

Public Abstract

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Title:A Good Line of Advertising: The Historical Development of Children's Advertising as Reflected in St. Nicholas Magazine, 1873-1905

Media researchers often assume that children's advertising began in the early days of radio and television broadcasting. In fact, it had begun nearly a half century earlier within the pages of children's magazines. One of the first magazines to include advertisements aimed at children was St. Nicholas: Scribner's Illustrated Magazine for Girls and Boys.

This study documents the evolution of children's ads in St. Nicholas during the editorship of Mary Mapes Dodge from 1873 to 1905. Within these ads, one can see the convergence of the complex trends in the evolution of advertising and the changing understanding of childhood, along with the changes introduced by the Industrial Revolution such as new technologies, the mass production of children's products, and more efficient transportation methods. The convergence of these trends created for the first time an opportunity for companies to identify and appeal to children directly as a unique consumer audience.

At the beginning of children's advertising in the late nineteenth century, children were seen as possessing "impressionable minds" that companies could influence through advertising; now at the beginning of the twenty-first century, children are seen as "profit centers" that companies mine for increased corporate profits. Many of the tools and strategies corporations use today in this mining process developed within the pages of beloved children's magazines in the late nineteenth century.