well as "member-checks" after the data collection period where the children discussed and confirmed the research findings (Flick, 2007: 33–34).

The individual interview was considered an appropriate method in the first study as individual interviews give room for each research participant's perspectives on the research subject (Freeman & Mathison, 2009: 101). In the second study I wanted to explore how the group interview could be used to gain further insights into children's

views of and engagement with online advertising. Group interviews can make the interview situation more relaxed, and can help to elicit information as the children can inspire each other to talk and to reflect upon the interview topic (Freeman & Mathison, 2009: 104–105; Lewis, 1992: 414–416). However, potential disadvantages of group interviews are that some children talk less in a group setting, and that peer pressure can limit what children want to share in the interview situation (Gibson, 2012: 152; Freeman & Mathison, 2009: 104–105). For instance, they may want to present themselves as critical and independent individuals, and therefore accentuate their critical perspectives on advertising (Buckingham, 1993).

Looking back and comparing these two interview methods, it is evident that the group interview was more productive for researching children's experiences. The individual interview gave fruitful insights into children's perspectives, but these interviews were less relaxed and it was difficult to make the interviews longer than 20 minutes. It may be the case that some of the children perceived the topic as boring (Andersen, 2007: 226) or that some children felt that it was an awkward situation to talk about online advertising with an unfamiliar adult. However, children in the group interview situation in general seemed more relaxed, they were inspired to talk, and they shared new experiences when listening to what their peers said. Peer pressure did not seem to limit what the children discussed in the interviews, as they did not only bring up how they actively and critically engaged with advertising, but also talked about how they struggled with and felt steered by the advertising strategies.

As described above, the interview method was used to gain insight into children's everyday life experiences of advertising. In the second study (2015) I also, at the end of the interviews, included a reception study where the children watched screen-recorded examples of advertising on a computer and were asked to reflect upon these advertisements. However, this data was not useful in the context of the present thesis as it did not say much about children's everyday life experiences. This focused attention on advertising is a rather different situation compared to a more "natural" viewing context where advertising commonly is attended to more sporadically, as described by McQuarrie and Phillips (2012): "In terms of *reception* environment, the fundamental fact about mass media advertisements is that they are *secondary*. Some other content in the surrounding medium in which the ad is embedded is the primary focus of the consumer who encounters ads there" (p. 229). Interviewing children about how they experience advertising in their everyday life could also be said to put an "unnatural" focused attention on advertising. However, in these reflections children could talk about how they commonly engaged with advertising, and one common reflection among the children was that advertising is a secondary media content that they wished to avoid.

Observations of children using the internet could have been used as a method to get further insight into children's engagement with online advertising. In qualitative research methodology it is commonly argued that triangulation and a multi-method approach enhances validity of the research (Maxwell, 2012: 106–107), and, in line

with this argument, observations could have been used to complement the individual interviews and the group interviews. Some qualitative researchers also argue that the qualitative interview is a problematic method for gaining insight into people's everyday practices, as, for instance, individuals do not always do what they say they do, and as people also may deliberately lie to the researcher (Roulston, 2010: 205). However, observations, like interviews, do not give a "neutral" understanding of individuals' everyday lives. The presence of the researcher affects the behavior of the research participants during observations as within the interview situation. This problem can be solved by "going native," as in prolonged ethnographic research, but this was not an option in the present thesis project. I do not argue that observations are not valuable – this method would probably have added new dimensions to the empirical data and the results – but I argue that the qualitative interview is a fruitful and productive method in itself, which can be used to gain insight into children's views of and engagement with online advertising.

3.2.3 Interview procedure and interview guide

In both empirical studies the interviews took place in small rooms close to the children's classrooms. In the first study, the children participated individually in the interviews. In the second study the children were divided into 12 groups. These groups were put together by me and were then checked by the teachers to assure that there were no prior conflicts among the children. Most groups consisted of four participants, but due to practical circumstances some groups had three or five participants (see Table 2). Four participants was the preferred number in order to keep the groups small so to give space to all children (Morgan et al., 2002: 8). To get variation in the groups there was a mix between same-sex and mixed groups; eight groups were same-sex groups and four were mixed groups. All groups worked well, although among the younger children there were some tensions between the boys and girls in the mixed groups.

Table 2. Composition of group interviews.

Group interview	Interview participants
Group 1	4 boys (9-year-olds)
Group 2	4 girls (9-year-olds)
Group 3	4 girls (9-year-olds)
Group 4	2 girls and 2 boys (9-year-olds)
Group 5	2 girls and 2 boys (9-year-olds)
Group 6	4 boys (9-year-olds)
Group 7	3 girls (12-year-olds)
Group 8	3 boys (12-year-olds)
Group 9	3 boys (12-year-olds)
Group 10	2 girls and 2 boys (12-year-olds)
Group 11	4 girls (12-year-olds)
Group 12	4 girls and 1 boy (12-year-olds)

The children were informed before the interviews that their participation was voluntary, and that their names would be anonymized in the reporting of the results. They were also asked about their permission to audio-record our conversations. The interviews were semi-structured with mainly open-ended questions, which aimed at eliciting talk on children's experiences of online advertising. Open-ended questions are important as they give opportunities for the participants to choose what to focus on (Berry, 2002: 681). In the first study, the children were initially asked general questions on the concept of advertising and why they believe that advertising exists (see Appendix 9.1). After this they were asked to think about when they use the internet at home and to tell about the websites they use. After this the children were asked if they remembered any advertisements they had seen. This question, and the following questions, prompted children to talk about their experiences of advertising on the internet.

In the second study the interviews started with a general discussion about what they liked to do on the internet when they could choose freely, and after this they were asked if they had seen advertising when they use the internet. This question generated different experiences of advertising online. Other questions were used in the interviews to further elicit talk about advertising, such as whether they watched advertisements on the internet and what advertising could look like (see Appendix 9.1). When the children brought up specific examples of advertising or spoke about concrete situations when they had encountered advertising I asked them where they had seen the specific advertisement (on what website or app) and sometimes also what was advertised, in order to make sure that the children were actually talking about advertising. Often the children themselves spontaneously described the location of the advertisement, and sometimes also what was advertised. Previous research has also shown that children are good at remembering advertising they have seen (Andersen, 2011: 70; Lawlor, 2009: 32). One reason for this may be that advertising often is

repeated and the same advert can be encountered over and over again; repetition is considered a specific genre feature of advertising (McQuarrie & Phillips, 2012: 230). More specific questions were asked at the end of the interviews that related to the use of advertising as entertainment and information. However, the children had many times touched upon this spontaneously earlier in the interviews.

Some months after the interviews all schools were visited again, and the results of the studies were discussed in the classrooms with the children. The children brought up similar experiences as during the interviews in these discussions, and these "member-checks" (Flick, 2007: 33–34) thus confirmed the validity of the interview findings.

3.2.4 Transcription, material and data analysis

In the first study in 2011, the individual interviews lasted on average 15 minutes. In the second study in 2015, the interviews lasted around one hour. All interviews, both individual and group interviews, were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Laughter and significant tones of voice, such as frustration, sighing or whispering, were included in the transcripts. Important aspects of body language which had been noted in a research journal during the interviews were also included in the transcripts. This could for example be expressions of boredom and fatigue, such as sinking shoulders. The group interviews were more challenging to transcribe than the individual interviews as the children often had similar voices or talked at the same time. However, different strategies were used to facilitate the transcription process. First, in the group interviews I asked the children to present themselves with their names at the beginning of the interviews. When listening to the sound recording I could note differences in voice and dialect that could be used to distinguish between the children. Second, the children wore nameplates during the interviews and I frequently repeated their names, which also aided the transcription process. After the transcription was finished, each interview was listened through once again and compared to the transcription texts. This revealed that some words were missing, or that I had misunderstood some particular phrase or sentence, and these errors could then be corrected.

As described above, the children were generally detailed in their descriptions and most children showed no difficulties in discussing their experiences of advertising on the internet, apart from some children in the individual interviews (Paper I: 111). Hence, the interview data in both studies provides a deep and varied material for analyzing children's views of and engagement with online advertising. Many different experiences were described by the children, but these different experiences were commonly repeated through the interviews. The variety of perspectives covered in the interviews contributes to the content validity of the method (Lunt & Livingstone, 1996: 15). In both studies, children were interviewed until saturation emerged, that

is, when no new dimensions regarding the research topic came up. While the empirical data provides a rich material for analyzing children and online advertising, the data also has some limitations regarding what aspects of online advertising it captures. In the interviews the children spoke about forms of advertising they viewed as advertising, and in most cases this was well-defined commercials such as banner advertising and video advertising. Other forms of advertising, such as advergames, were not discussed in the interviews. However, this limitation should not be seen as too problematic, as banner and video advertisements are present parts of children's daily internet usage, and therefore merit research attention.

The data analysis started with reading and re-reading the interview transcripts to look for patterns, and to see similarities and differences within each interview and between interviews. In both the individual interviews and the group interviews children's descriptions often came in the form of "short stories" (Bazeley, 2013: 113–114), where they described different encounters with advertising on the internet in the context of their internet usage. These short stories commonly included descriptions of events, practices, thoughts, feelings and views related to advertising, and how the presence of advertising in different ways affected their online activities. In both studies, these short stories have been central in the analysis to understand children's views of and engagement with advertising, and what consequences the presence of advertising has for their internet usage.

In paper I the data was analyzed using thematic coding, as this method of analysis is fruitful for capturing "the social distribution of perspectives on a phenomenon or a process" (Flick, 2006: 307). Each interview was analyzed to get insight into children's views of advertising, and the analysis focused on capturing the negative and positive statements in relation to online advertising. The context for these statements was central for understanding why particular aspects of advertising were perceived as negative or positive, and the most important context here was the relationship between the advertisements and children's internet usage, that is, if advertising interfered or not with children's preferred activities, and what consequences this had for children's media experiences. In relation to this, the analysis focused on children's description of what they "do" with advertising in various situations. The coding process here centered on engagement with advertising as entertainment and information, as well as the various practices for avoiding advertising. Based on this, the analysis focused on how the different practices could be understood as forms of tactics (Certeau, 1984).

In the first study, the whole empirical material was analyzed in detail and used in the paper. In this way I captured children's views of and engagement with online advertising in relation to various online spaces. In contrast to this, after reading and rereading the interview transcripts of the second study, I choose to concentrate on one particular dimension of the interview data that surfaced in all interviews, namely descriptions of how the children viewed and engaged with advertising in mobile games. This choice to focus on one particular aspect of the interview data has enabled

a more focused, and also to some extent deeper analysis. Advertising in mobile games was brought up spontaneously by the children as an important part of their experiences of advertising. Hence, children's own interests and priorities guided the focus of the paper. Children's descriptions of their engagement with advertising in mobile games came also in this study mainly in form of "short stories," and the analysis revolved much around understanding what these stories communicated. These short stories were in focus during the whole data analysis process, and too detailed coding and "cutting" in the interview data has been avoided in order to not lose sight of the context of children's descriptions (Maxwell, 2012: 114, 121). On one level the children in these stories described particular events, that is, encounters with advertising in mobile games, and on another level the children described what they thought and felt about these events, and the practices they performed in these situations. The children sometimes explained only "what happened," but were not explicit about their own perspectives on this, and therefore had to be prompted to also talk about what they thought and felt about these situations. It became evident during the data analysis that these probing strategies were crucial as they gave insight into children's experiences *and* their interpretations of these experiences. Without their interpretations of the events it would have been difficult to evaluate what these encounters meant for children, and the interview data would have lacked one important dimension.

De Certeau's theoretical framework also served as a source of inspiration in the data analysis of the second paper, and one aim of the paper was to deepen the understanding of children's engagement with online advertising as forms of tactics. However, the data also communicated something else that could not be captured by de Certeau's theoretical framework. All theory has blind spots, as described by Maxwell:

> No conceptual framework, model, or theory can capture everything about the phenomena you study; every theory is a lens for making sense of the world, and every theory both reveals some aspects of that reality, and distorts or conceals other aspects. (Maxwell, 2012: 86)

When analyzing the interview data for paper II, I also paid more attention to children's descriptions of how they sometimes gave up and just "sat there," how they watched advertising without wanting to, how they felt "steered" by the advertising strategies, and how they experienced moments of resignation.[11] These were practices that did not seem to introduce a "difference" in the cultural economy, which is central to tactical engagement (Certeau, 1984: xiii, xxii). To try to understand and theorize these forms of engagement, which contrasted to the more active tactical

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[11] The concept of resignation denotes an act of giving up (Waite, 2006: 733), and involves a sensation that "something unpleasant is going to happen and cannot be changed" (Merriam-Webster, 2016c).

engagement, I started to work with the concept of *non-tactics*. To give a firmer base for this concept I related it to Livingstone's (2009: 32) discussion on children's agency online, where she proposes that children creatively resist some pressures online, but succumb to others. Non-tactical engagement was identified by analyzing how children did not actively create difference in relation to the advertising strategies, such as children's descriptions of how they watched and pressed on advertisements. Tactical engagement was identified by analyzing how children's practices produced differences in relation to the advertising strategies, that is, how the aims of advertising (such as watching and pressing advertisements) were opposed in different ways. The interview data was also analyzed to see if differences between accounts, for instance regarding tactical and non-tactical engagement, could be related to gender and age.

3.2.5 Ethical considerations in research with children

Ethical considerations are an important part of the research process, and go beyond practical procedures such as informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality. For instance, the nature of the power relationship that exists between the researcher and the participants has implications for what ethical considerations have to be made in a study. In research with children there is a power asymmetry between the researcher and the child, where one obvious asymmetry is the age difference. Another difference is that children are at school as they have to be there, while the researcher has more freedom to decide when to initiate contact and when to leave. Research with children in a school setting involves the risk that the children perceive participating in research as part of the school work, and, hence, not a matter of free choice. It is thus important to be clear about the fact that participating in a study is voluntary and not part of school work.

In research with children it is also important to be constantly sensitive and alert to children's more subtle signals, and respect when children do not want to interact with the researcher. The adult has to respect and consider children's integrity, as some children might cooperate without wanting to, if they believe it is expected from them (Juul, 2011: 34). In one of the individual interviews I experienced that the child was very quiet and tense, and after trying to ask some follow up questions to motivate the child to talk, I felt that is was unethical to try to prolong the interview situation and thus ended the interview. In the group interviews there were sometimes children that talked more than the others, and then I had to ensure that all children that wanted to speak got the chance to do so, by actively giving them the turn to speak. I could see that many children expected me to do so, as they looked at me and waited for me to give them the chance to speak. It was a delicate balance not to interrupt those children that talked a lot, and at the same time make sure that all children felt included in the group interview. In one of the group interviews I also noticed how one girl got tears in her eyes and after a short moment I realized that she could not

reach the grapes that had been moved to the other end of the table, and then I moved the plate, without making any comments, so that she could reach the fruit.

Sensitiveness to children's interests is important not only in the actual interview situation, but also between the interviews. By way of example, some children in sixth grade got upset as their group interview was scheduled after the school holiday week "sportlovet," due to time constraints, and there was a lively discussion among the children. To compensate for this situation I decided that they could get their movie tickets before the interview (the other children got their tickets after participating in the interviews). The girl that was most upset calmed down but accentuated that "it's not only about the movie ticket," indicating that she actually valued and wanted to participate in the interview. When I made this compromise she probably felt that I had listened to her, and that I tried to do something about the situation. Some of these examples may seem banal, but it is in these moment-to-moment details that children's well-being is considered, and confidence is built between researcher and participant. Maxwell (2012: 100) writes that human relationships are particularly important in qualitative research and affect the data collection process, the empirical data and the results. Hence, good relationships with participants are important not only for ethical reasons, but can also have a direct impact on the quality of the empirical data.

3.3 Researching children's virtual worlds

The research process around paper III, which focuses on children's virtual worlds, was rather different from the research process around papers I and II, discussed above. While researching children's engagement with online advertising entailed going out in the "real world" to meet children and teachers, researching children's virtual worlds involved a journey into the virtual space. This section describes the methods used when investigating children's virtual worlds as commercial spaces. The section initially discusses the motivations behind selecting Habbo Hotel as a case, and also provides some basic facts about this virtual world. Thereafter, the section discusses the different methods, materials and approaches used in the research process.

3.3.1 Case selection

The main aim of the study was to analyze opportunities for participation in children's virtual worlds, and how participation is constrained by the commercial strategies (the sale of virtual goods and VIP membership). The aim was also to gain insight into how the producers represent their practices, and how the users tactically relate to the commercial strategies. The case of Habbo Hotel was selected as it was considered a

rich environment for studying these phenomena. For instance, the chat function was well developed and used, and provided a rich material for studying the dialogues between the users. The virtual world also had a complex revenue model based primarily on the sale of virtual goods and VIP membership, which made it fruitful to analyze. The sampling strategy, hence, was purposive, as is common in qualitative research (Maxwell, 2012: 94). When selecting this virtual world for the study I also considered the popular virtual world Moviestarplanet; however, this online platform did not provide the same opportunities to study the interactions between the users. Other virtual worlds such as Neopets and Webkinz were only available in English, and it was considered relevant in the context of the present thesis to study a virtual world with Swedish-speaking young people. Habbo Hotel was also selected as it was, at the time of the study, a popular virtual world among children in many different countries. This opened up for a comparative element in the study, and I chose to study both the Swedish and the English language versions of the virtual world.

Habbo Hotel is produced by the Finnish corporation Sulake and at the time of the study was available in 11 different language versions. In 2015, the Swedish language version of the hotel could no longer be accessed. Sulake explained the closure with reference to the need to focus on larger markets (Sulake, 2015a). Due to this closure the users could no longer access their virtual objects, or move them to other language versions of the hotel. Swedish Habbo users reacted to this closure, and in an interview in the newspaper Expressen, a 19-year-old boy said: "It is really terrible [för jävligt]. We are like a big family there" (Giertz, 2015; my translation). This former user also said that Habbo Hotel had been an important part of his life since he was eight years old and that it had formed his childhood. The community created in the virtual world still lives, stated the boy, but all objects he had purchased during these years, for about 10,000 Swedish crowns, were gone (ibid.).

The English language version of Habbo Hotel still existed in 2016. The producer describes Habbo Hotel in the following way:

> Habbo is a place to meet new and existing friends, express your creativity and simply have fun. Its a richly colorful pixel art wonderworld populated by millions of avatars called Habbos. Explore millions of rooms created by other users in the virtual community.
>
> Habbo is a virtual hotel where millions of people from around the world go to live out their fantasies. Its a massively multiplayer experience where users design rooms, roleplaying in organizations, and even open their own trade shops and cafes. Currently there are over 120 million user-generated rooms in the 9 Habbo language communities. (Sulake, 2015b)

The revenue model of Habbo Hotel is based primarily on the sale of virtual goods and premium memberships (VIP membership), but also advertising (Johnson et al.,

2010: 625). It is difficult to estimate the age of the users in the virtual world. Sulake Corporation has stated that the majority of users are adolescents between 13 and 18 years of age (Paper III: 700). However, research has shown that many users are younger children (Johnson et al., 2010: 626; Ruckenstein, 2011: 1064).

3.3.2 Observations, ethical considerations and method of analysis

To study participatory opportunities and commercial strategies, as well as the users' tactics, the English and Swedish language versions (habbo.com and habbo.se) were observed during two months in 2012, for approximately two hours in the evenings each day. Initially, two accounts, one for each language version, were created and I got an avatar that I could move around with in the virtual world. The observations were initially explorative, as I tested the different functions of the virtual world and visited the different rooms. I observed how my activities in different ways were constrained by the commercial strategies, that is, what parts of the virtual world required payment and which parts were free to use. I also paid particular attention to the ways in which the producer communicated to me as a user, and strategies used to make me purchase on the site. As I was interested in how my participation was constrained as a non-paying member I did not make any purchases in the virtual world. The advertising and marketing strategies were also an important part of the observations. Different marketing strategies were encountered, particularly in the English version, such as banner advertisements, more integrated product placements, and events with a promotional purpose. After this initial explorative phase the observations were more structured, where each day I visited the most popular rooms and observed the various messages that were communicated by the producer.

The main data for studying the users' tactics in relation to the commercial strategies was the chat function, and different events in the virtual world. In these chat dialogues the users spoke in different ways about the purchase of virtual goods and VIP membership. The chat dialogues also revolved around many other topics and to get some focus in the observations I mainly concentrated on chat content that somehow related to the purchase of virtual goods and VIP membership. The observations were participatory in relation to technology, but non-participatory in relation to other avatars. Interaction with users would have required informed consent (Boellstorff et al., 2012: 157). As this is problematic to obtain in the virtual world, and as interaction with users was not necessary for the purpose of the study, I decided to not engage in conversations with the users. However, there are scholars who argue that it is unethical to engage in "covert" observation of users in virtual worlds (ibid.: 142–143). Yet, as my observations were conducted during a limited amount of time and as I did not follow specific users or communities, I did not consider it relevant to reveal my identity as researcher. Constantly revealing my identity would also have affected the chat dialogue and would probably have rendered the data less relevant for

the purpose of the study. In the reporting of the results, avatar names have been anonymized to protect the identities of users (Paper III: 705).

Observations were documented by taking screenshots and by making notes in a research journal that were connected to the different screenshots. Below follows an excerpt from the research journal (translated to English). The code SV37 means that it was screenshot number 37 taken in the Swedish language version:

Session Swedish Habbo, February 15, 2012

SV37- It says that you only get hair extension if you are a VIP (Valentine's quest calendar).

SV38- About VIP membership. 25 habbo coins for a month (50 Swedish Crowns).

SV39- Other things in the shop are connected to Valentine's day. They accentuate that one can purchase Habbo coins through SMS. For instance, a big heart or Valentine's furniture costs 2 Habbo Coins (SV40). Pixel shop. One get pixels for all activities, such as logging in to Habbo each day etc, one also has to pay with Habbo coins. It is not sufficient with pixels.

As this quotation shows, different aspects related to the revenue model, and how it affects and structures usage of the platform, were noted in the research journal.

Data analysis and data collection were to a large extent intertwined. As described above, the observations were to some extent structured from the beginning with a focus on participatory opportunities and commercial constraints. The theoretical framework based on participation theory (Carpentier, 2011), a political economy approach, as well as de Certeau (1984) guided the analysis of the data.

3.3.3 Document analysis and Twitter interview

Another aim of the study was to gain insight into how the producer Sulake represents the virtual world. Several documents found on habbo.com, habbo.se, and Sulake's homepage were collected for this purpose, including documents such as "The Official Parents Guide" and "Terms of Service." The material also included a YouTube video advertisement for Habbo Hotel. An interview with one of the Habbo Hotel designers was also conducted to get better insight into their views on user-generated content versus "producer-generated content" in the virtual world. This interview took place on Twitter in March 2012. Sulake has an active Twitter account for Habbo Hotel, hence, social media could be used to get into contact with individual designers.

The documents and the individual interview were analyzed using Potter and Wetherell's (1987) method of discourse analysis. This discourse analytical approach,

also used in papers IV and V, stresses how language is used for various purposes in different social contexts. The data was analyzed in search of differences and similarities between accounts, and how the discursive constructions varied depending on intended audience of the document. The discursive representations found in the documents and in the interview were compared with the observations I had made of the virtual world. By doing so it was possible to discern what aspects of the virtual world were accentuated and which dimensions were downplayed or omitted from discourse.

3.4 Researching advertising producers

Researching advertising producers' self-representation and audience constructions brought about new challenges compared to researching children and online advertising, and children's virtual worlds. While children as research participants are relatively easy to locate and recruit for research, and the virtual world was open to join, it took much time, effort and inventiveness to both find and recruit the advertising producers to the interview study. This section discusses the research process around papers IV and V, and starts by describing the recruitment process and selection of participants.

3.4.1 Selection of participants and the recruitment process

As stated in the literature review chapter, the study includes not only advertising agency practitioners but also marketers employed by advertising corporations. Including marketers was considered important for two reasons. First, both advertising agency practitioners and the advertisers are engaged in the advertising production process in different ways (Hackley & Cover, 2007: 65; O'Boyle, 2009: 566). Second, and most important, when it comes to advertising on the internet, advertisers also produce advertisements "in-house" without specialized expertise in advertising production. This is, to a large extent, due to the fact that advertisements can be produced relatively easy and with low costs on the internet, by using for instance Google AdWords. Several of the interviewed producers worked this way. Hence, by interviewing both agency practitioners and marketers I have included different types of professionals involved in the practice of advertising to children on the internet.

Another guiding principle in the sampling and recruitment process was to include professionals that worked with different forms of advertising. I chose to focus on banner advertisements on popular children's websites, as well as branded entertainment, such as advergames, on corporate websites. Demographic factors, such as gender and age, were considered secondary in the sampling process as too many

variables would have made an already complicated recruiting process more difficult and time-consuming.

The recruitment process entailed challenges in different ways. One challenge was the lack of information on which professionals are involved in advertising to children. There were, for instance, no advertising agencies that explicitly stated on their websites that they had this as part of their work competence. Marketers within advertising corporations were easier to locate, as it was possible, for instance, to observe advertisements on children's websites and contact the companies. Different strategies were used in the study to identify and recruit relevant interview participants. One of the main strategies was to observe advertising on two online game websites, Spela.se and Spelo.se, which were popular among Swedish children at the time of the study (Swedish Media Council, 2010: 21; Swedish Media Council, 2013: 44). I observed advertisements which surfaced on these websites and selected advertisements that were considered child-directed based on: 1) media placement (spela.se and spelo.se), 2) product and brand relevance (such as children's media and toys), and 3) appeal to children (for instance the use of color, and funny and cute figures).[12] Media placement, product relevance and appeal are common criteria for identifying "child-directed" advertising (Cai & Zhao, 2013; Henry & Story, 2009; Sandberg, 2011). The observations of Spela.se and Spelo.se were made using an account on the computer where all previous search history and cookies had been erased so that my own previous searches would not determine the advertisements shown. After identifying relevant advertisements I called or e-mailed the advertising corporations and in this way I recruited three marketers that were interviewed face-to-face. Two marketers who declined a face-to-face interview, with reference to time constraints, were interviewed by e-mail. Around seven corporations declined participation in the study.

Another recruitment strategy was to observe corporations' websites in search for advergames or other types of branded entertainment, such as children's areas with child-appealing and funny material, which promoted child-relevant products. After identifying advergames and other forms of branded entertainment I called or e-mailed the corporations, and through this recruitment strategy I interviewed four marketers face-to-face. One marketer who declined participation with reference to time constraints was interviewed by e-mail. None of the corporations that I contacted declined participation in the study using this sampling strategy.

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[12] The following description gives an idea of what a child-directed advertisement can look like: One of the advertisements I considered child-directed was an advert for a television program on the Disney Channel. The advert showed a young girl holding a magic and sparkling ball, with a fantasy landscape in the background. This advert surfaced on the popular children's website Spela.se (media placement), it advertised a child-relevant product (children's program on children's TV-channel), and had a child-friendly appeal (the young girl and the fantasy landscape). Individuals involved in producing this particular advertisement were not interviewed in the present study.

Another method was to observe advertising agencies' websites (agencies based in Skåne or Stockholm) as agencies on their websites commonly show the brands and the corporations they work with. Advertising agencies also commonly show examples of their campaigns on their websites. After identifying agencies that worked with child-relevant brands, and that showed relevant work examples, I called these agencies. In this way I recruited four participants that were interviewed face-to-face. Most of the agencies that I called said that they did not work with advertising to children, or to children and families. Around 30 advertising agencies that were contacted said that they had no relevant experiences for the study.

One advertising agency practitioner was recruited by searching for child-relevant brands on the magazine Resumé's website. This news magazine, focusing on the media and market communication industry, commonly reports when Swedish advertising agencies get new important clients, and can thus be used to identify relevant agencies and individuals. One advertising agency practitioner was also found through searches on Google. Two participants in the study were recruited through snowball sampling, that is, they were mentioned by other interview participants.

Although it was possible, using these strategies, to identify corporations and advertising agencies that seemed relevant to contact, it was not a straightforward task to recruit producers to the study. I understood early on that it was less successful to say that I was searching for professionals engaged in advertising to children. I therefore presented my project in a less specific way, saying that I was researching children and online advertising and that I wanted to talk with individuals involved in producing advertising for a particular brand, or a specific advertisement or campaign. For instance, the first person that I interviewed stated during our first telephone conversation how "immoral" it is to advertise to children, and that they direct their campaigns to parents. When this telephone call ended I thought that this person was not relevant for the interview study. However, after a few weeks I came to think about the campaign again, and as the producer had mentioned specific details I was able to search for the campaign on Google. In this way I found an advergame that was part of the campaign and it was obvious that this advergame was aimed at children, regarding its appeal, the product it advertised, and the prizes that could be won in the contest. Hence, I called this person again and booked an interview. This strong and moralistic view on child-directed advertising came up in many of the e-mail conversations and telephone calls that I had with agency practitioners and marketers.[13]

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[13] Another telling episode concerning the morally charged context surrounding advertising to children, also in a broader societal context, was an encounter with a man from the organization Red Cross on the street just before one of the interviews in Stockholm. I had met this person before on the street, and we had talked about the cold weather at that time (minus 15 degrees). As he recognized me he asked what I was waiting for. I responded that I was about to conduct an interview with a person engaged in advertising to children. The man then pointed his finger in the air and said "Naughty Naughty!" (Ajabaja).

3.4.2 Participant characteristics

Finally, 18 advertising producers were interviewed in the study (see Table 3 below). Out of these, eight were advertising agency practitioners, and 10 were marketers. The marketers within the advertising corporations had titles such as Marketing manager, Brand manager and Digital marketing manager, and persons working in advertising agencies had titles such as Creative director, Art director, Account director, and Digital creative. Hence, persons with many different roles were interviewed, and not only persons engaged in the actual creative work. The persons interviewed were employed in both national and multinational corporations. Some of these individuals were engaged in advertising for brands that are well-known internationally, while some worked with smaller brands that probably are less known among the wider public. The banner advertisements and the branded entertainment produced by these professionals promoted various kinds of products that were child-relevant, such as children's media, toys, candy and fast food. Seven of the interviewees were women and 11 were men. The producers had several years of work experience within marketing and advertising, and most participants had some form of education in marketing, advertising, IT or economics.

Table 3. Summary of participants in the producer interviews.

Interview	Interview type	Title	Gender
Interview 1	Individual interview	Account director	Woman
Interview 2	Individual interview	Digital marketing manager	Woman
Interview 3	Individual interview	Creative director	Man
Interview 4	Individual interview	Brand manager	Man
Interview 5	Individual interview	CEO advertising agency	Man
Interview 6	Individual interview	Marketing manager	Woman
Interview 7	Individual interview	Marketing manager	Man
Interview 8	Individual interview	Art director	Man
Interview 9	Individual interview	Account director	Man
Interview 10	Group interview	Project assistant market communication, Brand manager	Woman, Woman
Interview 11	Individual interview	CEO IT company	Man
Interview 12	Individual interview	Creative director	Man
Interview 13	Individual interview	Digital creative	Man
Interview 14	Individual interview	Art director	Man
Interview 15	E-mail interview	Trade marketing manager	Woman
Interview 16	E-mail interview	Web and store manager	Man
Interview 17	E-mail interview	Head of marketing	Woman

As worked either in an advertising agency or in a marketing department within a corporation that produce child-relevant products. However, two of the interviewees do not fit in entirely in this description. One of the participants was a CEO in a

smaller company and was not only involved in advertising production but in managing the company as a whole. Another interviewee had a production company, and had also produced shows for children's public service television. This person was found through snowball sampling in an interview with an advertising agency practitioner. The agency practitioner described why they had chosen to work with this producer: "When we developed this game [advergame] we had contact with a game developer that had produced many children's games … It was this producer who designed this game, for 8-, 9-, 10-year olds. Pedagogics and those kinds of things." Hence, the advertising agency had selected one person with special experience of producing entertainment for children, both commercial games and public service programs.

This particular case indicates that persons who are considered experts on children are contacted and involved in advertising production. As shown in the quotation above, the interviewee said "pedagogics and those kinds of things." This suggests that knowledge about pedagogics is considered important when producing advertising to children. This practice, involving experts on children, was also evident in one of the other cases in this interview study. When discussing the corporation's website and the advergames found there, one marketer said that they worked with both psychologists and physical education teachers:

> All children want computer games, but we have only some [emphasis] computer games. We give more than double [tips] on good playing activities outdoors. And then we follow all research, we have consultants, both psychologists and physical education teachers … During all these years we have not been criticized for our communication. (Brand manager)

In this quotation, the producer stresses that the promotional activities on their website are good for children and that they think about children's well-being. Accentuating the importance of nature and outdoor activities for children, in contrast to media usage, echoes Pettersson's (2013: 214) study on the imagined child audience in public service television; children were in television programs predominantly represented outdoors, and only sporadically indoors watching television.

3.4.3 Individual interviews, group interview and e-mail interviews

The recruitment process resulted in 13 individual face-to-face interviews, one face-to-face group interview with two participants, and three e-mail interviews. These different forms of interviews were the outcome of the recruitment process. In most cases, contact was established with one marketer or advertising agency practitioner and, therefore, an individual face-to-face interview was the most natural, and also preferred, outcome of the recruitment process. However, in one corporation, the

marketer that I had established contact with invited her superior manager to also participate in the interview. It was perhaps not an ideal situation to have this kind of hierarchical relationship between two interview participants, but as the interview had taken months to schedule I felt that I could not have additional demands on the interview situation. As the interview data is used as a topic rather than as a resource (Seale, 1998) for the participants' experiences, this posed no particular problem in the data analysis process.

Some of the participants who declined face-to-face meeting, due to time constraints, agreed to answer questions via e-mail, hence three interviews were conducted this way. E-mail interviews, or computer-assisted interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009: 149), may not provide the same depth as interviews face-to-face (ibid.). However, these interviews gave some general indications about how the producers positioned themselves in relation to the practice of advertising to children, and their constructions of children as an advertising audience.

3.4.4 Interviewing elites

The interviews conducted within this study can be defined as "elite interviews." The concept of "elite" is defined in different ways by different researchers, but, for instance, Harvey (2011) defines elites as "those who occupy senior management and Board level positions within organizations" (pp. 432–433). Some of the advertising producers had these types of senior positions, while other producers had less senior positions. Disregarding the exact definition of "elite," the interviews conducted within this study share similarities with how elite interviews are described in methodology literature. One of the characteristics of elite interviews, as put forward by Harvey (2011: 433) and Berry (2002), is how elite interview respondents view the interview situation as a site where they have to justify their work. Berry writes:

> We have a purpose in requesting an interview but ignore the reality that subjects have a purpose in the interview too: they have something they want to say. Consciously or unconsciously, they've thought about what they want to say in the period between the request and the actual interview. They're talking about their work and, as such, justifying what they do. That's no small matter. (Berry, 2002: 680)

As discussed earlier, it was evident that the advertising producers felt that they had to justify their work within the interview situation. Important to understand here is that all interviewees worked in private corporations and therefore had to consider what information to provide, and in this process consider the corporate reputation. In addition to this, it is reasonable to think that they did not want to jeopardize their own employment within these organizations. Some of the interview respondents

seemed relaxed in the interview situation, while others were more tense and concerned about their participation in the study. One example of a more tense interview situation was one interview in an advertising agency where the interviewee asked me for both identification card and business card before the interview. Another example of a concerned interviewee was a marketer who said, as we went down in the elevator after the interview: "I thought, 'Oh Gosh, what if this is shown in Plus [a Swedish television program on consumer issues] later.'" The marketer had previously described bad experiences of journalists who had given the company negative media exposure. This interviewee later on contacted my supervisor and asked for a written and signed "contract" which guaranteed the confidentiality of the interview data.

Also common to elite interviews are the difficulties when it comes to scheduling, and the time pressure surrounding the interview situation (Harvey, 2011: 436). Several of the interviews took place between business meetings and several of the interviewees also stated the exact time when the interview had to be finished. Some interviews were conducted at the end of the workday before the producers were going home to their families. It was apparent that some of the interviewees went to considerable efforts to make space for the interviews in a busy work and family life schedule. During this interview study I felt that I was taking their time and that I had little that I could offer them in return. This contrasts to interviewing children, where it was possible to give something meaningful back, such as a much appreciated special pencil (interview study 1) or a movie ticket (interview study 2). However, several of the producers said at the end of the interviews that they had appreciated reflecting on these issues, as they rarely did so in their work. One Brand manager, for instance, said: "It was fun to think about this and discuss a little bit. One rarely gets these kinds of opportunities to sit down and think things through and discuss." On these occasions, I felt that I had contributed something that was of value for the producers as well.

3.4.5 Interview procedure and interview guide

Among the face-to-face interviews, seven took place in Malmö and seven took place in Stockholm. Most interviews were conducted in meeting rooms in the companies, and some of the interviews were made in cafés. It was not the preferred option to conduct interviews in cafés due to the problems this environment can pose to the audio-recording. This was, however, the outcome of circumstances or a direct request from the interviewee. Only one interview took place in a personal office, which indicates that the interviewees in general wanted to keep a certain distance.

Before the interviews I briefly described the research project and assured that all information about specific persons, corporations and brands was to be anonymized, and that their participation was anonymous and confidential. The interviewees were given a short information sheet about the project, the ethical considerations and

contact details for the project leader. The interviewees were then asked if they gave their permission to audio-record the interview. Before the interview I also defined "children" as individuals up to the age of 12 years. This was done in order to focus the interview on younger audiences and, hence, to have a mutual understanding of the interview topic.

The interviews were semi-structured and the interview guide had a basic structure that was used through all interviews (see Appendix 9.1). However, there were also some changes in the guide based on what questions worked and did not work, and new questions that I found had to be included in the guide. All interviews also had specific questions related to the advertisements that were to be discussed in the interview. In general, the interviews started with questions about their experiences of working with advertising to children on the internet, and here I also asked questions related to the observed advertisements. These questions revolved around the aim of the advertisement and the target group. In their answers to these questions the interviewees in different ways positioned themselves in relation to the practice of advertising to children, and this positioning also involved speaking about children as an advertising audience. The interview guide also included questions aimed at eliciting more "talk" about their views on children as an advertising audience, such as how they believe advertising affects children. These questions were first posed in general without specifying the medium, and were then asked in relation to their own banners and branded entertainment. To connect these questions to their own practices was important as the interviewees commonly spoke differently about the effects of advertising in general and the effects of their own advertisements on children.

Hence, the interviews started with general and open-ended questions in order to create a good atmosphere in the interview situation (Harvey, 2011: 434). However, later in the interviews, as suggested by Richards (1996: 203), I also posed some more sensitive and critical questions. On these occasions the interviews sometimes took the form of the "confrontational interview" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009: 158–160). In the confrontational interview, which Kvale and Brinkmann argue can be suitable when interviewing elites, "the interview becomes a battleground where the interviewer contradicts and challenges the interviewee's statements" (ibid.: 159). As the participants in different ways claimed that they did not advertise to children, but, for instance, to parents and families, I pointed to specific characteristics of the advertisements and asked in what ways they were not "child-directed." This created a tense atmosphere as I directly questioned their "versions of reality." However, I tried to make the interview situation as comfortable as possible by keeping a neutral and non-accusing tone.

Every interview situation is unique and the researcher must be highly attentive and sensitive to the particular interview context, and must be ready to make changes and improvise when needed. The interview situation is a constant compromise between different interests that sometimes are opposite. For instance, one has to try to create a

good atmosphere which makes the participants feel comfortable (Harvey, 2011: 434). One important part of this is to be a good listener and let the respondents speak as freely as possible. At the same time one has to consider the time constraints of the interview and ensure that all relevant questions are covered. Hence, long and irrelevant accounts may need to be interrupted in a smooth way. Decisions on where to probe and encourage the interviewees to develop their answers must also be taken in the moment, considering both the relevance of the accounts and the time constraints inherent in the actual interview situation (see also Berry, 2002: 681). Those interviews with a clear deadline were conducted under considerably more stress than those interviews with less time constraints. All these challenges were more present in the interviews with the adults than when interviewing children.

Each interview situation is also a new site for learning. I learned, for instance, to take a less active role in the interview and not to be too quick to pose new questions. When the interviewees stopped speaking after discussing something relevant and interesting, I remained silent. Often the interview participants continued speaking at those moments (see also Berry, 2002: 681). This moment of silence could be made less awkward as I took notes during the interviews. This note-taking gave both me and the respondent time to think, without the need to have constant eye-contact, something which made the interview more relaxed. I also experienced that after conducting some interviews I was more present in the interview situation and could more easily judge when to probe, asking questions such as "could you tell me more about…?." This may be due to the fact that I had gained familiarity with the kinds of answers that often came up during the interviews.

3.4.6 Transcription, material and data analysis

The interviews lasted between 45 minutes and one and a half hours. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Significant tones of voice, indicating for instance irritation, were included in the transcripts, as well as laughter and longer pauses. The transcription process entailed challenges similar to the group interviews with children, as here too at times I had little control over the "soundscape." In one interview there was an echo in the room which sometimes made it difficult to hear what was said, and some of the interviews in the cafés also had competing voices or music in the background. Despite these challenges it was possible to achieve good quality in the transcripts, and as was the case with the interviews with children, all interviews were carefully listened through and compared with the text after the transcription was finished. Small errors could then be corrected.

As described in the introduction to this chapter, it became evident that much of what was said during the interviews had self-representational and legitimizing purposes. The interviewees strived, in different ways, to legitimize their practices. It was also evident that the information provided by the producers was highly managed

and selected. This could, for instance, be judged by comparing what was said during the interviews with the observations that I had made of their advertisements. The interview data is, hence, not a good source for gaining insights into how they work with advertising to children. However, the empirical material provides a rich source for analyzing how the producers represent themselves, their practices and the child audience.

The analysis started by reading and rereading the interview transcripts. As Jonathan Potter and Margareth Wetherell (1987) describe: "analysis involves a lot of careful reading and rereading. Often it is only after long hours struggling with the data and many false starts that a systematic patterning emerges" (p. 168). The analysis of the data for papers IV and V has focused on mapping the various ways in which the producers positioned themselves in relation to the practice of advertising to children, and the various ways in which the producers constructed the child audience. After weeks of reading and rereading the transcripts I started to find certain patterns in the interview data that captured the data as a whole, and that gave justice to both the similarities between the interviews, but also the variability in accounts. One important goal of the analysis has been to not lose sight of the complexity and the contradictions of the empirical material (Flyvbjerg, 2001: 85–86).

The first step of the analysis, that is, the search for patterns in the interview data, entailed finding descriptions that shared certain *similarities* in content and form, and also to look for *differences* between accounts, both within the same interview and between the different interviews (Potter & Wetherell, 1987: 168). The second step of the analysis entailed understanding the various functions of these patterns (ibid.), and understanding these constructions as shaped by cultural context and industry interests. For the purpose of paper IV I also analyzed which interpretative repertoires the producers drew on when legitimizing their work. Interpretative repertoires are, as also mentioned in the introductory chapter, flexible interpretative resources that are used in social interaction for different purposes, such as for justifying behavior (Wetherell, 1998: 400–401), and are commonly organized around recurring concepts and grammatical constructions that are used in a particular way (Potter & Wetherell, 1987: 149).

One central part of the analysis has also been to understand the producers' "constructions of reality" in comparison to their actual advertising practices. As I had, in most cases, observed their banner advertisements and their branded entertainment I could see what the producers accentuated and what they downplayed when speaking about their own practices. Without these observations it would have been difficult to have an independent researcher's perspective in the analysis. If their words had been taken literally the results of the present study would have been that there are no producers involved in advertising to children on the internet. One concrete example of this gap between discourse and practice is that one of the interviewees stated that there were "not a lot of brand logos" in the advergame, a statement which downplayed the promotional dimension of the advergame. However, my own

observations revealed that brand logos and the brand's spokes-character were ever-present in the advergame. This strategy, to contrast the producers' discourse with their actual practices, was also central in the analysis of the virtual world Habbo Hotel, as previously discussed. Comparing discourse with actual observations can be understood as a form of triangulation (Bazeley, 2013: 406). This triangulation has enabled a better understanding of the studied phenomena, and has helped in judging the validity of the interview data.

3.4.7 Power relationships and ethical reflections when researching producers

As discussed earlier, when interviewing children the researcher has to be aware of the power imbalance that exists between the adult and the child. When it comes to interviewing advertising producers, or interviewing elites more generally, the power imbalance can, in some respects, be considered the opposite (Drew, 2014: 78). In this study, the producers had more influence on the interview context, both the location and the scheduling of the interview. In addition to this, almost all interviewees were older than myself and probably considered themselves as more experienced and knowledgeable, and as occupying a more influential position in society than a doctoral student. Furthermore, it was obvious that many of the interviewees wanted to show their knowledge about advertising and marketing, and wanted to teach me about "how the industry works."

However, in another respect I had a power position in the interview as I had an exclusive overview and control of the interview guide, and hence considerable control of the interview situation. Considering this, the research interview can be understood as the "proper place" or the "place of power" (Certeau, 1984: 38) of the researcher. Following this line of reasoning, these *producers of advertising strategies* were, somewhat paradoxically, in the interview situation placed within another strategy; the scientific institution. When contacting and interviewing the producers I became "the subject of will and power" (ibid.: xix) that established a relationship with an "exterior distinct from it" (ibid.).

The papers where the findings are reported can also be understood as the "proper place" of the researcher and the scientific institution. When writing papers IV and V I had the power to define what to focus on in the interview data and to define these producers as "producers of child-directed advertising" (based on my observations of their practices). Mayer et al. (2009) write that one important question within production studies is how we as researchers represent producers' self-constructions, and state that the "crisis of representing producers, their locations, industries, and products is the burden of representation for production studies" (p. 4). The burden of representation and the power to define "reality" has ethical implications. What right do I as a researcher have to define "the other" and impose my own understanding of

these individuals, particularly as my understanding in some ways goes against the producers' perspectives and constructions of reality? I have reflected upon this issue during the research process and have come to the conclusion that sometimes there are different understandings of "reality," and that it is valuable to highlight these conflicting perspectives, and in this way reach a better understanding of society and culture. To take a critical and "independent," or at least different, perspective as a researcher is particularly important when research has to do with powerful economic interests; the goal of these actors' work is primarily to protect commercial interests and not to consider children's best interests and well-being, even though these may also be considered.

4 Results and discussion

In this chapter I outline and discuss the main results of the papers, and I also discuss the findings in relation to previous research. The chapter follows the same structure as previous chapters and thus focuses first on children's views of and engagement with online advertising, thereafter on participation and commercial strategies in children's virtual worlds, and finally on how advertising producers represent themselves, their practices and the child audience.

4.1 Children's views of and engagement with online advertising

The present thesis has taken its point of departure in the observation that children's online activities take place to a large extent in a commercial environment where advertising and the sale of virtual goods are present parts of the online experience. One of the aims of the thesis has been to analyze and critically discuss how children view and engage with online advertising, and what consequences the revenue models (advertising and the sale of virtual goods) have for children's participation and media experiences. Undertaking such research was considered relevant because most previous studies have focused on advertising effects and children's advertising literacy. This research does not give room for children's own perspectives, and does not sufficiently seek to understand children's relationship with advertising in the context of their internet usage.

The interviews with 9- and 12-year-old children in 2011 and 2015 show how children experienced the internet as a highly commercial environment. The interviewed children had ambivalent or solely negative views of advertising on the internet, and described advertising primarily in negative terms as something that intrudes and interferes with their preferred activities. Hence, advertising was mainly perceived as irritating and annoying, and the main mode of engagement described by the children was practices of avoidance. These practices have been conceptualized as *avoidance tactics*. Children described how their engagement with advertising took the form of a struggle, and how they both resisted and resigned in relation to advertising on the internet. However, children also described online advertising in more positive

terms as sources of entertainment and information. In the following I further develop these main findings, and discuss in more detail the results of papers I and II. I start by discussing children's negative views of advertising and how the children engaged with advertising they perceived as interfering with their activities online. Thereafter I discuss children's engagement with advertising as entertainment and information.

4.1.1 Online advertising as intrusion: Struggle, resistance and resignation

Papers I and II both show how children mainly had negative views of advertising on the internet, and how they were most bothered and annoyed by advertising that appeared in online and mobile games. This is evident, for instance, in the following conversation between two 9-year-old boys in 2015:

> Victor: You miss out on all playing. Sometimes you miss 13 seconds of playing.
>
> Frans: Mmm. It can be 30 seconds too.
>
> Victor: Yes.
>
> Frans: Like in the "Game of war" advert.
>
> Victor: It was really boring. And once I had to watch an advert that was two minutes. I had to miss two minutes by watching a film [ad].

Playing various forms of digital games is an important part of children's online activities, as shown in various statistical reports (Findahl, 2014; Findahl & Davidsson, 2015; Swedish Media Council, 2015). The present thesis suggests that children are most bothered by advertising in this particular online space, compared to other online spaces. Children in both studies also described how advertising can be annoying on, for instance, YouTube, but how advertising in games is particularly bothersome as advertisements come in a more unpredictable manner and as mobile games are saturated with advertising (Paper II: 7). Another possible reason why advertising in games was considered especially disturbing, compared to other online spaces, may be because playing games is a more goal-directed activity than, for instance, watching YouTube videos, as one important motivation for playing digital games is the pleasure of achievement and the pleasure of succeeding and winning (Hamlen, 2013; Olson, 2010). Tanyel et al. (2013: 667) argue that one reason why individuals are more negative toward advertising on the internet than on television is because internet usage is more goal-directed than television viewing. This line of reasoning may also be applicable to different online spaces, where usage can be more or less focused and goal-directed.

When discussing their experiences of advertising on the internet in 2011 the 9-year-old children explained how they performed different forms of avoidance tactics. This, for instance, involved looking at the line below the advertisements where it shows how much time is left before the game starts, going away for a moment to talk with a sibling, or watching television while the ad surfaced on the computer screen (Paper I: 113). Avoidance tactics were also described by the children in 2015, and the 9- and 12-year-olds expressed how they, for instance, deleted mobile games that were saturated with advertising, turned off the Wi-Fi when no internet connection was needed to play the game, or went to drink a glass of water (Paper II: 11–12). In relation to a specific advertising strategy within mobile games, which reward children if they watch an advert (for instance with more energy in the game, extra lives, or virtual objects), the children described how they performed haptic-based avoidance tactics in the virtual space, such as leaving the game app for another app. Avoidance tactics in relation to this advertising strategy also involved bodily movement in the offline space, such as going to the toilet, engaging in other media usage (reading a book), or engaging in social interaction (talking with a sibling).

In both 2011 and 2015 the children expressed their critique toward online advertising, for instance, by describing advertising as annoying and bothersome. In the latter study the children also formulated more elaborate critique, for instance, by arguing that all advertisements ought to have a close button so that they can choose whether to watch advertising or not, and by emphasizing that all advertisements clearly should state if game apps are free to download or need to be purchased. In paper II I conceptualize children's critique of advertising as tactics, and more specifically as "tactics of the mind," as critique produces a difference and opens up a gap between the individual and the strategy (Paper II: 16–18). While children, through avoidance tactics, produced gaps in the more concrete sense of the word, such as movement in offline space away from the touchscreen, tactics of the mind can be said to create a mental rather than a spatial gap in relation to the strategy. By formulating more elaborate critique against advertising that involved normative ideas about what are fair and unfair marketing practices in the online landscape, the children can be said to evoke a *moral economy*.[14] Based on this it can be argued that two different economies operate in the commercial online landscape; the attention economy of the advertising strategies and the moral economy of children's tactics. In

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[14] The concept of moral economy was developed by the English historian E. P. Thompson in his study of 18th-century food riots (Thompson, 1971), and has since then been used in a wide variety of different studies, mainly in history and in social anthropology (Randall & Charlesworth, 2000: 2). In his seminal article "The moral economy of the English crowd in the Eighteenth century," Thompson (1971) states that individuals involved in food riots defended traditional rights and popular consensus "as to what were legitimate and what were illegitimate practices in marketing, milling, baking, etc" (p. 79). One central aspect of this moral economy was the idea of fair prices for bread (Thompson, 1991: 228). In the context of the present thesis I use the concept of moral economy in a similar way to Thompson, denoting ideas about what constitutes fair and unfair marketing practices.

paper II I also conceptualize children's laughter in the interview situation as forms of tactics, as children through their laughter expressed the absurdity they experienced in their encounters with advertising (Paper II: 18). This laughter accentuated children's critique against the commercial environment in mobile games and, thus, produced difference and a distance to the strategies. This also shows how negative experiences from everyday life became a source of amusement, and a way to interact socially with their peers in the group interview situation.

When comparing the studies from 2011 and 2015, it becomes evident that the children in the latter study described other dimensions of their engagement with advertising than a few years earlier. In 2015 the children described how their engagement with advertising in mobile games took the form of a haptic struggle, where they engaged involuntarily with advertisements on the touchscreen (Paper II: 8–11). In their descriptions of different encounters with advertising the children expressed negative experiences of deception, enforcement and confrontation related to advertising in mobile games. This might suggest that advertising in mobile games on touchscreen devices is a more demanding environment than in digital games on computers, and that advertising strategies in the commercial online landscape have become more difficult for children to handle. The children described how adverts appeared suddenly and in an unpredictable manner and how they accidentally pressed on the adverts. As a result of this involuntary engagement with ads they came out of the game app and into App Store, Google Play or the web browser Safari. The children also expressed how they tried to press away advertisements but how the close buttons were too small for their fingers, or that the close buttons simply did not work. Because of this, the children involuntarily pressed the adverts, and were directed away from the game and into, for instance, App Store. Some of the children described how they felt lured in these situations. In paper II I conceptualize this experience as a sense of "deception in-the-hand" (Paper II: 11). In the following conversation two 12-year-old girls describe how they accidentally pressed suddenly appearing advertisements and how they experienced that these strategies were designed to intentionally lure them:

> Anna: They usually try to lure people, that is, the games, to press the adverts. If you enter an app it can take up to three seconds and then an advert appears and you touch it and enter App Store …
>
> Sara: Yes, sometimes it [the advertisement] just comes up…
>
> Anna: Yes.
>
> Sara: …without you knowing it.

Anna: So when you are about to press "play" you accidentally touch the advert instead.

Sara: It's really annoying.

As this quotation shows, children were not only interrupted in their gaming activities, but also led away from the game app to App Store. Advertising has traditionally aimed at influencing people's attitudes, to make them go voluntarily to the shop and make purchases. However, in mobile games the children were, in a way, forced to the shop, something which reveals a new dimension of advertising online. In this context the children did not describe how they were *cognitively* influenced by advertising, but rather how they were taken to the shop through forced and unwanted *physical* interaction with advertisements. Corner (2011) argues that the media exercise *soft power* through its possibility to influence and generate perceptions and feelings; he writes: "It [the media] does not have the physical, possibly coercive, dimension that, for instance, military power, police power and aspects of economic power, including the power of labour relationships, can and do have in many countries" (pp. 14–15). Children's descriptions of advertising in mobile games question the idea of the media as exercising solely soft power, and indicate that the power of the media also can involve a more physical and coercive dimension.[15]

Children's engagement with advertising also took the form of a struggle in situations where they tried to handle small close buttons. This is shown, for instance, in the following conversation between two 9-year-old girls:

Maria: When I play games, there appear squares in the middle of everything when you press "play" or when you just press the game. It's really annoying because sometimes there is a very small "X," that you have to hit precisely to get it away, and then you accidentally touch one millimeter on the side and you enter App Store. Yes, so there is chaos and you have to press "home" and go back into the game again. And so it happens again and again, all the time. It's pretty tiresome.

Yasmin: Yes, the same happens to me.

Maria: Mmm.

Yasmin: The X-button is so tiny [shows how small it is with her fingers] and you have to press right in the middle of it, and if you don't, you enter App Store.

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[15] One could argue that advertising on television also involves a coercive dimension, as advertising breaks can be perceived as a forced movement between different spheres (see Andersen, 2007: 227).

In the quotation, Maria describes how her struggle with advertisements in mobile games resulted in a "chaos" and how the game play was interrupted. Several children described in this way how advertising interrupted their mobile game play, and how this also disrupted moments of immersion, achievement and enjoyment. However, the children not only revealed how advertisements interrupted their game play, but also how suddenly appearing advertisements changed the outcome of their gaming activities and in this way affected their gaming experiences. They described, for instance, how they lost the game, got lower scores or had to replay the games. Children's achievement and the pleasure of succeeding and winning were, consequently, hindered in the games by adverts appearing, thus interrupting important motivations for game play (Paper II: 9). The following conversation in one group interview with 12-year-old boys shows how suddenly appearing advertisements changed the outcome of the games:

> Amir: On the iPad, when I press a game and when I have played a few minutes there usually appear adverts, and sometimes it comes so fast that you accidentally touch it. …
>
> Interviewer: What do you think when that happens?
>
> Amir: That it's very tiresome, because you are so focused on the game, and then an advert appears.
>
> Marcus: That's why my record on Flappy Bird got much lower. … When I was on 94 an advert appeared [laughter].

Advertising is traditionally known for interrupting media experiences, but not for changing the storylines of the "main content" of media usage; the outcome of a drama or the meaning of a news article is not altered by the adverts in between the film or in the newspaper. This consequence of advertising to change the course of events in the games can be seen as a new dimension of advertising, which may be specific to in-game advertising.[16]

As discussed above, both the individual interviews and the group interviews show how the children in various ways tried to adapt the online environment to their own interests and their own rules (Certeau, 1984: xiv). They performed avoidance tactics to resist advertising that they did not want to pay attention to, and they struggled with dysfunctional close buttons and advertisements that appeared suddenly. De Certeau's theory is based on the premise that everyday practices are tactical in nature

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[16] However, one can argue that product placements also affect the story line, when the content in a film is structured to put focus on a specific brand (see Galician & Bourdeau, 2004: 34). The difference is that this "change" has been made in advance by the producers, while suddenly appearing advertisements in mobile games alter the story line in real time.

(1984: 39–40), hence, that users are active and that they introduce a difference in the cultural economy. However, paper II also highlights how children in both age groups and both girls and boys engaged in *non-tactical* practices; the children described how they sometimes just "sat there" and waited without performing avoidance tactics, how they felt that they had to actually watch the adverts in order to obtain rewards, and how they experienced moments of resignation (Paper II: 13–16). Words like "sit" and "wait," and the modal verbs "must" and "have to" were commonly used by the children in the interviews. The modal verbs "must" and "have to" articulate a sense of obligation and enforcement put on them by the commercial strategies. When asked if they watch advertisements after pressing them to get a reward one 9-year-old boy said:

> Sam: Yes, I have to.
>
> Interviewer: Do you have to watch it?
>
> Sam: Mmm, otherwise I don't get it [free "gems"]. It even says "Watch a video if you want a reward" [last part said in English].

Moments of resignation were commonly described in relation to their struggle with advertising, and particularly in relation to advertisements that appeared suddenly. In the following quotation three 9-year-old girls describe how suddenly appearing adverts changed the outcome of the game, and in the last sentence, Emilia says that "it's not worthwhile to drive again then, because it's always the same," indicating a sense of resignation:

> Johanna: When I play Subway Surfers, I press the screen to start and when it has started an advert appears, and then you usually die.
>
> Yasmin: You get caught by the police.
>
> Interviewer: You get caught by the police?
>
> Yasmin: Yes because you stand and spray on the trains…
>
> Emilia: …and you are not allowed to do that, so they catch you … but when adverts appear, then you want to drive, but you cannot do that so you press the "X" but then you have already been caught by the police. So it's not worthwhile to drive again then, because it's always the same.

In the quotation Emilia expresses how she does not find it meaningful to play the game due to the appearing advertisements. Other children refrained from touching the screen due to fear of suddenly appearing advertisements; one 12-year-old girl said:

> If you enter an app it can take up to three seconds and then an advert appears and you touch it and enter App Store … So I always, I sit and wait around 10 seconds before I dare to touch anywhere [laughter among the children], because I can't stand it.

In line with Livingstone (2009: 32), this "non-playing" and "non-touching" can be seen as acts of giving up, showing that children sometimes succumb to the pressures put on them online. The word "passivity," in contrast to active engagement, could be used to label these practices. However, this would be problematic as it promotes the idea that "passivity" is an individual characteristic of children. A more nuanced understanding is to take into account how the structure of the text enables or disables different forms of engagement. Discussing children's media literacy, Livingstone (ibid.) argues that: "pointing the finger of blame at the individual's failure of intelligence, motivation or effort is unhelpful … for this is to neglect the degree to which interfaces are poorly designed or necessary resources and contexts for action are lacking" (p. 206). This indicates a need to not only educate and put responsibility on children, but also the need to improve the interfaces of commercial online spaces, such as how advertising is integrated in these spaces (see further chapter on policy and regulatory implications).

Tactical and non-tactical engagement should not be seen as entirely separate forms of engagement, but as intertwined in complex ways. The interviews suggest that everyday practices can involve different layers of tactical and non-tactical engagement. As shown in paper II, sitting and watching advertisements without wanting to can be understood as non-tactical engagement, since one of the aims of advertising is to catch the attention of the media user. In these situations, however, the individual can produce tactics of the mind, such as critique, and in this way create difference in relation to the strategy. Hence, everyday practices open up and close gaps in relation to the strategies in complex ways. Users try in different ways to adapt the cultural economy to their own interests and purposes, but do not always manage to do so, or sometimes just partly succeed. The interviews with children also show how there can be a fine line between tactical and non-tactical engagement with advertising. By way of example, one 9-year-old girl said in one of the group interviews in 2015:

> On my iPad at home there is a game called Littlest Pet Shop, and to get hearts that make the pets feel good, you have to watch a film [ad] that takes about 20 minutes, and then I just have to sit like this [showing how she waits and is bored]. Many times I just turn it off.

In the quotation the girl first expresses how she engages non-tactically with advertising by sitting and waiting against her will. However, just after this she describes how she engages tactically with the advertising strategy by turning off the iPad. This indicates how tactical and non-tactical engagement should not be thought

of as enduring qualities or something that has clear boundaries, but rather that children oscillate between these forms of engagement when playing mobile games.

Children's descriptions of advertising as an "intruder" in the online space reflect a subjective experience of what it is like to navigate a commercial online environment which, to a large extent, is structured as an attention economy (Roberts, 2012: 2). The various encounters with advertising described by the children, such as suddenly appearing advertisements, suggest that advertisements are designed to capture the attention of children with the use of surprise-based techniques which aim at disabling, or circumventing, children's avoidance tactics. Somewhat paradoxically, these strategies rely on time, which de Certeau describes as characteristic of tactics; according to de Certeau, the power of a strategy is based on its possession of a "proper place," while tactics primarily count on time (Certeau, 1984: 38–39). From these descriptions of suddenly appearing adverts emerges another picture where the power of strategies is based not only on the ability to produce visibility in the game space, but also on a "clever *utilization of time*" (ibid.: 38–39).

The children also described other attention-grabbing strategies, such as advertisements that utilize color and motion, and the children stated that they were disturbed by these features of advertisements while surfing online (Paper I: 115). Other strategies for capturing users' attention, described by the children in the interviews, were adverts that put them in "forced-exposure mode," that is, adverts that could not be clicked away, as well as advertising strategies built into the game structure that offer children certain rewards for pressing an advert (Paper II: 11). Some of the children viewed the advertising strategy which rewards the player with, for instance, virtual objects as something positive and as an opportunity to get advantages in the games, while other children expressed how they felt that they had to watch the adverts to be able to play the games, and that it was not a matter of free choice. These divergent views are shown in the two following quotations from two different group interviews in 2015:

> In a game called My Boo, that almost everyone has in the class, if you have little energy left and are very tired and can't manage to play so you get money, then you can press it [the advert] and then you can get free energy … Then I don't have to go to bed [in the game]. It takes too much time. (Boy, 9-years-old)

> When I play a game called My Boo, then it [the animal] starts to get tired and then you press "energy" to get energy to be able to play, but then you have to watch the film [advert]. And if you don't want to watch, if you pressed wrong, then you can't get back. (Girl, 9-years-old)

Children's ambivalent views on this advertising strategy are shown also in the following conversation between two 9-year-old boys, where the voluntary and involuntary aspects of the strategy are negotiated:

Henrik: In this "cow game," if you want a cow or something like that, you *can* press it [the advert], then you *must*, then you *can*, then you *must* watch an advert. And then you get it [the cow].

Elias: … you can *choose* if you want [emphasis] to see the advert or not. Then you can *choose* it before [emphasis] the advert appears.

Henrik cannot decide whether to use the word "can" or the word "must" in this context. The word "can" implies voluntary engagement and possibilities for agency while the word "must" connotes enforcement and lack of personal choice. His friend Elias objects to this ambivalence and accentuates that one can "choose" whether to watch the advert or not, hence, stressing this as a voluntary option.

These results, that children mainly have a negative view of online advertising, are in line with previous studies (e.g. Andersen et al. 2008; Sandberg et al., 2011; Saunders-Uchoa-Craveiro & Araújo Cysne Rios, 2013; Tanyel et al., 2013). However, the papers in this thesis also show how children's engagement with advertising involves dimensions not discussed and theorized in previous research, such as children's struggle with advertisements, the sense of deception in-the-hand and resignation. These results thus advance our understanding of how the revenue models of the media (advertising) in different ways affect children's media experiences and usage. Comparing these results with the eye-tracking studies made by Holmberg et al. (2014; 2015), one can see both similarities and differences. Holmberg et al. (2014) conclude that children were distracted by animated banner advertisements, while the adverts did not significantly affect their task performance. The results of the present thesis suggest, in line with this, that children feel distracted by adverts. However, the children also reported on how their gaming performances sometimes were affected by advertisements appearing.

The results, viewed in light of previous research on children and television advertising, show how there are certain similarities between children's engagement with advertising online and children's engagement with advertising on television. Bartholomew and O'Donohoe (2003), Buckingham (1993) and Andersen (2007; 2011) reveal how children engage actively with advertising and how they present themselves as ad avoiders, and highlight the various practices performed during the television advertising break (such as walking out of the room, turning off the television, switching channel, or interacting with siblings). These are, interestingly, similar to the tactics children perform in relation to advertising on the internet. However, the present thesis also reveals other dimensions of children's advertising engagement. Buckingham (1993) and Bartholomew and O'Donohoe (2003: 447) discuss how children by being critical and skeptical toward advertising, and by arguing that advertising affects other people and not themselves (the third-person effect), present themselves as capable and wise consumers. In addition to this, Bartholomew and O'Donohoe (2003) accentuate how children put themselves in a

power position with respect to advertising. The present thesis has, in a similar way, shown how children are reflective and critical, yet, the thesis has also shown how children describe a sense of resignation in relation to online advertising, and how they also feel "steered" and persuaded by the advertising strategies. These are descriptions that rather stress children's lack of power in relation to the advertising strategies. This non-tactical engagement has not gained sufficient attention in previous research on children and advertising. The present thesis, hence, proposes that struggle and resignation should be seen as important dimensions of children's advertising engagement.

Saunders-Uchoa-Craveiro and Araújo Cysne Rios (2013: 508) show, in their study on children's experiences of advertising on digital games sites, that 9- and 11-year-olds from Spain and Brazil had similar experiences of advertising as irritating and disturbing, and they argue that this reveals a global children's culture. The results of the present thesis demonstrate, in line with this, that children share similar experiences of online advertising as an unwelcome "intruder," an experience which was present in both age groups and among both girls and boys. Hence, there seems to exist some form of "interpretive community" (Schrøder, 1994: 344–345) around online advertising among children that crosses national boundaries, gender and age. However, as discussed in this section, the children to some extent also expressed divergent views on advertising strategies in mobile games which are integrated into the game structure.

4.1.2 Online advertising as entertainment

The results also show how online advertising sometimes was engaged with as entertainment (Paper I: 115–117). The strategy to incorporate entertaining features in advertising, such as funny figures, is a common technique for capturing the attention of media users (Garretson & Niedrich, 2004), and can thus also be seen as part of the attention economy online. In 2011, the interviewed children described how they sometimes watched advertisements that contained cute and funny animated figures, and the children brought up examples of advertisements with animals such as chickens, bears, and a sheep. When the children described these advertisements, and how they also interacted with figures in the adverts by clicking on funny characters, they mostly focused on the entertaining features and not the brand or product. However, some children also spontaneously mentioned specific brands in their descriptions (Paper I: 117). Some of the 9-year-olds also expressed how they had interacted socially with their friends in relation to funny advertisements. However, apart from this the children had few experiences to tell about social interaction in connection to advertisements. The following quotation from the interviews conducted in 2011 shows how one 9-year-old girl engaged with an entertaining advertisement:

Girl: It was an advertisement that came up on a webpage and they advertised a mobile, and the bear was next to it, and you could click on the bear and music started to play, and it said something.

Interviewer: Do you remember what it said?

Girl: Welcome.

Interviewer: Did you click on it?

Girl: The first time I clicked on it was because I wanted to see, and I clicked and it said "Welcome." …

Interviewer: Why did you want to do that?

Girl: It said: "Click on me; I'm going to say something."

In paper II I do not discuss children's engagement with advertising as entertainment, as the children did not bring up this form of engagement in relation to advertising in mobile games. It is nevertheless relevant to mention in this contextualizing part of the thesis that the children also in 2015 engaged with online advertising as entertainment. In the group interviews the children primarily discussed entertaining YouTube commercials, and in some of the group interviews, primarily those with the 9-year-olds, they sang long jingles from video adverts they had seen on YouTube. In addition to this, the children also brought up cute animals they had seen in YouTube advertisements. As in the first study, these children focused primarily on the entertaining features and less on the brand. Several of the adverts they mentioned advertised products that are not directly child-relevant, such as AMF pension [a life insurance company], Flygresor.se [a flight travel company] and Systembolaget [a state-owned company that sells alcoholic beverages], but they also mentioned more child-relevant brands such as McDonald's. In these interviews the children also described how they sometimes interacted socially around entertaining advertisements. These descriptions primarily focused on social interaction in relation to online advertising at school; several children brought up how the whole class sang along with YouTube adverts that came before videos the teachers were about to show in the classroom.

In paper I, where I discuss engagement with advertising as entertainment more in-depth, I theorize this engagement as tactics. When the children discussed their experiences of entertaining advertisements they concentrated mostly on the entertaining features, such as the funny figures, and less focus, or no focus, was put on the product or brand. Hence, this can be seen as an example of how children adapt the commercial online environment to their own interests and their own rules (Certeau, 1984: xiv), by making selections in the mediated material. However, I also

discuss how these tactics, even though they introduce some form of difference in the strategy, nevertheless are partly in line with the intentions of the strategies, as the strategy has succeeded in capturing the attention of and engaged the users (Paper I: 119). Funny and cute figures are used in advertising to capture the attention of users, particularly children, and the results of the present thesis indicate that these strategies can have their intended outcome. Hence, engagement with advertising as entertainment could as well be seen as involving a non-tactical dimension where children succumb to adults' pressures online (Livingstone, 2009: 32). In line with this, children's engagement with advertising as entertainment could be understood as a form of "affective labor." Papacharissi (2015) writes: "It [advertising] directs audiences to produce particular affects that might align with the advertised product. The affective labor that audiences produce is not compensated and is further employed to add to the affective and material value of the advertised object" (p. 21). One can also argue that there does not have to be an opposition between being active and being influenced, as discussed by Buckingham and Tingstad (2010): "it is entirely possible that children (or indeed adults) might be active and sophisticated readers of media, but might nevertheless still be influenced – or indeed that an *illusion* of autonomy might be one of the pre-requisites of contemporary consumer culture" (p. 5). In the last part of this quotation the authors propose that an illusion of autonomy might be fundamental to consumer culture. In light of this, it can be argued that strategies strive for producing certain kinds of tactics that are in line with the intentions of strategies, and make the user feel that these are independent and voluntary practices.

In the survey study by Andersen et al. (2008) they state that "less than one eighth of tweens reported that sometimes pop up commercials on internet were funny" (p. 197). Apart from this general statement, previous research on children and online advertising has not focused on how children engage with online advertising as entertainment. As described above, research has primarily stressed children's negative views of advertising in the online environment. The present thesis thus adds to our understanding of children's online advertising engagement by showing how advertising online also can be engaged with as entertainment, and that children mainly find cute and funny figures, and advertising jingles, entertaining. These findings may reflect changes that online advertising has undergone in more recent years, where banner and video advertisements probably utilize more sophisticated and attention-grabbing techniques based on entertainment.

Previous research on children and television advertising, as discussed in the literature review, has shown how children sometimes find television advertising entertaining, particularly advertising jingles that they sing along with (Bartholomew & O'Donohoe, 2003: 445; Buckingham, 1993: 258; Lawlor, 2009). Buckingham (1993: 259) finds that children's engagement with television advertising as entertainment is disconnected form the actual product advertised, while Andersen (2011: 63–66) puts forward how children need product relevance to find advertising

relevant and interesting. The results of the present thesis suggest something in the middle; the children engaged with advertising as entertainment irrespective of the product or service advertised. However, they also sometimes mentioned child-relevant products, such as mobile phones, when discussing entertaining advertisements.

4.1.3 Online advertising as information

As discussed above, the children mostly viewed advertising online as an "intruder," but also as entertainment that sometimes could provide interesting media content. In addition to this, children expressed how advertisements sometimes were attended to as information on products they found relevant. In the study of 2011 the children described products they had seen in online advertisements, such as computer games, toys and clothes, that they wanted to purchase. Some of the children stated how they only had expressed their desires to buy these products, while some of the children said that they had bought the products (Paper I: 118). In the study of 2015, the children revealed how they sometimes watched advertisements in mobile games to find information on new games to play (Paper II: 15), particularly "free-to-play" games. When asked if they had pressed advertisements, one 9-year-old boy said: "I did it the other day when I wanted a game that I like, and then my little brother also played it." Hence, advertising can be thought of as a vehicle in the commercial app ecology that promotes further game play in a commercial environment.

In paper II I discuss how engagement with advertising as information can be understood as non-tactical engagement, as the main aim of advertising, to result in consumption, is fulfilled. However, the findings also indicate that engagement with advertising as information involves a tactical component. The children described how they selectively choose to press on adverts with games that they found relevant. In light of this, the children can be said to introduce some form of difference in the overall web of strategies, adapting the online environment to their own interests and needs.

Engagement with advertising as information was described mostly in positive terms by the children, but some children also expressed how they felt that the frequent appearance of adverts for particular games finally convinced them to play these games, thus expressing a negative sense of being persuaded. One 12-year-old girl said:

> There are some adverts where you think "this looks fun," and when you have seen it like 20 times, you just: "Oh, okay, I'll download it then." Then you download it and try it, and very rarely it's fun.

Some children were also suspicious and critical to advertising as a source of information; they argued, for instance, that game apps can steal personal data such as

credit card information, and that games automatically can steal money from the bank account connected to the iPad. Children also brought up how games found in advertising can result in exaggerated and addictive game play, and that new games can create addiction to in-app purchases, hence evoking the idea of the "problem gamer" and game play as risk (Harvey, 2015: 89–98). Children also criticized the fact that adverts do not always show if games have to be paid for, and stressed that adverts should clearly indicate the price. These normative statements can also be seen as part of children's moral economy (Thompson, 1971).

Engagement with advertising as information has not gained the same attention in previous research as engagement with advertising as entertainment, or children's negative views of advertising. However, in line with the results of the present thesis, Saunders-Uchoa-Craveiro and Araújo Cysne Rios (2013: 507) discuss how children used advertising on gaming websites as a source of information, primarily regarding media products such as mobile phones and video games. Some of these children expressed their desires for these products and had also made purchases. In relation to television advertising, Buckingham (1993: 247, 254) also discusses how children had bought products seen in advertisements and said that they had asked their parents for the advertised products. However, as stated above, both Buckingham (1993: 251–252) and Bartholomew and O'Donohoe (2003: 447) describe how children accentuated that they themselves were not influenced by television advertising, while emphasizing how other persons are affected. In contrast to this, children interviewed in the present thesis described how they sometimes felt persuaded by advertisements, and rarely discussed how advertising affects other people.

4.2 Children's virtual worlds as commercial spaces

Virtual worlds for children, as discussed in the introductory chapter, have been identified as part of the new digital marketing "ecosystem" (Montgomery, 2012), and have been described as the latest commercialization of children's culture (Wasko, 2010: 113). In light of this, it was considered relevant to include an analysis of this particular online space within the present thesis. The main research question for paper III concerned opportunities for participation in children's virtual worlds and how participation is constrained by the commercial strategies. This focus highlights, just as papers I and II discussed above, how the revenue models of commercial online media in different ways have consequences for and structure media usage.

The results of paper III show how participation in Habbo Hotel was structured for commercial purposes; the main strategy was to attract and keep users within the virtual world by making available some parts of the virtual world for free and then promoting VIP membership and virtual goods to the users. Habbo Hotel mainly provided opportunities for social participation as the chat function was free to use in

the virtual world (Paper III: 718). Hence, making available possibilities for social interaction in the chat can be seen as a way to attract users in an online environment that to a large extent is based on a culture of "free content" (Dijck, 2013: 40).

The observations of the virtual world revealed that the user was constantly presented with promotional messages that aimed to make the user aware of the benefits of paying for VIP membership and virtual goods. These messages can be defined as advertising, as they are mediated messages with a persuasive goal that promotes a product, service or brand (Bucy et al., 2011: 1253). Showing the benefits of purchasing VIP membership, these advertising messages also functioned as constant reminders of the constraints put on the users who do not pay in the virtual world. Advertising messages that seemed to be intended only for VIP users were shown also to non-VIP members to raise awareness and create interest in paying for membership. One message, for instance, said: "BONUS: Always bet on black! This one's for VIP users! Change your clothes color: Nothing's more stylish than black. Change your top, pants/skirt, and shoes to black" (Paper III: 711). Other messages contrasted non-paying members with VIP members to show the benefits of purchasing membership: "Love in the hair. Your hair looks a little ragged; time for a change. Hair extensions for VIP or short hair for everyone" (ibid.: 711).

Strategies that aimed to make the user pay on the site commonly involved the clothes and appearance of the avatar. By limiting the colors on the free-to-use clothes (where non-paying users for instance could get dressed only in muted colors) and style of hair and accessories it could be clearly signaled in the virtual world who had paid for VIP membership and who had not. The avatars' possibilities to communicate through body language was also limited; through body language the figure could freely communicate, for instance, by dancing and sitting, while VIP membership was needed to blow kisses or to laugh (Paper III: 710). To accentuate for non-paying members that VIPs had more communicative possibilities, one advertising message said: "Get a VIP to laugh next to you! Stand beside a VIP Habbo and tell a joke or a funny story. You can also just ask them to laugh – as simple as that" (Paper III: 711). Research has shown how engaging with the avatar is one of children's favorite activities when playing in virtual worlds (Tuukkanen et al., 2010: 3), and that virtual goods can have the same function as non-virtual goods, such as signaling status (Lehdonvirta et al., 2009: 1073). Hence, it can be argued that by structuring media usage in this manner, the producer strategically takes advantage of children's interest in using the avatar and children's need to gain status in the peer group.

Paper III draws on Carpentier's (2011: 130–131) theoretical framework on media and participation, where participation is defined as co-deciding on/with, for instance, technology, content and people. Based on this I argue that the users had possibilities for social participation, as they could produce (co-decide on) media content in the chat. In contrast to this, there were limitations regarding how users could co-decide on other forms of media content in the virtual world. First, the virtual goods are created by the producer, and the user could mainly choose between predefined sets of

goods. Second, to be able to engage with the virtual goods the user mainly had to purchase these objects from the shop. The user could also obtain virtual objects by other means, for instance, through gifts, and this can be seen as a way to maintain the interest of the user in being part of the virtual world. With regard to games, the main way for the user to "create" games was by putting together pre-defined games (Paper III: 712). Based on these observations I conclude that participation in the virtual world primarily took minimalist forms, and that usage mostly can be characterized as interaction and consumption. In light of this, I also propose that the virtual world Habbo Hotel could be thought of as a panopticon-like shopping mall (Paper III: 697).

There were also other forms of advertising and marketing practices that surfaced in the virtual world, such as third-party advertising and events that promoted commercial games and artists. These forms of advertising were only observed in the English language version of the virtual world. The English version had a janus-faced mix between advertising for non-commercial youth and charity organizations, and advertising for commercial games such as Sims 3 (see screenshot in paper III: 714). By integrating these different forms of advertising the producer Sulake aimed both to help children in their everyday lives, and at the same time to persuade children to buy products and in this way monetize their participation in the media. A special room was created to promote the game Sims 3 where the player could participate in a small game. At the end of the game the user was invited to participate in an interview, and was asked in this interview about the user's home country. This can be seen as commercial surveillance, as information about country probably was of some value for the producer. Other forms of commercial surveillance were observed in the virtual world, such as the "Habbo Research lab" where users could participate in chat conversations with the producers. Sulake has also conducted large surveys with users to find out about children's consumption habits, and sell this information to advertisers (Paper III: 715).

Another aim of paper III was to analyze how the users engage tactically with the commercial strategies in the virtual world. By analyzing conversations in the chat and various events in the virtual world it was possible to identify practices that produced difference (Certeau, 1984: xiii) with regard to the interests of the producer, namely, to make users pay for virtual goods and VIP membership, and to create positive attitudes to Habbo Hotel. One form of tactics was the links to YouTube videos and blogs that users posted in the chat bubbles. Through these links the young people showed photos of themselves and how they, for instance, played the guitar (Paper III: 715–716). As described above, the self-expressive possibilities of the avatar were limited to make the user purchase VIP membership and in this way access more unique clothes and hair-style. By linking to other online platforms, in the free-to-use chat, the users could bypass these commercial limitations and expressed themselves by other means, without paying for it. Another tactic was the common activity in the chat bubbles to beg other users for VIP membership and virtual objects, and in this

way obtain the desired items without paying for them. This has been conceptualized as a "practice of begging" (Paper III: 716), and can be seen as a potential negative consequence of the revenue model. An example of this "practice of begging" is shown in the following chat-dialogue between two avatars:

> Black: plz get me it. [plz = please]
>
> Rabbit: why dont you buy credits and not take other peoples money.
>
> Black: hey, can u plz buy vip for me?
>
> (Paper III: 716).

Tactics could also be identified during promotional events in the virtual world; on one occasion the artist Cher Lloyd chatted with the users in a special room to promote her latest single. However, this promotional event resulted in chaos and collapsed, as there were too many chat bubbles at the same time, and as the chat flow went too fast. Hence, the users could not engage in a meaningful conversation with the artist and started to blame the producer for the failed event: "Just cause HABBO is poo! Don't mean we shouldn't be grateful for Cher trying to do something for fans!," "Cer [sic] don't go on Habbo again, go on twitter its so much easier," "WASTE OF TIME." These tactics were represented symbolically in the chat, and hence, were not "hidden" and "unsymbolized" as suggested by de Certeau (1984: xvii; xii).

Paper III also includes an analysis of how the producer Sulake represented the virtual world. Comparing the producer's representation of Habbo Hotel, as for instance on their website, with their actual practices in the virtual world, it became evident that Sulake painted an idealized picture of the platform in order to sell it to parents, users and advertisers. Habbo hotel was described solely in positive terms as a virtual world where children in a safe environment can socialize with friends, express themselves, and be creative in a world built entirely on user-generated content (Paper III: 706–709). In addition to this, economic transactions were described as learning opportunities for the children. In these descriptions the virtual worlds was depicted as full of opportunities while the constraints were left out of the discourse, and, clearly, the begging practices that were common in the virtual world were not mentioned. The idea that the virtual world is based solely on user-generated content is an idea the producer wanted to maintain, to downplay their own strategic role, and to connect to the positive connotations of the "democratic" and "user-produced" web 2.0 (Paper III: 709). In the Twitter interview the producer strived to maintain this discourse by emphasizing the role of the users, but at the same time also revealed that Habbo is not made up exclusively of user-generated content. When asked if any of the popular rooms were created by Sulake, the designer responded: "Some are, some not. I'd love

to see the user-generated rooms being more popular than ours. It's all about you – not us. :)" (Paper III: 707).

Previous research on opportunities for participation in children's virtual worlds has shown that these spaces provide opportunities for civic and social participation (Lund, 2013; Tuukkanen et al., 2010). The results of the present thesis also show, in line with this, how Habbo Hotel provided participatory opportunities, primarily social participation in the chat. However, and in line with Grimes (2015), the results also show how participation was constrained and structured in different ways for commercial purposes. Through the constant promotion of VIP membership, sale of virtual goods, and other promotional activities, this virtual world, like other commercial virtual worlds (Grimes, 2015; Wasko, 2010) can be said to reinforce consumer ideology. The interpretation proposed by Ruckenstein (2011) that Habbo Hotel is a child-friendly environment and that the producer takes care of children's interests, can be questioned in light of the results of the present thesis.

4.3 Online advertising producers: Self-representation and audience constructions

As discussed in the introductory chapter, there are contradictions in the Swedish regulatory framework when it comes to children and advertising. The law is not media-neutral, as child-directed television advertising is banned to children below the age of 12 in television channels broadcasting from Sweden, while there is no ban on child-directed online advertising. Hence, Swedish marketers and advertising agency practitioners, with the advent of the internet, have been given new and rather unrestricted possibilities to advertise to children. These practices take place in a society with a strong view on child-directed advertising, manifesting itself in, for instance, the legal ban on child-directed television advertising. This complex situation prompts the question of how Swedish producers of child-directed online advertising represent themselves, their practices, and the child audience in this context.

In the literature review chapter I stated that it is surprising that this group of media producers to a large extent are neglected in previous research, considering the importance given, and research effort put into, audience research on children and advertising. By directing attention to producers of child-directed online advertising this thesis contributes to the development of a production perspective on children and advertising. In the following, the results of papers IV and V are presented and discussed in relation to previous research.

4.3.1 "We don't advertise to children"

Paper IV focuses on how Swedish producers of child-directed online advertising represent themselves and their practices, and how these discursive constructions are used for legitimizing purposes. Using the discourse theoretical perspective developed by Potter and Wetherell (1987; 1992) and Wetherell (1998; 2007), as well as Caldwell's (2008; 2014) approach to production research and the idea of the cross-cultural interface, the paper, more specifically, focuses on the subject positions the producers adopted and refuted during the research interview, and the interpretative repertoires they drew on to legitimize their work.

The results show that all producers with various strategies either refuted or distanced themselves from the subject position "producer of child-directed online advertising" (Paper IV: 8). The wish to avoid being associated with this practice, was, as discussed in the method chapter, evident during the recruitment process, and surfaced in all interviews in different ways. By way of example, one Art director who distanced himself from advertising to children said: "There are lots of people who'll do pretty much anything for money. Like … make war games for kids, advertise to kids … There are many ways to take advantage of the fact they are kids, but I've never liked it." One Marketing manager who refuted his and his corporation's engagement in advertising to children said: "We don't aim our advertising at kids, at least not intentionally or directly … But the answer to your question is: 'No, we don't advertise to children.'" When refuting or distancing themselves from the subject position as producer of child-directed advertising the producers had different strategies for arguing what they did instead, that is, different ways of justifying and legitimizing their practices.

One argument put forward by the producers was that their advertisements – both banners and advergames – were directed to *parents as gatekeepers* (Paper IV: 9–10). The producers argued that they did not target children directly, but that parents decide whether to let the children, for instance, play the advergame. By constructing the parent as gatekeeper the producers in this way portrayed themselves as responsible producers. However, by placing the responsibility on parents they also evaded their own responsibilities in the communication process. Another common way to distance themselves from the subject position of targeting children, and to legitimize their practices, was to argue that their advertisements were not directed *exclusively* to children, but to the family, or to children *and* parents as a dual target audience (Paper IV: 10–11). Thus, targeting both children and parents, or the family, was constructed as the opposite of targeting children. This argumentation did not take into account the appeal of the message, or media placement, but had to do with the audience they claimed they had in mind when producing the advert. Other producers argued that their adverts surfacing on Spela.se and Spelo.se were not targeted *intentionally* to children, and that they were unaware that their adverts surfaced on these websites (Paper IV: 11–12). The producers described how the automatic process of Google's

advertising service Google AdWords made it difficult for them to know and control where their adverts were shown. One producer also mentioned that this advertising service does not target individuals based on age but on interests (analyzed from, for instance, search history). This claimed "lack of control" regarding where adverts are shown contrasts to advertising in other media, for instance on television, where advertisers, presumably, are aware of which channels or magazines they advertise in. This lack of control, due to new advertising services, is worth reflecting on as many websites used by children utilize Google AdWords (Cai & Zhao, 2013).

The producers also evaded the subject position as producers of child-directed advertising by downplaying the promotional dimension of branded entertainment (such as advergames) (Paper IV: 12–14). Branded entertainment was described as something that is beneficial to children and children's development, while other dimensions, such as the persuasive dimensions, were omitted from their discourse. Branded entertainment was described as, for example, "entertaining and educative games," "pedagogical games," and as "a safe place" (Paper IV: 13, Figure 1). By accentuating this, the producers positioned themselves as educators and producers of entertainment, and not as marketers or advertising agency practitioners. This discourse resembles how Habbo Hotel was described by Sulake, discussed above, where the commercial virtual world was portrayed as providing learning opportunities and a safe space for the children. This suggests that commercial media producers have a tendency to downplay their profit motives, and strive to present their practices using concepts that have positive connotations among the wider public, such as learning and safety. This can be seen as part of a marketing strategy, which aims to gain the confidence of, above all, parents, and perhaps also regulators.

As discussed in the introduction, new advertising strategies, such as advergames, have been developed in order to bypass the well-known skepticism toward advertising that exists among media users (Cicchirillo, 2014: 85; Faber et al., 2012: 20). The results of paper IV show how this advertising strategy online is also accompanied by a rhetorical practice among advertising producers, where they discursively construct branded entertainment as something other than advertising. This discourse can be seen as part of a general strategy to sustain the idea that marketing practices are solely to the benefit of media users, and erase the idea that advertisers and media users may have divergent interests. To downplay the marketing dimension of branded entertainment also functions, in this context, to legitimize and justify their practices, as it is difficult to argue against the benefits of "pedagogical games." Hence, in light of this, these ways of representing themselves and their practices can be said to serve industry interests, and to protect their own and their corporations' reputation.

In contrast to the ways in which the producers represented their own practices, child-directed television advertising was portrayed as questionable and immoral media content (Paper IV: 13). Child-directed television advertising was constructed as, for instance, "immoral," "dubious," and "not okay" and in addition to this, children were described as "very influenced" by this media content (Paper IV: 13, Figure 1). In this

way the producers equated the illegal (television advertising to children) with the immoral (see also Drumwright & Murphy, 2004: 12). By describing child-directed television advertising in negative terms the producers can be said to locate possible problematic aspects elsewhere, and to construct their own work as unproblematic. This also suggests that the Swedish broadcast law that bans television advertising to children below the age of 12 establishes norms regarding which types of advertising are considered problematic and which are not. However, it is difficult to conclude whether this is specific to the Swedish cultural context, or a wider phenomenon, as, to my knowledge, there are no previous in-depth studies on this topic (on cultural context, see further discussion below in 4.3.2).

In paper IV I also analyze what interpretative repertoires (Potter & Wetherell, 1987: 149; Wetherell, 1998: 400–401) the producers drew on when legitimizing their practices. The results show how two interpretative repertoires were drawn on by the producers to evade and distance themselves from the position as producers of child-directed advertising, and to legitimize their practices: the "critical repertoire" and the "strategist repertoire" (Paper IV: 14–17). In the critical repertoire the producers positioned themselves as critics of child-directed advertising, thus constructing themselves as morally responsible economic actors. Commonly used terms in this repertoire were concepts such as "expose" and "take advantage of," and child-directed advertising was constructed as problematic with reference to, for instance, children's undeveloped advertising literacy. Drawing on the strategist repertoire, which in contrast to the critical repertoire is based on instrumental reason (Svensson, 2007: 284), the producers represented themselves as strategic economic actors, and argued that they did not advertise to children as this is not strategically the best option, because, for instance, parents make the purchase decisions. Modal verbs such as "shall" and "must" were commonly used in this repertoire, as well as war and hunting metaphors. One Account director said: "It is more commercially important to *attack* the parents."

As already stated, there is, to my knowledge, no previous research on producers of child-directed online advertising and their self-representational practices. However, when comparing the results of paper IV with research on advertising producers more in general, some interesting reflections can be made. First, previous research on advertising and ethics shows that advertising agency practitioners tend not to prioritize ethical reflection (Drumwright & Murphy, 2004) and that economic motives are prioritized (Larsson, 2006). This thesis shows how the advertising producers distanced themselves from child-directed advertising based on both moral and strategic/economic grounds. Yet, both ways of arguing have justifying and legitimizing functions, and, hence, ultimately serve economic interests. Drumwright and Murphy (2004: 11–12) also discuss how advertising practitioners engage in different rationalizations, such as "passing the buck," that is, arguing that other agents, such as parents, have to take responsibility for negative effects. This could also

be seen in the present study, where the producers argued that parents act as gatekeepers between the advert and the child.

Previous research on marketers and advertising practitioners has also shown how these professionals construct their identities by positioning themselves against other groups in the industry (Alvesson, 1994; Galli, 2012; Hackley & Kover, 2007). Paper IV has shown how the advertising producers constructed their identities by positioning themselves and by creating boundaries, not in relation to other agents in the industry, but to advertising practices they did not want to be associated with. Research has also shown how producers have different ways of relating to the commercial dimension of advertising; Hackley and Kover (2007) show how creatives distance themselves from the commercial aspects of advertising; while Svensson (2007) shows how marketers mainly position themselves within a narrative of instrumental reason. The results of the present thesis also show different ways of relating to the commercial. Some producers argued based on commercial logics, while others downplayed the commercial dimensions, for instance by criticizing child-directed advertising, or by downplaying the promotional aspects of branded entertainment. In addition to this, Galli (2012) discusses how societal recognition is important for advertising producers. The results of the present thesis seem to confirm this, as the producers commonly tapped into the public discourse on children and advertising, which can be seen as a way to gain recognition in the interview situation, and, hence, from the surrounding society.

4.3.2 The child advertising audience: Between vulnerable and competent

Paper V of this thesis analyzes how Swedish producers of child-directed online advertising construct children as an advertising audience, and how these audience constructions can be understood as shaped by cultural context and industry interests. This paper questions previous research which argues that marketers are bound to construct children as competent consumers that are not easily influenced by advertising, in order to legitimize marketing to children (e.g. Buckingham, 2011: 21). This idea has been conceptualized as "a marketers' logic" (Paper V: 613). As previous research has primarily been done in an Anglo-American context, this paper contributes to the understanding of how marketers construct children across different cultural contexts.

The results show how the producers constructed an ambivalent and multifaceted image of children, combining the idea of the "vulnerable and incompetent" child that is easily affected by advertising with the idea of the "competent and dependent" child who is skillful in their dealings with advertising, but dependent on the family. Producers who positioned themselves within the public view of advertising, and, hence, drew on the critical repertoire, tended to construct children as vulnerable. One Account manager stated: "Children believe what one says, they take it [advertising] as

information, I think. They are more easily influenced than adults, of course." Children were also constructed as "uncritical" and "unfiltered," and as lacking the capacity to distinguish between different messages. These producers accentuated the negative effects of advertising, such as children's "nagging" at their parents, and discussed how the commercial world and consumer society can have problematic consequences for children, such as increasing stress (Paper V: 617).

However, these constructions were commonly made in relation to advertising in general or in relation to television advertising. When asked about the potential effects of their own advertisements on children, producers of branded entertainment constructed children as less affected. This is conceptualized as *the producer version of the third person effect* (Paper V: 620). The producers stated that their own adverts probably had very little effect on children, had a positive effect, or simply stated that they did not have any idea about the potential effects. One Art director said: "I believe that it [the advergame] passed by very quickly. It was like a mayfly, like a Popsicle, a 'goodbye, next,' that you don't even remember the taste of, so, no, there were no major effects I believe." This contrasts with how the same person spoke about advertising in general: "The effects [of advertising] can stress them [children] out. The most important risk is that they get stressed, and that they enter consumer society too early." In addition to this, it was also evident that producers constructed children as more competent when they spoke about their own kids (Paper V: 620).

Other producers, who mainly positioned themselves as strategic economic actors, thus drawing on the "strategist repertoire," described children as a competent advertising audience. One advertising agency CEO said: "I think that children, of course they have different perspectives and experiences, but children are extremely skilled when it comes to understanding what advertising is" (Paper V: 622). However, while children were described as a competent advertising audience by these producers, children were at the same time constructed as dependent consumers, that is, they were depicted as having little money of their own to spend, and that parents make the purchase decisions. Thus, children were defined as an "influence" market, and not as a "primary market." This contrasts with how children are commonly described in the literature on "tweens" (around 8–12-year-olds), where they are seen as having their own spending power (Valkenburg, 2004: 83–84). In the paper I also show how some producers "collapsed" the idea of children as a special audience by arguing that children and adults are equally affected by advertising. By erasing the idea of the competent "standard adult," children appear less vulnerable and incompetent. Similar critique toward the idea that children are more susceptible to media effects than adults is also found in academic writing (e.g. Buckingham, 2000: 166; Potter, 2003: 70).

The results of paper V, showing that the idea of the vulnerable and incompetent child exists among Swedish producers, question the existence of a "marketers' logic" and suggest that marketers in their discourse can operate according to different logics. In the paper I propose that this difference with regard to previous research can be

explained by the Swedish cultural context, where the ban on child-directed television advertising makes it highly controversial to be associated with the practice of advertising to children, and that producers therefore position themselves as critics to adapt to the public view on child-directed advertising.

In addition to this, I also argue that the different audience constructions existing among the producers can be understood as shaped by industry interests. By constructing children as "vulnerable and incompetent" and "competent and dependent" the producers avoided being associated with a practice that might have a damaging effect on their self-image and their corporations. These constructions can, thus, be seen as strategies for protecting their own image and the corporate reputation. As employees in private corporations, these producers had to carefully consider what information to share within the research interview. Like other elite interviewees, these producers also had a goal with the interview, and one important part of this is to justify their work (Berry, 2002: 680). In another context, these producers would probably have constructed children differently. It is therefore relevant to highlight the importance of the actual interview situation – which can be seen as an encounter between the public and the private – for understanding the producers' self-representation and audience constructions.

As described in the literature review chapter, Buckingham et al.'s (1999) and Lemish's (2010: 107) studies on television producers stress the dominance of the view of children as active and powerful media consumers. The findings in this thesis show a somewhat different picture, where the idea of the vulnerable child had a central position among the producers. Pettersson's (2013) doctoral thesis on the imagined child audience in Swedish public service television shows how children are constructed as both competent and vulnerable, and that the image of the competent child gained more prominence in the later years of the studied material. The present thesis also shows, in line with this, how these two constructions of children were present among marketers and advertising agency professionals. However, as stated above, the present thesis highlights the importance of the idea of the vulnerable child among producers. Pettersson (ibid.: 216) also discusses how education and learning are important parts of the representation of children in public service television. As discussed previously, the present thesis shows how commercial media producers also tap into this discourse on children and learning. Hence, both public service and commercial media producers accentuate the importance of providing children with learning opportunities. However, important differences regarding the motives behind this discourse should be acknowledged here; while public service can be said to primarily consider children's needs, commercial media producers, although they may also have a genuine interest in children's well-being, primarily use these constructions to further economic interests.

The findings in the present thesis also show interesting similarities with Sjöberg's (2013) study on how children are represented in relation to consumption. Sjöberg found that children in magazine and newspaper advertisements were constructed as

part of the family and not regarded as agents in their own right (ibid.: 316). The idea of children as dependent on the family was also found in the interviews with the advertising producers. This contrasts with the view of the child as an independent agent, a view that has gained strength in the Nordic countries in the post-war welfare state (Sandin, 2012: 128). It is remarkable to see how fairly traditional views on children are present in the commercial world. Sjöberg (2013: 319–320) also finds traditional viewpoints in the representation of children in children's magazines, where traditional gender stereotypes were promoted. Sjöberg concludes that the representation of children in the advertisements is ambivalent "as it simultaneously and ambiguously represents children as both vulnerable and competent, as well as competent and incompetent" (ibid.: 316). The results of the present study are in line with these results, and this shows how advertising producers in both images and speech represent children in complex and ambivalent ways.

5 Conclusion

The overall goal of this thesis has been to contribute to a critical understanding of children's commercial online environment as spaces for children's everyday life activities and participation, and as spaces for powerful commercial interests that seek to target children online and monetize their internet usage. The thesis mainly contributes to such a critical understanding by focusing on the perspectives of the social actors connected to this environment – the child internet users and the commercial media producers – although the thesis also includes a more textually oriented study on children's virtual worlds. Hence, the present thesis has primarily focused on the subjective dimensions of consumer culture, as well the "subjective form" of online advertising (Johnson, 1986/87; Turow & McAllister, 2009: 4). The combination of audience research, media production research, and textual analysis in the form of online observations and document analysis, has enabled a multifaceted understanding of how the different actors relate to this environment, and also enables a discussion of how the child internet users and the commercial media producers discursively position themselves in the power relationship that exists between them.

This thesis has shown how the interviewed advertising producers discursively opted out of and evaded this power relationship. Power is here defined in relation to de Certeau's idea of the proper place and the power to produce presence and visibility in children's everyday lives, which is also connected to economic power (Certeau, 1984; Hackley, 2002: 223; Thompson, 2005: 50). The professionals that in different ways have been involved in producing advertisements that surfaced on websites popular among children, and child-directed branded entertainment on corporate websites, did not want to be associated with the practice of advertising to children. Hence, they denied the existence of a calculative strategy targeting children and instead positioned themselves as communicating to parents, parents *and* children, the family and as rather different types of social actors: educators and entertainment providers. Similar positioning was found in the discourse of Sulake on Habbo Hotel where the virtual world was described as a safe place with learning opportunities. Advertising producers also positioned themselves as critics through their audience constructions, where constructions of children as vulnerable were common among the producers, and in this way they distanced themselves from the practice of advertising to children. Through these discursive constructions the producers portrayed their practices in a favorable light and downplayed aspects that might be considered problematic by the surrounding society. These constructions thus served legitimizing

and justifying purposes. This discursive positioning, and the will to evade the power relationship between themselves and the children, also sustains the idea that there are no power relationships in the commercial online environment. Denying one's own power can be seen as an effective means to maintain power, by avoiding the risk of being questioned.

One potential consequence of the advertising producers' self-representation is that it might hinder a dialogue between the industry and the rest of society, such as policy-makers, and might also hinder self-reflection in the production process. If no producer wants to be associated with the practice of advertising to children it can be difficult to pursue a constructive dialogue with the industry regarding advertising directed to children in the commercial online landscape. It is difficult to judge whether these self-representational practices were "only" rhetoric prompted by the interview situation, or whether they also were beliefs and thoughts used for internal self-justification. If these ideas were internalized beliefs, self-reflection in the production process may also be hindered. This can be considered problematic as self-reflection among media producers might contribute to less deceptive marketing practices. As discussed by Larsson (2006), advertising producers prioritize economic motives before esthetic and moral issues, as moral issues cannot be prioritized in a competitive market. Hence, wider structural constraints also play a role when it comes to possibilities for self-reflection in advertising production.

As shown in this thesis, the producers had different ways of defining and representing the concept of advertising and what constitutes child-directed advertising. The marketing dimension of branded entertainment, such as advergames, was downplayed and some producers did not want to associate it with advertising or marketing at all. Child-directed advertising was also narrowly defined as a message where no mental consideration had been paid to parents or the family, and the producers did not include media placement, product relevance or appeal in their definition of what is "child-directed." These representational practices can be seen as part of a power struggle; there are commercial interests involved in promoting a narrow definition of advertising, as this concept is loaded with negative connotations, and as new marketing practices, such as advergames, precisely aim at bypassing media users' ad-skepticism (Cicchirillo, 2014: 85). To narrow the concept of "child-directed advertising" so that it does not seem to exist at all can also be seen as a strategy to avoid being associated with a morally charged practice. In this way potential regulation on child-directed advertising also seems less relevant. Based on the results it is evident that there is a need for a critical discussion regarding the concept of advertising and the concept of child-directed advertising. This critical discussion ought to include not only academia and policy-makers, but advertising producers also need to engage in such a critical and self-reflective discussion. The present thesis could be used as a starting point for such a discussion within the industry. In this way, producers' critical media reflection and media literacy can also be improved. As

became evident in the interview study, some of the producers seemed to appreciate such a critical reflection.

In the introduction I positioned the producer-oriented papers within the field of media production studies, and more specifically in the cultural studies approach to media production, which focuses on, among other things, media producers' ideas, viewpoints and self-representation (Hesmondhalgh, 2010: 148; Mayer et al., 2009: 4). The present thesis adds to our understanding of how media producers represent themselves in "cross-cultural interfaces" (Caldwell, 2014), their discursive strategies for legitimizing their practices, and how power positions are evaded. This focus on representation does not tell us much about actual processes of media production, but the results are valuable as they reveal how these producers relate to the surrounding society, how they understand themselves and their practices in relation to the wider public, and how they prefer to construct their arguments. This thesis also adds to our understanding of media producers' constructed audiences, particularly how the image of the audience is used for strategic purposes, and also, which has been largely neglected in previous research, how constructed audiences are shaped by cultural context. Future research could further explore commercial media producers' self-representation and legitimizing strategies, and how producers in different cultural contexts construct their audiences. Future studies could also try to get insight into processes of advertising production, and investigate how experts on children's development, such as psychologists and teachers, are incorporated in the production of online advertising, to see how these social actors contribute to shaping commercial media content and in this way support commercial interests online.

The interviewed children had different ways of engaging with advertising in their everyday lives. On the one hand, children's different forms of tactics, can, in line with Bartholomew and O'Donohoe (2003), be seen as ways for children to demonstrate their agency and power. The children produced difference in relation to the strategies in various ways, through avoidance, critique, laughter, and by making selections and transformations in the mediated material. In this way the children carved out their own lived spaces within consumer culture and adapted the commercial environment to their own interests and their own purposes. However, in contrast to this, the children in the interviews also positioned themselves as targets of powerful strategies, by expressing a sense of deception in-the-hand, a sense of resignation, and moments of enforcement and confrontation. Using modal verbs which express obligation (such as "must" and "have to") the children communicated a subjective experience of what it is like to be targeted online by instrumental reason and calculative strategies. This shows how the commercial online environment, primarily in mobile games, is a demanding environment for children. The interviews suggest that it is not an easy task for children to adapt the commercial environment to their own interests and purposes, and that they have to struggle to make this appropriation.

The results of the thesis show, using the words of Livingstone (2009), how "[c]hildren creatively resist some adult pressures but at the same time they succumb to

others" (p. 32). The children did not only engage tactically with the commercial strategies but they also succumbed to adult pressures and engaged non-tactically with advertising, that is, they acted in various ways in line with the purpose of the commercial strategies. Non-tactical engagement involved, for instance, moments of sitting and waiting without wanting to, feelings of being obliged to watch advertisements, and moments of resignation. This suggests that children's trajectory (Certeau, 1984: 34), or navigation, through the commercial online environment involves moments when children feel they are in charge and in control, and other moments where they feel controlled and subjected to powerful strategies.

In the introduction to this thesis I emphasized that the ways of organizing media, such as the revenue models, have implications for media content, and also for media usage and media experiences (see Hardy, 2014: 7; McAllister, 2009: 5). The results show how the revenue model based on advertising has various consequences for children's internet usage. While this revenue model makes possible free media usage in the first place, something which is attractive for children (Nairn, 2008), the revenue model also creates negative media experiences, and interferes and blocks positive media experiences that individuals seek from their internet usage. Advertising counters basic motivations for internet usage, such as relaxation and entertainment, and obstructs experiences that players seek from games, such as immersion and a sense of freedom (Cairns et al., 2014: 339; Hamlen, 2011: 537). The revenue model based on the sale of virtual goods and VIP membership also structures media usage for commercial purposes and brings about unintended consequences, such as the practice of begging found in the analysis of the virtual world Habbo Hotel. Children have few possibilities to make changes in this structure and to make a difference *on the screen*. They can only make difference based on the possibilities that are given to them by the producers. If advertisements have functional close buttons, children can press them away. If they are dysfunctional, or non-existent, the children must relate to that. In situations where children are not given possibilities to make differences on the screen they can make a difference by leaving the media device, by leaving the game app for another game or by deleting games. Hence, revenue models both enable and disable media usage in complex ways.

As also stated in the introduction, audience research in the cultural tradition has highlighted the multiplicity and creativity of audiences' meaning construction (Livingstone, 2008: 51; McQuail, 1997: 19–21). The present thesis adds to our understanding of the range of media user's practices and meaning construction, by showing the ambivalence and fluidity of children's practices in relation to online advertising. This thesis also adds to our understanding of the media as an integrated part of everyday life. Children's media-related practices and other everyday life practices were intertwined in complex ways; as described above, tactics used to avoid advertising involved going to the toilet, interacting with siblings or drinking a glass of water, but also involved other media usage, such as watching television or reading in a book. The sociologist David Beer (2012: 366) argues that we need to know more

about how mobile media creates and fills "empty spaces" in everyday life. Beer speaks of the empty spaces that emerge between the private space of the home and the public space of the city, and that mobile media is used "to fill the voids that we encounter in our routines" (ibid.: 362). I suggest that advertising contributes to creating perceived "empty spaces" in everyday life, which the children fill with offline activities, or evade through movement to other media content.

The sociologist Morgan O'Brien (2009) also highlights the relationship between experienced "empty spaces" and media usage. Drawing on de Certeau (1984), O'Brien analyzes how teenagers use mobile phones at school and in this way tactically evade the strategic control of the teacher in the classroom. When feeling bored in the classroom the children send messages to their peers, and in this way they feel that they are using time in a more meaningful way. O'Brien writes: "This 'tactical' use of the mobile phone is bound to the impulse to rescue time from the grip of the repetitive routines of school" (ibid.: 36). The results of that study, and those of the present thesis, show a similar logic; individuals share a will to escape perceived "empty" spaces (such as boring and repetitive moments) in everyday life, by either initiating or taking a pause from media usage.

In this thesis I have argued that Michel de Certeau's theory on practices in everyday life (1984) is still relevant today when analyzing media usage in a different media landscape. The focus on how individuals engage creatively with the media in order to fulfill their own goals and desires has been fruitful in the context of the present thesis. However, during the project I found that de Certeau's perspective allowed for a limited perspective on everyday life practices. The idea that everyday practices are tactical in nature, that is, that they are based on difference rather than similarity with the strategies (ibid.: xiii, xxii) is not fully supported by the results of the present thesis. As indicated in the interviews, individuals also create sameness with the strategies in different ways, by not opposing the strategies and by resigning to the pressure of the structure. Hence, audience research should be sensitive to media users' creativity and possibilities for agency, but take into account how the structure of the media has consequences for and shapes media usage in different ways. The focus on how users oscillate between tactical and non-tactical engagement might be a fruitful topic for future studies. This includes not only analyzing the dialectical movement between tactics and non-tactics, but how one media-related practice can involve different layers of both tactical and non-tactical engagement. In this thesis I have pointed to, for instance, how non-tactical bodily practices (such as sitting still without wanting to) are combined with tactical "mental" practices – "tactics of the mind" (such as critique).

The results of the present thesis also indicate some relevant topics for future research on children and online advertising, and children's virtual worlds. This thesis has provided deeper insights into children's engagement with advertising on the internet, for instance children's haptic struggle with advertisements on the touchscreen and children's non-tactical engagement with advertising. I have touched

upon different online spaces but primarily focused on children's engagement with advertising in mobile games. Future research could further explore children's engagement with advertising in different online spaces, and how children experience deception and resignation in relation to various forms of advertising in the online landscape. To gain better insights into what marketing strategies are used in the app ecology, textual analysis of this environment is much needed. This also includes further analysis of how the revenue model based on the sale of virtual goods affects children's media usage, and what psychological mechanisms producers calculate with to make children pay for media content. To further understand children's views of advertising in the online landscape, future research could also look deeper into children's "moral economy," that is, what they consider fair and unfair marketing practices.

6 Policy and regulatory implications

One purpose of this thesis has been to produce knowledge that can be used to inform policy and regulatory development, and in this way contribute to improving the commercial online environment so that it better serves the interests of children and children's well-being. As discussed in the literature review chapter, online advertising has been categorized as one of the risks of internet usage (Livingstone, 2009: 159), and previous research has also to a large extent been framed within a risk perspective (for instance research on advertising for unhealthy food). I did not have a predefined focus from the start as to what is problematic about online advertising, but wanted primarily to hear children's own perspectives. By giving room for children's views of advertising online, this thesis, in line with the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, acknowledges children's rights to express their views on matters that concern them (CRC, 1989, article 12). By giving space to children's own voices it has been possible to discern what they considered problematic and bothering about advertising on the internet.

Based on the results of the interviews, there were some aspects of online advertising that the children found particularly disturbing. First, children found commercials in digital games particularly bothersome, and above all surprise-based advertising strategies that they did not have the chance to avoid, as well as advertisements that put them in a forced-exposure mode. Based on children's own moral economy (Thompson, 1971) advertising should not "lure" people to press/click on them, one should be able to take away adverts, and the price should be included in advertisements in order to provide relevant information. Considering this, one guiding principle is that engagement with advertising should be voluntary, that is, the user should be given the possibility to make a difference on the screen.

Hence, the results of the present thesis suggest that regulators and policy-makers should consider how to regulate these aspects of online advertising that mainly have to do with form and timing. Advertisements should facilitate avoidance tactics and not be designed to hinder or evade them, and advertising strategies based on unpredictability and deception should not be used. The long-term consequences of these advertising strategies are not known. Fontaine (2014: 5) argues that a central foundation of trust is predictability. This thesis has shown how children experience that advertising in mobile games is highly unpredictable and how they feel lured by the advertising strategies. In light of this, one potential consequence of highly intrusive in-game advertising might be less trust in adult society. From a researcher's

perspective, one can also question advertising strategies within mobile games that seek to attract attention by rewarding children with virtual objects and advantages in the games if they press adverts. Based on children's descriptions, these advertising strategies are not always considered a voluntary option in the games but something the children have to press to be able to play. In addition to this, it can be questioned whether marketing strategies in virtual worlds which take advantage of children's need to gain status in the peer group are fair marketing practices.

There exist different views regarding which is the best way to go – regulation or media education? Buckingham (2000) argues that to try to create a "safe space" for children, for instance, by banning advertising, is "to retreat into an unreal fantasy world" (p. 167). He argues that one should instead focus on media education to prepare children to deal with the commercial world. In contrast to this, Livingstone (2009: 202–206) argues that to focus solely on media literacy is to place all responsibility on the individual and not the state or the industry. This is to liberate the industry from regulation, and to disregard the structural features of the interfaces that enable or disable meaningful media usage (ibid.). I would argue that the best way forward is to combine media literacy education and regulation. Children should be provided with opportunities in school to reflect on their engagement with advertising, and get a better understanding of the revenue models of the media. Livingstone (2009: 200) asserts that media literacy includes the ability to avoid undesired media content. In light of this, children should be given opportunities to reflect upon their practices for avoiding advertising, and in what situations they sit and watch advertisements without wanting to. By doing so, children can become more aware of their engagement with advertising, and perhaps also more skilled in avoiding content they are not interested in.

However, there is also need for a better regulation of commercial practices in the online environment. As described in the introduction to this thesis, there exists no specific regulation on child-directed online advertising in Sweden. However, to protect children's interest in having a meaningful media usage it is probably insufficient to create a specific ban on child-directed online advertising. Children use websites and apps that are used by a wide demographic, and a better way forward would therefore be to regulate aspects of advertising that are particularly disturbing, and try to facilitate voluntary engagement. Existing laws do not sufficiently focus on the design and appearance of advertising in its surrounding media context, but focus more narrowly on the content of the advertisements. The Swedish Marketing Practices Act (Swedish Parliament, 2016b) regulates what is called "aggressive marketing practices" and includes some formulations that might partly cover aspects of advertising that children find disturbing. For instance, the Marketing Practices Act dictates that marketing is to be considered aggressive if it includes "harassment, coercion, physical violence, threats or other aggressive means of influence" (ibid.: 7§; my translation). It is further specified that when judging whether marketing practices are aggressive one has to take into account timing, duration and location (ibid.: 7a§).

Similar formulations exist in the EU Unfair Commercial Practices Directive (European Commission, 2016b), where it also says that in order to judge whether marketing is aggressive account must be taken of, among other things, "its timing, location, nature or persistence" (ibid.: Chapter 2, Section 2, Article 9a). These formulations might be applicable to advertising that appears frequently and in an unpredictable manner, hence, advertising that appears in front of the media user in an "aggressive" manner due to its timing and persistence. However, both the Swedish Marketing Practices Act and the EU Unfair Commercial Practices Directive only focus on consequences that are negative for consumers' possibilities to make independent economic decisions (Swedish Parliament, 2016b: 6§, 7§) and only cover harm to "consumers' economic interests" (European Commission, 2016b: 6, 7). Hence, harm to other interests, such as the media users' interest in positive media experiences, is not acknowledged in the legal regulatory framework. How advertising is integrated in the surrounding media context and how this affects media usage and experiences should be considered important, and taken into account in legal regulation of the media.

While existing legal regulation can be considered insufficient in this context, there exists one policy document with recommendations from the Nordic Consumer Ombudsmen that takes a wider grip on advertising and how it relates to the surrounding media context. This document is called "The Nordic Consumer Ombudsmen's standpoint regarding trade and marketing on the internet" (Swedish Consumer Agency, 2015a; my translation). Here it says, among other things, that 1) it should be easy to remove commercial messages, 2) methods that take away consumers' possibilities for control should not be used, and 3) marketing messages should not interrupt or interfere with editorial content, and should not cover editorial text (Swedish Consumer Agency, 2015a: 4). In a section dedicated to children and young people, the document also states that games should not be interrupted by advertising (ibid.: 7, 7.6). These policy formulations more fully acknowledge the media users' right to meaningful media usage, where advertising should be integrated in such a way that it does not obstruct the users' preferred activities. This line of thinking should be further developed in policy, and incorporated into the legal regulatory framework.

7 Sammanfattning

Denna sammanläggningsavhandling – *Barn som måltavla online: Unga internet-användare och producenter i den kommersiella mediemiljön* – handlar om barns kommersiella internetmiljö, med fokus på de sociala aktörerna kopplade till denna miljö; i detta fall barnen och medieproducenterna. Genom att kombinera publikforskning, produktionsforskning samt textanalys (observationer och dokumentanalys) bidrar avhandlingen till en kritisk förståelse av internet som en plats för barns vardagliga aktiviteter och deltagande, och som en arena för kommersiella aktörer vilka försöker påverka barn online. Två artiklar analyserar barns perspektiv, nämligen hur barn relaterar till och hanterar onlinereklam samt vilka konsekvenser reklam har för barns medieupplevelser och användning. Två artiklar fokuserar på reklamproducenterna och hur de presenterar sig själva, sina praktiker och barnpubliken. En artikel studerar barns möjligheter för deltagande i virtuella världar, och hur affärsmodellen, som baserar sig på försäljning av virtuella föremål samt VIP-medlemskap, begränsar möjligheter för deltagande. Denna artikel analyserar även hur producenten presenterar sina praktiker, samt hur användarna förhåller sig taktiskt till de kommersiella strategierna. På en mer generell nivå, genom att kombinera de olika perspektiven, diskuterar avhandlingen även hur barn och producenter diskursivt positionerar sig i det maktförhållande som finns mellan dem.

Tidigare forskning om hur barn förhåller sig till reklam online och som tar sin utgångspunkt i barns egna röster är begränsad. Tidigare studier har framförallt fokuserat på vilka effekter reklam har på barn samt undersökt barns reklamförståelse, det vill säga om de kan skilja mellan reklam och övrigt medieinnehåll samt om de kan förstå reklamens syfte. Producenter som är involverade i att annonsera till barn på internet är också i hög grad frånvarande i tidigare forskning. Hur plattformar strategiskt arbetar med att möjliggöra och begränsa barns deltagande online för kommersiella syften har också ägnats lite uppmärksamhet i tidigare studier. Denna avhandling bidrar således till forskningen inom medie- och kommunikations-vetenskap, främst vad gäller studiet av barn, reklam och virtuella världar, samt till forskningen om medieproducenter i allmänhet och reklamproducenter i synnerhet. Förutom att bidra till det inomvetenskapliga samtalet syftar avhandlingen även till att producera kunskap som kan vara av betydelse i en vidare samhällelig kontext. Lärare, föräldrar och lagstiftare har intresse av att få en inblick i hur barn upplever och hanterar reklam på internet, och få kunskap om den kommersiella miljö som barn spenderar en stor del av sin fritid i. I linje med FN:s Barnkonvention (CRC, 1989,

artikel 12) betonar denna avhandling barnens rätt att komma till tals i frågor som rör dem. Med utgångspunkt i barnens egna perspektiv ges konkreta förslag till hur internetreklam kan regleras för att den kommersiella mediemiljön ska bli mer användarvänlig (se nedan).

I avhandlingen används främst teoretiska perspektiv som på olika sätt hjälper till att analysera individers vardagspraktiker, föreställningar och diskursiva uttryck. Studierna som fokuserar på barnen och deras upplevelser av internetreklam tar sin utgångspunkt i kulturteoretikern Michel de Certeaus (1984) idéer kring praktiker i vardagslivet, där han menar att individer på olika sätt försöker anpassa kulturella representationer (som reklam) till sina egna behov genom att göra små ändringar och skapa "skillnad" gentemot dessa strategier. Studierna som fokuserar på reklam-producenterna tar sin utgångspunkt i medieproduktionsforskaren John Caldwells (2008; 2014) idéer om vad som karaktäriserar det "tvärkulturella" mötet mellan akademi och medieindustri, samt socialpsykologerna Margareth Wetherell och Jonathan Potters (1987; 1992) diskursanalytiska perspektiv som betonar hur språk används i social interaktion för att fylla olika syften, som att representera sig själv på ett fördelaktigt sätt, legitimera handlingar eller för att rikta anklagelser. Den mer textorienterade studien av den virtuella världen Habbo Hotel kombinerar teorier om deltagande (Carpentier, 2011) med ett politisk-ekonomiskt perspektiv. De Certeau (1984) används också här för att analysera användarnas praktiker online.

I studierna har framförallt olika varianter av den kvalitativa intervjun använts för att analysera barns och producenters förhållningssätt, som individuella intervjuer, gruppintervjuer och e-postintervjuer. I analysen av Habbo Hotel kombineras observationer med dokumentanalys och en producentintervju. Totalt ingår intervjuer med 66 barn och 19 producenter i avhandlingen (se Tabell 4 nedan).

Tabell 4. Sammanfattning av metoder och intervjudeltagare.

Artikel	Metoder	Tidpunkt för datainsamling	Intervjudeltagare
Artikel I	20 individuella intervjuer	2011	10 nioåriga flickor 10 nioåriga pojkar
Artikel II	12 gruppintervjuer (totalt 46 barn)	2015	24 nioåringar (12 flickor och 12 pojkar) 22 tolvåringar (13 flickor and 9 pojkar)
Artikel III	Observationer online, dokumentanalys, 1 producentintervju	2012	Designer anställd av företaget Sulake Corporation
Artikel IV & V	13 individuella intervjuer, 1 gruppintervju, 3 e-postintervjuer (totalt 18 producenter)	2013	10 marknadsförare (6 kvinnor och 4 män) 8 reklambyråarbetare (1 kvinna och 7 män)

Intervjustudierna som fokuserar på barns förhållande till onlinereklam tar sin utgångspunkt i observationen att reklam och annan marknadsföring är ständigt närvarande i barns internetanvändning, och således en integrerad del i deras vardagsliv. Barn, som internetanvändare i allmänhet, använder i stor utsträckning "gratis" medieinnehåll (Cha, 2013: 60; Dijck, 2013: 40) och detta för med sig att reklam samt försäljning av virtuella föremål och premiummedlemskap, blir en allestädes närvarande del av onlinemedier. Resultaten visar att barnen, både flickor och pojkar och både 9- och 12-åringar, hade ett komplext och ambivalent förhållningssätt till reklam online. I intervjuerna lyfte barn främst upp erfarenheter från olika typer av banner- och videoannonser, och det är denna typ av reklam som avhandlingen främst fokuserar på. Barnen hade i huvudsak en negativ inställning till reklam och uppfattade den som ett intrång i deras internetanvändning. Reklamen upplevdes som irriterande, påträngande och som ett hinder i medieanvändningen. Det var främst reklam i olika former av digitala spel och mobilspel som barnen fann störande och svår att hantera. Barnen berättade hur reklam plötsligt dök upp vilket gjorde att de ofrivilligt tryckte på den och blev förflyttade till exempelvis App Store och Google Play, samt hur kryssen som används för att ta bort annonser var för små för deras fingrar, eller dysfunktionella på andra sätt. Barns interaktion med reklam tog formen av en kamp, där de på olika sätt försökte navigera runt den för att kunna ägna sig åt sina självvalda onlineaktiviteter. Olika undvikandetaktiker användes, som att lämna skärmen för att dricka ett glas vatten eller gå på toaletten, eller engagera sig i annan medieanvändning, till exempel att läsa i en bok och titta på TV. Medan barnen beskrev hur de på olika sätt förhöll sig taktiskt till reklamen, både vad gäller handling (undvikandetaktiker) och i tanken (exempelvis kritik) så visar intervjuerna hur barnen också förhöll sig icke-taktiskt till onlinereklam; de satt och tittade på reklam utan att vilja, och de upplevde stunder av resignation, där de kände att det på grund av reklamen inte var värt mödan att fortsätta spela. Medan affärsmodellen som bygger på reklam möjliggör gratis medieinnehåll som barn fritt kan ladda ner och använda, vilket upplevs som positivt, har denna affärsmodell således också negativa konsekvenser för barns internetanvändning, framförallt på så sätt att positiva medieupplevelser blockeras och istället frammanar känslor av konfrontation, irritation, resignation, samt känslan av att bli lurad.

Även om de negativa upplevelserna betonades av barnen i intervjuerna så lyfte de också fram hur reklam utgjorde en källa till information, främst vad gäller medieprodukter de var intresserade av. De berättade även hur de ibland tog till sig reklam som underhållning. Barnen beskrev exempelvis gulliga djur och figurer som de hade sett i bannerannonser, samt hur de sjöng med till medryckande reklamslingor i YouTube-annonser. De redogjorde för hur de sjöng till annonser i klassrummet när videoklipp visades i undervisningssyfte. Även i själva intervjusituationen bröt barn, främst nioåringar, ut i sång och visade att de hade lärt sig långa reklamsånger utantill. De reklamvideor som barnen refererade till annonserade främst produkter och tjänster som inte kan anses vara relevanta för barn, såsom Systembolaget och pensionsbolag.

Studien av den virtuella världen Habbo Hotel visar också hur affärsmodellen, som bygger på försäljning av virtuella föremål och VIP-medlemskap, har konsekvenser för mediets innehåll och struktur, och således även för användarnas deltagande. Den övergripande strategin för att locka och behålla användare var att tillhandahålla möjligheter för socialt deltagande i chatten. Här kunde användarna fritt kommunicera med varandra och skapa innehåll i den virtuella världen. För att få barn att göra mikrobetalningar begränsades möjligheterna att delta på olika sätt; exempelvis krävdes betalning för olika typer av virtuella föremål som används för att bygga rum och andra miljöer, och den personliga avatarens möjligheter att kommunicera via kroppsspråk var kringskuren på så sätt att endast betalande medlemmar kunde skratta och blåsa slängpussar. Kläder var också utformade för att locka till betalning, exempelvis var endast enfärgade kläder med matta färger gratis att använda medan kläder med starkare färger och med mer utsmyckning var avgiftsbelagda. Producenten spelade således på barns vilja att nå status i kompisgruppen för att få dem att betala för medieinnehåll online. Meddelanden som framhöll de begränsningar det medför att vara icke-betalande medlem återkom genomgående, vilket visar att den övergripande strategin var att locka användare till den virtuella världen med gratis tjänster och innehåll, för att sedan försöka marknadsföra virtuella produkter och medlemskap.

Analysen av Habbo Hotel visar också att barnen på olika taktiska sätt kringgick de kommersiella strategierna. Då användarna hade begränsade möjligheter att presentera sig själva genom sin avatar på ett fördelaktigt sätt utan betalning kunde de istället länka till bloggar och YouTube-videor i chatten där de visade foton på sig själva och hur de spelade olika instrument. För att försöka kringgå köp var det även vanligt förekommande att användare tiggde om virtuella föremål eller VIP-medlemskap i chatten från andra användare. Man kan således säga att det i den virtuella världen fanns en "tiggarpraktik", vilket kan ses som en negativ konsekvens av affärsmodellen. Taktiska sätt att förhålla sig till plattformen visade sig även under ett marknadsföringsevent där en känd artist genom en avatar uppträdde i Habbo Hotel. När chattfunktionen kollapsade på grund av det stora antalet inlägg som gjordes samtidigt uttryckte användare stark kritik och riktade fula ord mot den virtuella världen.

I studien av Habbo Hotel analyserades också hur producenten presenterade sina praktiker. I dokument som var ämnade till en vidare allmänhet och framförallt föräldrar betonades de möjligheter för lärande, social interaktion och självpresentation som användning ger, medan mer negativa dimensioner, som "tiggarpraktiken" och hur producenten strategiskt arbetar för att påverka barnen att köpa virtuella objekt och medlemskap, naturligt nog inte förekom i beskrivningen. I dokument som riktade sig mot potentiella annonsörer lyftes barns möjligheter till identitetsskapande fram som något positivt, dock inte för barns egna välmående, utan för att detta skapar goda möjligheter för annonsörer att få uppmärksamhet kring varumärken.

Studien som behandlar hur reklamproducenter presenterar sig själva, sina praktiker och barnpubliken tar sin utgångspunkt i den samtida svenska samhällskontexten där producenter i och med internet har fått nya möjligheter att rikta reklam till barn. Lagstiftningen som begränsar reklam till barn på TV, vilket endast gäller TV-kanaler som sänder från svensk mark, gäller inte för reklam på internet. Den svenska lagstiftningen rörande barn och reklam är således inte medieneutral, men föreliggande avhandling visar att denna lagstiftning tycks etablera normer för vad som anses vara moraliskt försvarbart och inte. De intervjuade reklamproducenterna, som var involverade i att annonsera på spelsajter riktade till barn eller reklamspel och andra former av "branded entertainment" på företags egna hemsidor, försökte på olika sätt att distansera sig från praktiken att göra reklam till barn online. En del producenter framhöll det omoraliska i att rikta reklam till barn och menade att de istället riktade reklam till familjen, till föräldrar *och* barn, eller att reklamspel var något annat än reklam, som pedagogiska spel eller ren underhållning. Andra producenter distanserade sig från identiteten som "producent av reklam till barn" på ren strategisk-ekonomisk grund. Enligt denna argumentation är det inte produktivt att rikta reklam till barn då det är föräldrar som tar inköpsbesluten.

Producenternas konstruktioner av barn som reklampublik var mångfacetterade och ambivalenta; barn beskrevs både som sårbara och inkompetenta, och som kompetenta och beroende. Innan intervjuerna började hade "barn" definierats som individer upp till 12 år, för att ha en gemensam referensram i samtalet. I konstruktionen av barn som sårbara och inkompetenta beskrevs barnen som lättpåverkade och deras svårigheter att förstå reklamens kommersiella syfte lyftes fram. Reklamens negativa effekter betonades, till exempel ansågs reklam kunna påverka barn att tjata på sina föräldrar, samt bidra till stress. I konstruktionen av barn som kompetenta och beroende menade producenterna att barn är kompetenta reklamtolkare men att de är beroende av familjen och inte är självständiga konsumenter. Genom att presentera barn som sårbara positionerade sig producenter inom "allmänhetens" syn på reklam till barn som något problematiskt, och framställde sig således i god dager, på ett sätt som var passande i den aktuella intervjusituationen. Intervjun kan ses som ett "tvärkulturellt" (Caldwell, 2014) möte mellan det privata (reklamindustrin) och det offentliga (universitetet). Producenteras diskurs inom ramen för detta möte kan förstås som riktad till en vidare publik. Då reklamproducenter är måna om det omgivande samhällets acceptans (Galli, 2012: 9), var det viktigt att denna diskurs också var i linje med den allmänt rådande synen.

Genom att ta ett samlat grepp om de olika studierna blir det möjligt att diskutera hur barn och reklamproducenter diskursivt positionerar sig i det maktförhållande som existerar dem emellan. Makt förstås här i relation till de Certeaus (1984) idé om "den egna platsen" (the proper place) varifrån producenter kan nå individer i deras vardagsliv med symboliska uttryck. Reklamproducenterna försökte på olika sätt distansera sig ifrån och undvika denna maktrelation, då de på olika sätt framställde sig själva som något annat än "producenter av reklam till barn". Deras självrepresentation

frammanar således idén av att det inte förekommer maktrelationer mellan barn och producenter i den kommersiella onlinemiljön. Att på detta sätt omformulera vad reklam handlar om, och vad man som reklamproducent gör, är ett effektivt sätt att försöka hålla sig kvar i en dold maktrelation, som genom att vara dold görs mer effektiv. På detta sätt kan producenter även undvika kritik, och undvika att få sin maktposition ifrågasatt.

Barnens olika taktiker i förhållande till reklam på internet kan ses som ett sätt för dem att uttrycka sin agens och makt i förhållande till reklamstrategierna. Även om reklamen är ständigt närvarande under deras internetanvändning, och har en symbolisk makt i form av sin närvaro, kan barnen till viss del ignorera den och fokusera på andra aktiviteter online (som att byta till en annan app) eller offline (som att interagera med syskon eller dricka ett glas vatten). Även om barnen på många sätt framhöll sin agens så beskrev barnen också hur de kände sig utsatta för en kalkylerande strategi som försökte lura dem, och som de hade svårt att hantera, samt hur de ibland resignerade på grund av de ständigt återkommande annonserna. Barnen positionerade sig således också som relativt maktlösa i förhållande till det kommersiella trycket online. Detta visar att den kommersiella onlinemiljön är krävande för barnen, och att de ibland måste kämpa för att anpassa miljön för sina egna behov.

Resultaten från studierna om hur barn upplever reklam på internet indikerar att den kommersiella onlinemiljön bör förbättras gällande en rad aspekter. Det är troligen inte tillräckligt att införa ett generellt förbud mot reklam riktad till barn på internet, eftersom barn använder plattformar som brukas av användare i olika åldrar. En mer framkomlig väg vore att reglera onlinereklams utformning så att den negativa inverkan på användningen begränsas. I barnens perspektiv var reklam som kom på ett oförutsägbart och plötsligt sätt, och som inte enkelt kunde klickas bort, särskilt problematisk. I centrala dokument som reglerar marknadsföring på svensk och europeisk nivå (European Commission, 2016b; Swedish Parliament, 2016b) beaktas inte specifikt dessa "formmässiga" aspekter av reklam, eller hur annonser uppträder i den omgivande mediekontexten. Regelverket beaktar inte heller tillräckligt individens rätt till ett meningsfullt mediebruk. Detta borde betonas tydligare i policydokument och lagar som reglerar reklam, inte minst då medier blir mer och mer integrerade i våra vardagsliv.

Viktigt är också att barn får möjlighet att reflektera kring reklam och marknadsföring i skolan. Livingstone (2009: 200) menar att förmågan att undvika oönskat medieinnehåll är en av komponenterna i mediekunnighet. Genom att reflektera kring sina undvikandetaktiker och i vilka situationer de mer eller mindre ofrivilligt tittar på annonser kan barn få ökad medvetenhet om sitt förhållande till reklam. Möjligen kan de på detta sätt också bli mer motiverade att undvika kommersiella budskap de inte är intresserade av. Skolan och föräldrar bör också bidra till kunskaper om plattformars olika affärsmodeller, samt hur kommersiella aktörer på olika sätt arbetar för att påverka beteenden och attityder online.

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9 Appendices

9.1 Interview guides

Interview guide for individual interviews with children 2011

1. When I say the word "advertising," what do you think about then?

2. There are advertising in many places – do you know why advertising exists? (Why do corporations advertise?)

3. a) Think about when you surf the internet at home. What websites do you use then? b) Have you seen advertising on these websites?

4. Do you remember any advert you have seen on the internet at home? (What did it advertise? Where did you see the advert?)

5. Can you try to describe what advertising can look like on the internet?

6. Do you look at adverts on the internet? (Do you sometimes watch? If you did so, why did you look at that advert?)

7. Do you want to, or do you not want to, look at adverts?

8. What do you think about advertising on the internet? (Can advertising, for instance, be entertaining or irritating?)

9. Have you bought something or asked for something that you have seen in an advert on the internet?

10. Have you talked with your friends about advertising that you have seen on the internet?

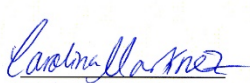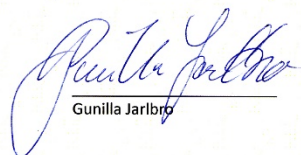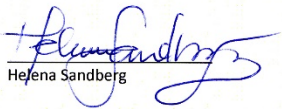*Interview guide for group interviews with children 2015*

1. I know that you use the internet both at school and at home. Could you tell me a little bit about what you like to do on the tablet, mobile phone or computer when you can choose freely? (Based on the answers: What do you like to watch on YouTube? etc.)

2. When you use the internet on the tablet, telephone or computer – do you see any advertising then?

–Do you remember any particular advert you have seen?

–What did it look like – could you describe it?

–What did you think about the advert? (Was there something that you liked or disliked about it?)

–Do you remember what it advertised?

–What did you do when you saw it? (clicked…)

–Where did you see the advert?

–Can you think about other advertisements you have seen on the internet?

3. What is your opinion regarding the fact that there is advertising on many of the websites and apps that you use? (Is there something good or bad about it?)

4. Do you look at the adverts? (No: Why not? Do you sometimes look? Yes: Why do you watch adverts/that advert?)

5. Have you talked with your friends about advertising on the internet? (Yes: What did you talk about then?)

6. Have you pressed or clicked adverts? (Why?/Why not?)

7. Have you seen adverts that you think are funny? (Yes: Could you tell me more about it? What was funny? What did you do then (clicked on it…)?

8. Have you seen adverts that you disliked? (What did you dislike about it? Where did you see the advert? Do you remember what it advertised, the product? What did you do then?)

9. Have you wanted to buy something that you have seen in an advert? (Yes: What was it? Could you buy it? Did you ask your parents?)

Interview guide for interviews with advertising producers 2013

1. Could you tell me about how you work with, or have worked with, advertising on the internet that is directed to children (below 12 years)? (mobile/web)

2. Case (the advergame/banner advertisement): Who was the target group? Age? What was the purpose of the advergame/advertisement on the internet?

3. What role does advertising on the internet play, when it comes to reaching children, compared to advertising in other media?

4. What are the best ways to reach children on the internet, in your opinion?

5. In your view, what attracts children and catches their attention in advertisements? How do you work to capture children's attention on the internet? (content, animation, color, advertising format, also in relation to case)

6. How do you believe advertising affects children?

–Do you believe that advertising has the same effect on children as on adults?

–Do you believe that children can differentiate between advertising and other media content?

–Do you believe that children can understand the purpose of advertising?

7. If we relate to these advertisements (case), how do you think that the banner/advergame affect children? Can children identify this as advertising? Can children understand the aim of this advergame/advertisement?

8. Do you have any specific guidelines when you work with campaigns on the internet that are directed to children?

9. How do you gain knowledge on what attracts children in advertising?

10. Have children been involved in the work process when you have produced advertising? (focus groups etc.)

11. Does one have to make some special considerations when working with advertising to children under 12 years of age? (why?)

12. Are there any types of advertising that you believe are not okay when directing advertising to children? (format, content)

13. What is your view on the possible effect of advertising that children may nag at their parents?

14. According to the Marketing Practices Act, advertising must be clearly identifiable as such. How do you reflect on this in relation to the advergames? Should the advergames be more clearly labeled as advertising?

15. There is an ongoing debate on and critique of advertisements for unhealthy food directed at children. What is your opinion of this criticism?

16. What is your opinion about having the same regulation on the internet as on television, that is, that advertising must not aim at capturing the attention of children below the age of 12?

9.2 Co-author statement for paper I

CERTIFICATE

Lund, April 25th, 2013

LUNDS UNIVERSITET

Department of Communication and Media

To whom it may concern

The authors of the paper entitled:

"Children's views and practices regarding online advertising"

a forthcoming publication in *Nordicom Review* 2013, hereby certify that each and every author has fulfilled the needs to be credited as an author according to the Vancouver Protocol.

Carolina Martinez, the first author of the paper, has done the major contribution to the paper with regard to the research design and research questions, the data collection, the data analysis, the theoretical perspective and the writing of the paper. Helena Sandberg has contributed to the research design, the data analysis and critically reviewing the text. Gunilla Jarlbro has contributed to the research design and critically reviewing the text. All authors have given final approval of the version to be published.

Carolina Martinez

Gunilla Jarlbro

Helena Sandberg

They usually try to lure people, that is, the games, to press the adverts. If you enter an app it can take up to three seconds and then an advert appears and you touch it and enter App Store … So I always, I sit and wait around 10 seconds before I dare to touch anywhere, because I can't stand it.

Anna, 12 years old

Children's internet usage takes place to a large extent in a commercial environment where advertising and the sale of virtual goods are ever-present parts of the online experience. This thesis contributes to a critical understanding of this media environment as spaces for children's everyday life activities, and as spaces for commercial interests that seek to target children online. The dissertation investigates questions such as: How do children view and engage with advertising in mobile games? What participatory opportunities are provided to children in virtual worlds, and how is children's participation constrained by the commercial strategies? How do Swedish producers of child-directed online advertising represent themselves and their practices?

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