

Parental mediation and attitude towards child and adolescent exposure to the Internet. A marketing approach

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Abstract

The Internet is the leading medium for information and entertainment among young people. This study analyses whether parental attitude towards the Internet exposure time (IET), and the type of mediation used, is influential. It also analyses which variables influence the form of mediation concerning IET. We contrast that a different attitude towards its nature (as a source of information or persuasion) has no influence on IET, and is what provokes a more restrictive mediation. Also, those who have more knowledge of the Internet show a greater tendency towards an evaluative mediation. We present a series of recommendations for the Public Administration, parents and companies, highlighting the importance of increasing knowledge of the Internet and adopting a socially responsible corporate marketing.

Key words: Family; Children; Adolescents; Attitude; Mediation; Exposure.

JEL Code: M31, D12, M39.

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I. Introduction

The Internet is entering households with great force. In 2004, 48.11% of Spanish households owned a PC and 30.85% had access to the Internet, whilst in the second half of 2006 more than half now had a home computer (58.4%) and 41.1% had an Internet connection (source: INE, 2007). If we take into account that Hong Kong is the metropolitan area with the highest percentage of Internet connections in the home (60%), then the Spanish percentages are not to be considered small. This dynamic has effects on the family as a whole and on the personal life of the family members (Cabero, 2002; Naval, Sádaba, Bringué and Pérez-Alonso, 2003), from both a relational and a consumer perspective.

More and more children and adolescents (hereon C&A) prefer the new information and communication technologies – NICT- (e.g. the Internet, mobile phone or videogames) to the television (Bringué and García, 2006) and to other traditional media, and thus the messages – news, commercials and advertising – and values transmitted by these NICT have an increasing influence on this type of public (Bazarrá, Casanova and García, 2001; García and Bringué, 2003; Gros, 2005). According to the latest study cited by Bringué and García, during leisure time, 32% of C&A opt for the television whilst 38% prefer the Internet. Back in 1998, Garitaonandia *et al.* stated that they had a different attitude towards the new *vs.* the old ICT. On the other hand, parents do not follow the same dynamic and dedicate more time to the traditional media (television and radio) than to the NICT.

This implies that to the family generation gap we can add another digital gap, not so much owing to the differences in access to the Internet but more due to the fact that parents have less computer ability and know-how and a lesser perception of the useful contents of the Internet. (Uranga, 2006). However, the family (parents) is the socializing agent that is given the greatest importance by the C&A themselves (Elzo *et al.*, 1999; Sarabia and Parra, 2001) and, as such, could carry out an important role as mediators in the relationship their children maintain with the Internet, in their acquisition of consumer habits and in their exposure to this medium.

The ever-increasing exposure of C&A to the Internet makes this role of mediator relevant in certain areas, such as advertising, due to both the

potential social effect they have as socializing agents (Royo, Miquel and Caplliure, 2006) and the advertising saturation in this medium. Furthermore, the Internet is an extremely important channel of communication and will become increasingly so (Lafuente and Zorilla, 2001).

However, there is a very important asymmetry between parents and C&A concerning their knowledge of and attitudes towards the Internet, and exposure to this media is basically a lone activity (Larson, 1995). This can affect both the social and personal relationships of the C&A as well as their relationship with the family itself, something which will have an influence on their development (Shifrin, 2006; Villani, 1995).

For this reason it is important to know the perceptions and behaviours of parents concerning the exposure of C&A to the Internet with respect to whether they consider it a source of information (and therefore, positive) or a source of persuasion (and therefore, negative). The socialising message produced will be different depending on this perception and the mediation carried out. Taking this into consideration, the aim of this research is to discover parental perceptions and whether these influence or not exposure to the Internet, all from the point of view of parents themselves.

2. Children and adolescents and the Internet

The Internet is a medium that is neither damaging nor advantageous; it just depends on the use we make of it. Castells (2001) explains that it offers multiple opportunities and benefits, stating that it favours social relations, cooperative learning, the development of new abilities, new forms of knowledge building, and the development of capabilities, creativity, communication and reasoning. Tapscott (1998) states that there is an evident tendency in C&A to see this technology as an ideal vehicle for communicating with others. Along these lines we can highlight that the services most used are Messenger (AIMC, 2006) and chats. Gil, Feliu, Rivero and Gil (2003) offer a similar view, stating that C&A use the Internet as a tool for communication and obtaining information, thus making it applicable to their education process.

From the point of view of the family, both the literature on the subject and the parents themselves recognise the technological advantages that the Internet offers their children, opening up a theoretical new area of family participation and the possibility of a new paradigm of relationships (Saguier, 2003). Therefore, it is believed that the Internet, used well, can change the patterns of family communication to become a means of connection between the family members, above all in the initial phases of use (Kisler, Zdaniuk, Lundmark and Kraut, 2000; Orleans and Laney, 2000; Sutherland, Furlong and Facer, 2003).

Opposing these favourable views on the use of the Internet there are other more negative postures which highlight the possible problems caused by inadequate use. Authors such as Kraut *et al.* (1998) warn that it can cause isolation or increase phenomena such as loneliness and depression; whilst Gil *et al.* (2003) mention three aspects that can have negative effects, such as (1) addiction to its use (2) the isolation that it provokes and (3) the ease with which perverse and violent content can be seen. On the other hand, Naval *et al.* (2003) name in their studies three other negative effects, such as: (4) the loss of privacy, (5) the increase in consumerism and (6) the strongly persuasive effects of advertising on the Internet (above all that related to gambling, etc). Amorós, Buxarrais and Casas (2002), also mention the increase in consumerism (in general and on the Internet) if the Internet is not used correctly. Albero (2002) maintains that the use made of the Internet as a source of access to information is a long way from developing the curiosity and the ability to investigate and reason that authors such as Tapscott (1998) and O'Brien (2001) attribute to the use of the Web by C&A.

Parental attitudes towards the Internet can be both positive (encouraging its use) or negative (rejecting it for its potential dangers). Given (a) the knowledge gap between parents and children, (b) the low level knowledge of the former, (c) the generally negative opinion of the Internet – especially on the Web itself- (Kallinsky and Pourtois, 2005; Subrahmanyam *et al.*, 2000), (d) the mainly individual and isolating use of computers by children, and (e) the socializing and mediating role of parents (González, 2006), then it is predictable that the N&A's exposure to the Internet is

linked to their attitudes. Thus, a positive attitude will lead to a greater use of the Web, whilst a more negative attitude (greater concern for exposure to the Internet) will lead to a reduction in exposure time. Therefore, we establish as a working hypothesis:

H1: Exposure of C&A to the Internet (known and declared by parents) is negatively related to parental attitude towards the Web.

As we can rightly suppose that the amount of time spent on surfing the Web or using the Internet services is different on weekdays and at weekends, we pose two auxiliary hypotheses:

H1a. H1 applies when Internet exposure is on weekdays.

H1b. H1 applies when Internet exposure is during the weekend

3. The Internet as a source of information vs. persuasion

From a consumer socialisation point of view, a subject of unquestionable importance is whether the contents of the Internet act as sources of information or of persuasion. The impact on C&A of the large amount of information available and the presence of advertising targeted at them (with a basically persuasive approach towards buying goods or brand names of favourite goods in that market segment) makes it difficult to ignore or undermine this facet (Garitaonandia, 2006; Miranda, 2005). It is important that the C&A know how to distinguish an advertisement with informative content, but it is also important that the family perceive the importance of teaching them how to differentiate the two. Having an idea of what advertising on the Internet is, does not necessarily mean that they know how to realise when the objective is to persuade them to acquire products (Froufe and Sierra, 1998).

Academic and institutional literature, and writings by private associations have warned that C&A are greatly unprotected on the Internet and can be affected by the ability of many companies to obtain a large amount of information on their users without their knowledge (Garitaonandia, 2006; Naval *et al.*, 2003). And there are almost limitless strategies that can

be used to disguise advertising as informative content. If we study, for example, the composition of the websites of favourite brands and goods for children and adolescents, as well as the advertising that reaches them, it is difficult to clearly distinguish between the “information” that informs and the “information” that persuades (Naval *et al.*, 2003). Insisting on the difficulty to differentiate objective information from persuasion, Lanham (2006) maintains that on the Internet the first point is to attract the user’s attention, as without this it is not possible to carry out any type of persuasion. This author highlights the use of two models of information treatment: the transparent model (sincerity) and the deceptive model (buzz marketing). The adwords and recommendations of *Amazon.com* are examples of the first model, whilst some forms of viral marketing and exaggeration systems are examples of the second model. There are authors who maintain that persuasion is a key concept in Web communication (Navarro, 2003).

Also, we often forget the persuasive and commercial component of a large part of the information available on the Internet. Livingstone and Bober (2004b) show that most C&A ignore the persuasive effect of Websites. The main concern of parents in the face of the persuasive quality of the Internet stems from the possibility of contacting foreigners, disclosing family information, giving up relevant activities and the development of violent attitudes (Mesch, 2006). On the other hand, Livingstone (2003) and Livingstone and Bober (2004a) point out that many parents with children between the ages of 9 and 17 are those who see a greater danger in the information offered on the Internet, as they consider that their children are not capable of differentiating the informative aspects from the persuasive aspects on the Websites. However, Azzarone (2004), in his research carried out on youngsters aged between 8 and 19, found that the large amount of time that many youths spend on the Internet and other technological options is not as negative as many parents think, as this time allows them to master new abilities, develop their personality and make new friends.

On the basis of differentiating between the Internet as a source of useful information and a source of persuasion two hypotheses are posed:

H2a: A greater belief by parents that the Internet is a useful source of information leads to a greater (better) attitude towards this medium and a greater C&A Internet exposure time.

H2b: A greater belief by parents that the Internet is a source of persuasion (or that it entices them to see things they should not) leads to a lesser attitude towards this medium and less C&A exposure time.

4. Parental attitude towards Internet and its influence on children and adolescents

The appearance of the Internet in the home has generated many questions on the posture to be adopted by parents – within a context of socialization-concerning the use their children make of the medium and its contents. García and Bringué (2003) come across different family responses to the challenge of the Internet ranging from those who are in favour of total access control to those who are in favour of a total absence of mediation. And the fact is that, although the level of Internet use by young people is very high, it is noteworthy how little the parents include Internet access in their daily routine outside working hours (Albero, 2002).

Parents are becoming more and more aware of the possible perverse effects that inadequate use/consumption of the Internet can cause. However, this awareness does not imply knowledge, as shown by Castillo (2005), who confirms that parents have little knowledge of this medium. This has a great influence on their perception of the information that their children can receive from the Internet (Mesch, 2006). A large gap in attitude also exists. Sánchez (2006) states that C&A prefer and try out technological advances and see the ICT and the Internet as an interesting medium, whilst adults have a very different concept as they believe that the NICT are not made for them and are not clear on their possible uses and the role that they can take in their lives.

At present, one of the main reasons for concern within the family, as far as Internet use by youngsters is concerned, is the possibility that they adopt addictive or violent behaviours that can affect their development (Mesch, 2006). They are also concerned that exposure to certain information can cause them to fall into impulsive, unnecessary or inadequate consumerism. This is where the role of the family acquires importance in controlling their

children and their autonomy in the use of the Internet, regardless of the intergenerational conflicts that are caused by the use made of the Internet.

There is a large amount of literature concerning parental fear of the relationship their children have with the Internet and whether the information given/submitted can affect them. (Bartolomé, 1998; *Enviro-nics Research Group*, 2004; Gil and Feliu, 2006; Wang, Bianchi and Raley, 2005). There are many responses that parents can give, as socialising agents, on the control of use/consumption of the Internet and its content (Long, 2005). Family mediation (parental) and the type of mediation is, therefore, an important question which is, however, rarely tackled in reality. In the study carried out by Livingstone and Bovill (2001) covering seven European countries and Israel, Spanish parents were those who most indicated to their children (45%) when they could use the computer. However, compared with parents, the C&A know the Internet better, discover and recognise its innovations earlier and coexist more with computers. This means that on many occasions the parents are at a clear disadvantage and, thus, their authority to mediate can be questioned (Bringué and Sánchez, 2005).

Pinto (2007) differentiates three types of family mediation²: restrictive, evaluative and unfocused mediation. The first type consists in establishing rules of use and controlling exposure to the Internet in terms of time and content. The second type is more active and consists in orientation on adequate websites, active teaching, and conversations with the child about the Internet and how to surf the web. The third is based on generalised evaluations co-viewing but without interacting on the contents. However, the typical mediation by parents concerned with the contents of the Internet does not allow for the third type of mediation (as it is a basically individualised activity) and is centred more on a restriction of the number of hours rather than on discovering and acting in relation to the nature of the contents as, in general, they show great trust as far as this aspect is concerned (Albero, 2002). Therefore, we pose that:

H3. The frequency of use, the importance given to the Internet and the level of knowledge that the parents have of the web influences the degree to which they mediate in the interaction C&A-Internet.

(2) These types of mediation refer to the televisión media. However, they are perfectly applicable to the Internet.

Taking into account the above-stated on unfocused mediation, restrictive and evaluative mediation should be considered for H2. Therefore, two auxiliary hypotheses are created:

H3a. H3 applies when mediation is restrictive.

H3b. H3 applies when mediation is evaluative.

It is equally possible to consider mediation as a variable that determines children's and adolescent's exposure to the Internet. If this is so then it is to be expected that restrictive mediation will have a negative influence on exposure (more restriction, less exposure), whilst evaluative mediation will have the opposite or a positive effect (more evaluative mediation means more parent-children-Internet interaction, which will mean that more evaluative mediation will lead to a greater exposure to the Internet). Therefore we pose that:

H4. The two types of mediation significantly influence, albeit in opposite ways, the exposure of C&A to the Internet.

5. Methodology

Variables used:

- a) In order to measure exposure to the Internet we have used the average daily hours of Internet use, as we aim to measure the time and not the nature of the contents to which the C&A have been exposed. This form of measurement has been used in the majority of research in preference to that which establishes frequency on a scale ranging from 'never' to 'always' with a number of intermediate positions.
- b) Parental attitude towards the use that C&A make of the Internet has been measured using the Chan and Shen's scale (2004) which values the degree of agreement (using five points ranging from 'never agree' to 'total agreement') for 9 items. This scale comes from another scale created by Chan and McNeal (2002). The authors come across 3 factors: the first related to the concern about harm-

ful content (pornography, violence or encountering 'undesirable people'), the second focused on aspects related to illegal use (downloading programs and music) and the third dealing with the informative and leisure aspects of the Internet. They do not detail the overall reliability of the scale, but they do for one of the subscales (the third) with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.952.

- c) The opinion on whether the Internet is a useful source of information or a source of persuasion (seeing and convincing) has been measured by means of mono-item four point scales ('Strongly disagree', 'disagree', 'agree', 'strongly agree').
- d) The frequency of use, the importance of the Internet and the level of knowledge of the father/mother who answers the survey has also been measured by mono-item scales of eight points (from 'nothing' to 'totally').
- e) Mediation has been measured using five items on a five-point Likert scale. Two of the items refer to evaluative mediation and the rest to restrictive mediation. They were obtained from a pool of items taken from other scales, as the literature consulted contained no specific scale with a reliability that allowed its use ($f > 0.60$).

A survey was conducted, using a structured interview with a closed questionnaire, on a sample of 233 individuals selected by random route procedure with no quotas in four towns of the province of Alicante. The respondents are fathers/mothers who have children aged between 7 and 16 inclusive. Data collection was carried out during the months of January and February 2006 by interviewers from a research company dedicated to field work. A follow-up was carried out by telephone on 30% of all the questionnaires received, which are all completed and, therefore, no problems stem from missing information.

6. Results and discussion of the findings

6.1. Descriptive Results

Table 1 shows the basic descriptive statistics. We can see that the parents declare that the average Internet exposure of their children is 47 minutes

on weekdays and 75 minutes on weekend days (Friday to Sunday). In both cases there is an intense positive skew (in the lower values) as 53.6% of the parents state that their children do not connect during the week and 46% say the same for the weekends.³ Also in both cases the standard errors of the mean (*s.e.*) are very low, which means that very similar results would be obtained using other samples from the same population. A *t* analysis of the means shows that they can be considered significantly distinct ($t=12.538$; $gl=232$; $p=0.000$) as the parents' perception is that C&A are exposed to the Internet much more during the weekend than on weekdays.

(3) This data is close to the estimated average Internet penetration in Spanish households (OSIC, 2007).

The average level of Internet exposure can be considered close to the average among young Europeans. A study carried out by the European Interactive Advertising Association (quoted in OSIC, 2007) states that young Europeans surf the web an average of 11 hours a week which means an average of one and a half hours a day. The data in Table 1 refers to the exposure that parents have knowledge of (that carried out at home) and does not take into account the exposure at school, in cybercafés, public libraries, friend's houses, etc. Therefore, we believe that the results of exposure of our sample are not far from the above-mentioned results on a European level.

Table 1. Description of the variables in the analysis

Variable	Scale	Mean (<i>s.e.</i>)	Standard deviation	Skewness (<i>s.e.</i>)
C&A exposure to the Internet				
• On working days	Hours	0.78 (0.073)	1.122	2.105 (0.159)
• At weekends	Hours	1.25 (0.099)	1.513	1.368 (0.160)
Opinion of the Internet				
• A useful source	1 to 10	9.20 (0.034)	0.519	-1.523 (0.159)
• A persuasive source	1 to 10	8.03 (0.056)	0.848	-0.882 (0.160)
Parental behaviour				
• Frequency of use	1 to 10	3.85 (0.148)	2.255	0.785 (0.159)
• Importance of the Internet	1 to 10	5.69 (0.147)	2.249	-0.099 (0.159)
• Level of knowledge	1 to 10	3.22 (0.127)	1.935	1.085 (0.159)

Concerning the parent's consideration of the Internet, there is a great polarization of opinion on whether it is a useful source of information or harmful (by allowing children to see things they should not) and persuasive, although the mean is slightly inferior in the latter case. There is little correlation between both variables ($r=0.050$; $p=0.446$) and the application of a t analysis of about the difference in two means allows us to state that the average values presented are significantly different ($t=7.504$; $p=0.000$).

Furthermore, it is surprising that the parents, although they say that the Internet has an intermediate importance (5.69 over 10), they themselves make little use of the Web (3.85 over 10). Therefore, we find ourselves with fairly unprepared parents who state that their children make little use of the Internet.

Concerning the scales of attitude and mediation, Table 2 shows the factor loadings after Varimax rotation, the quality indicators of the factor analysis and the exploratory reliability (Cronbach's alpha). This confirms the existence of three factors or subscales concerning parental attitude towards the use which adolescents and children make of the Internet. The three factors found coincide with those described by Chan and Shen (2004) and they obtain high Cronbach's alpha, except factor 2 (concern for Internet use), which reaches a reliability of 0.679 which, despite being low, is sufficient for exploratory analysis. The overall scale has an exploratory reliability of 0.752. The application of a confirmatory factor analysis offers, as can be observed, very good results and can be considered an appropriate scale to be used for a posterior contrast of the hypotheses.

In the case of the scale of mediation on the use of the Internet, two factors are obtained (the loadings indicated in Table 2 also correspond with the Varimax rotation) which correspond to the two types of mediation considered (restrictive and evaluative). The exploratory reliabilities are very high, accounting for almost the whole of the variance explained (92.16%) and we discover that restrictive mediation is what really explains almost 85% of the information in the original scale. The structural analysis offers lesser adjustments, above all the Chi-2 which is significant and the RMSEA value, which is superior to what is considered the limit at 0.005). However, the reliabilities are very high and therefore precision of the measurements is guaranteed.

Table 2. Analysis of the scales used in the analysis

Scales / Subscales and items	Loadings	Indicators
Attitude towards children's use of the Internet (Chan and Shen, 2004) Exploratory factor fit: KMO = 0.727; Min. MSA = 0.669; Cronbach = 0.752; Expl.Var. =64.76% Structural model fit: Chi-2 = 27.2 ; df = 24; p=0.295 ; Chi-2 norm = 1.134 Baseline comparisons: NFI = 0.955 ; IFI = 0.995 ; CFI = 0.994 RMSEA = 0.025 (Upper and lower boundaries 90% confidence: 0.000 – 0.060)		
<i>Factor 1: Harmful content</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern for pornographic content Concern for violent content 	0.896 0.873	Cronbach = 0.829 Var. Expl.= 35.31% fc = 0.932
<i>Factor 2: Concern for use</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be on the Net for a long time is harmful They can find undesirable people on the chats The time they spend affects their studies Has negative effects on their relationships Internet encourages gambling 	0.555 0.641 0.645 0.723 0.544	Cronbach = 0.678 Expl. Var.= 16.54% cr = 0.790
<i>Factor 3: Unethical use</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern about the files they download Concern that they violate the rights of others 	0.909 0.895	Cronbach = 0.832 Expl. Var.= 12.91% cr = 0.897
Mediation in the use their children make of the Internet Exploratory factor fit: KMO = 0.854; Min. MSA = 0.814; Cronbach = 0.752; Var. expl. =92.16% Structural model fit: Chi-2 = 14.200 ; df = 4 ; p = 0.007 ; Chi-2 norm. = 3.55 Baseline comparisons: NFI = 0.989 ; IFI = 0.992 ; CFI = 0.992 RMSEA = 0.085 (Upper and lower boundaries 90% confidence: 0.049 – 0.111)		
<i>Factor 1 Restrictive mediation</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freq. with which I restrict what they can see Freq. with which I restrict when they can see it Freq. with which I limit access time 	0.781 0.833 0.867	Cronbach = 0.943 Expl. Var.= 84.91% cr = 0.932
<i>Factor 1: Evaluative mediation</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freq. of orientation on adequate websites Freq. of conversation on the websites they visit 	0.856 0.866	Cronbach = 0.952 Expl. Var.= 7.26% cr = 0.951
cr = composed reliability		

Table 3. Description of the scales and their factors

Variable	Scale	Mean (s.e.)	Standard deviat.	Skewness (e.t.)
Mediation				
• Restrictive	1 a 10	4.78 (0.208)	3.178	0.538 (0.159)
• Evaluative	1 a 10	5.22 (0.213)	3.249	0.271 (0.160)
Attitude (overall concern for...)	1 a 10	7.25 (0.078)	1.189	-0.753 (0.159)
• Factor 1: Harmful content	1 a 10	9.22 (0.091)	1.393	-2.778 (0.159)
• Factor 2: Use made	1 a 10	7.39 (0.091)	1.309	-0.312 (0.159)
• Factor 3: Unethical aspects	1 a 10	5.15 (0.141)	2.153	0.162 (0.159)

However, we should not confuse the importance of the factor with the behaviour of the parents. Thus, we verify that 53.2% of the respondents do not limit (never or hardly ever) what the C&A can see on the Internet and only 24% carry out certain restrictions on time and content. This can be seen in the descriptions detailed in Table 3. The parents consider themselves “fairly” restrictive and evaluative, although there are significant differences in the means (due to high standard deviations) and with a bias towards the lower values of the interval. However, they are very concerned (9.22 over 10) about the harmful contents available on the Internet and greatly worried about the uses that the C&A make of the Web and some of the dangers they can find. However, the attitude towards unethical (but active) use by the children is what they are least concerned about, although it exceeds 5 points over 10. Overall, their concern –attitude– has a high average value. Given this fact, it seems convenient to carry out an analysis of the correlation between the attitude factors, the types of mediation and Internet exposure. In Table 4 we can see correlations with significant coefficients, which indicates relationships between the variables included. Therefore, the mediations show very high and positive relationships, and therefore it cannot be said that a greater restrictive mediation means a lesser exposure to the Internet, although this will be tested later in H3 and H4. Also, the positive correlation with the two types of mediation states that it is feasible to consider mediation more as a dependent, rather than an independent, variable.

Table 4. Correlations between Internet exposure and attitude and mediation

Internet exposure	Overall attitude	Attitude factor 1	Attitude factor 2	Attitude factor 3	Restrictive mediation	Evaluative mediation
On weekdays	-0.147 (p=0.025)	-0.175 (p=0.007)	-0.082 (p=0.212)	-0.080 (p=0.226)	0.289 (p=0.000)	0.349 (p=0.000)
At the weekend	-0.195 (p=0.003)	-0.212 (p=0.001)	-0.137 (p=0.038)	-0.102 (p=0.120)	0.795 (p=0.000)	0.508 (p=0.000)

As far as the relationships with parental concern (attitude) are concerned, we see that this offers overall negative signs and significant coefficients (although they are notably lower than those obtained for the mediations). This indicates that a greater concern by the parents reduces exposure time, although not intensely. Furthermore, there are differences for each of the three factors indicated. Thus, the factor ‘Concern for Harmful Content’ is the factor that presents greater significant and negative relations, something that does not occur with the other two factors. Only the second factor (‘Concern about the use made’) is significant in the case of exposure at weekends, perhaps because this increases greatly during this period and, therefore, the parents show more concern and this leads to an intent to reduce time before the screen.

6.2. Test of the hypotheses

In order to test H1 (H1a and H1b) and H2 (H2a and H2b) we applied a structural equations analysis using AMOS 7 software. The results appear in Table 5. We can see that taking into account the total attitude (concern) level, adequate goodness-of-fits are obtained as the Chi-2 statistic is not significant and the Baseline comparisons coefficients are really very good. This occurs in both the model of Internet exposure on weekdays and the model for weekends. We verify that only H1 is confirmed and with the expected sign, since a greater concern about the Internet leads to less exposure. These results support H1 and do not allow acceptance of what is posed in H2 (H2a and H2b) as their standardized regression coefficients

are not significantly different from zero. This means that the parents' perception of whether the Internet is a means of information or has a highly persuasive content has no influence. Only the attitude or concern of the parents relates negatively to Internet exposure.

Table 5. Contrast of Hypotheses 1 and 2

Hypotheses	H1	H2a (act)	H2a (exp)	H2b(act)	H2b(exp)
<i>For Internet exposure on weekdays</i>					
SRW (p)	- 0.15 (0.023)	- 0.11 (0.103)	0.03 (0.626)	0.07 (0.282)	0.07 (0.291)
Fit	Chi = 0.594 (p=0.441) ; df = 1 ; Chi norm. = 0.594 ; N = 233 NFI = 0.944 ; IFI = 1.000 ; CFI = 1.000; RMSEA = 0.000				
<i>For Internet exposure at weekends</i>					
SRW (p)	- 0.18 (0.005)	- 0.11 (0.103)	0.08 (0.222)	0.07 (0.282)	- 0.06 (0.344)
Fit	Chi = 0.581 (p=0.446) ; df = 1 ; Chi norm. = 0.581 ; N = 233 NFI = 0.962 ; IFI = 1.000 ; CFI = 1.000; RMSEA = 0.000				
Nota: SRW : Standardized Regression Weights; (p) : level of significance					

As has been stated, parental concern is a multidimensional concept made up of three factors. Of the three, only one ('concern about harmful content') presents noteworthy and important correlations with C&A Internet exposure. As it is possible that each factor holds a different contribution, a structural analysis has been carried out taking into consideration the existence of these three factors. However, the fit obtained is bad (Chi-2=624.991; df=62; p=0.000; Chi-2-norm.=10.081; GFI=0.601; RMSEA=0.156). This could mean that one of the factors taken into consideration makes us lose the adjustment. Various tests have been carried out maintaining the same configuration (in order to fulfil the hypotheses) but substituting overall attitude with specific factors, however no fit with acceptable coefficients was obtained. For this reason, we only accept H1 for the case of overall concern, without considering the individualized existence of any factor in the model.

In order to test H3 we proceeded with a lineal regression analysis, where the dependent variable is Internet exposure (on weekdays and at weekends) and the independent variables are frequency of use, the importance given to the Internet and the level of knowledge that parents consider themselves to have. Two regression analyses were done, one for restrictive mediation and another for evaluative mediation. Table 6 shows the fits of the models and the regression coefficients obtained. Interesting results are obtained for both regressions, above all in the case of evaluative mediation.

Table 6. Results of the regressions for H3

	Restrictive mediation		Evaluative mediation	
	Adjustments (sig.)	Betas (sig.)	Adjustments (sig.)	Betas (sig.)
R ²	0.194		0.273	
R ² corr.	0.184		0.263	
ANOVA	18.309 (0.000)		28.597 (0.000)	
Constant		2.869 (0.000)		2.294 (0.000)
Frequency of use		0.322 (0.000)		0.361 (0.000)
Importance		0.720 (0.328)		0.007 (0.921)
Level of knowledge		0.106 (0.207)		0.206 (0.010)

Restrictive mediation is basically explained by variables that are not included in the model (due to the constant has a significant value) and by the frequency with which children use the computer, having a positive relationship. Neither the importance given to the Internet by parents nor their level of knowledge gives any noteworthy explanation. With relation to evaluative mediation, parental knowledge of the Internet is added to the aforementioned variables. These results are logical. In the case of restrictive mediation, the level of knowledge is not important; in fact, the lower the level of knowledge the lesser the inclination to be evaluative (you cannot talk about what you do not know) and the greater the use of restriction (a reduction in exposure is obtained via control of surfing and usage

time, as well as restricting Internet access). In the case of evaluative mediation, the interest is in interacting with the child, which means that knowledge of the medium, abilities in its use and the creation of parent-child communication become very important.

Finally, in order to test H4 take into consideration both exposure on weekdays and at weekends. Table 7 shows that on weekdays only restrictive mediation is significant for explaining level of Internet exposure. As the constant is also not significant it seems coherent to conclude that there are no other variables that have an influence. That is to say, C&A exposure to the Internet during the week (Monday to Thursday) basically depends on the level of restrictive mediation by parents. In the case of weekend exposure, we find that evaluative mediation is also significant and obtaining a greater coefficient of corrected R².

Table 7. Results of the regressions for H4

	Exposure on weekdays		Exposure at weekends	
	Adjustments (sig.)	Betas (sig.)	Adjustments (sig.)	Betas (sig.)
R ²	0.122		0.273	
R ² corr.	0.115		0.267	
ANOVA	15.938 (0.000)		42.852 (0.000)	
Constant		0.158 (0.236)		- 0.043 (0.794)
Evaluative mediation		- 0.022 (0.849)		0.225 (0.031)
Restrictive mediation		0.368 (0.001)		0.319 (0.002)

However, it is surprising that the sign of the significant beta coefficients is positive for the two regressions carried out. This means that the greater the restriction the greater the Internet exposure (on weekdays), and the greater the level of both mediations the greater the exposure (at weekends). This does not seem to make much sense, which leads us to believe that, in reality, the critical variable does not seem the Internet exposure but mediation. It is not incoherent to contemplate the possibility that mediation is an effect and not the cause of the frequency and intensity of the Internet

exposure. The less the C&A expose themselves to the Internet, the less need parents have to exercise some form of mediation. However, as the exposure increases, parents can see themselves forced to set limits, using different styles (restrictive or evaluative). We confirm, in agreement with the data, Hypothesis 4, but we believe that it is necessary to make a change in its formulation, in the sense that it is the exposure that has an influence on the intensity of the mediation. Therefore, we should carry out, in an exploratory sense, regressions where the dependent variable is mediation and the independent variable is exposure to the web. As the analysis would pose one sole dependent variable and one sole independent variable, the regression betas would correspond to the correlation coefficients indicated in Table 4 and an obliged four regressions should be carried out. The results are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Results for H4 (modified interchanging the variables)

	Exposure on weekdays		Exposure at weekends	
	Fit (sig.)	Betas (sig.)	Fit (sig.)	Betas (sig.)
<i>For restrictive mediation</i>				
R ²	0.122		0.258	
R ² corr.	0.118		0.255	
ANOVA	31.973 (0.000)		79.708 (0.000)	
Constant		4.428 (0.000)		3.871 (0.000)
Exposition		0.349 (0.000)		0.508 (0.000)
<i>For evaluative mediation</i>				
R ²	0.083		0.245	
R ² corr.	0.079		0.241	
ANOVA	21.017 (0.000)		74.475 (0.000)	
Constant		4.142 (0.000)		3.498 (0.000)
Exposition		0.289 (0.000)		0.495 (0.000)

We observe that the regressions have R² that are greater than 24% in the case of exposure at weekends and vary between 12.2% and 8.3% in

the case of weekday exposure. This tells us that the variability in mediation is much better explained in the weekend period. At the same time it is an indicator of the reliability of the regression forecast; that is to say that the variation in exposure at weekends is better explained by the activity of mediation than it is during the week. Furthermore, we observe that restrictive mediation has a greater intensity than evaluative mediation. Therefore, we can conclude the existence of a differentiated behaviour for the two types of mediation and during the two periods taken into consideration.

7. Conclusions, recommendations from a marketing perspective

In summary, we have that The Internet exposure of C&A is close to the European average if we add to the exposure time at home that which we estimate they carry out in other places. As well, the parents consider the Internet to be as much a source of information as a source of persuasion and the difference between both perceptions is significant. They believe that the Internet is more a source of information than a medium which incites children to see things they should not. However, this consideration does not arise from their knowledge, which is scarce, and here we verify that stated by Uranga (2006). The fact is that parents make little use of the Internet, they have little knowledge of the medium and, all the same, they grant it an intermediate level of importance. This stands out over the opinion of children, not analysed here, but which is very favourable towards this medium. For example, 60% of young Europeans confess they 'could not live' without the Internet (OSIC, 2007).

We have found that parental perception of the Internet as a useful source of information or as a source of persuasion does not affect C&A exposure to the Web. Neither does this perception significantly determine parental concern of Internet exposure. Nevertheless, the attitude (as a concern) of parents is a very important factor for understanding C&A exposure to the Internet.

Parents declare they have an intermediate level of mediation, the average of the evaluative mediation being higher than that of the restrictive ($r=0.840$ with $p=0.000$; $t=-3.580$ with $p=0.000$). This implies that parents prefer to reason than to use direct restriction. However, the statistically sig-

nificant difference does not seem to be really important when, out of 10 points, restrictive mediation reaches 4.78 and evaluative mediation 5.22. The first type ‘fails’ by a very small amount and the second type only just ‘passes’. Thus, mediation does not appear to be the cause of a greater or lesser exposure to the Web. In fact it seems to be the other way round: a greater exposure can lead to a greater mediation, where restrictive mediation has a greater influence than evaluative mediation on the reduction of exposure time.

Without doubt, the Internet is a medium that has a great influence on the behaviour and perceptions of C&A. Furthermore, the democratization of use of global information, the facility of access and the huge amount of information deposited there, makes it a considerably important medium. The use of the Internet by C&A and the concern of many families about exposure to a medium they have little knowledge of, is the cause of many controversies (Navarro and Morales,2001; Sánchez 2006), due to both the positive and the negative aspects concerning a correct use of its content, as well as the time spent surfing the web.

From a Social Marketing perspective⁴, and faced with the findings in this study, as well as those in existing literature, we consider that two of the critical factors that model an adequate use of the Internet by C&A are parental attitude towards exposure and the mediation they carry out. It should not be forgotten that C&A consider the family to be the most important socializing agent. But both parental attitude and parental mediation depend to a large extent on their level of knowledge. A greater level of knowledge will mean a greater tendency towards evaluative mediation and a lesser use of restriction. Having said this though, reality is complex as there are uncontrollable variables that are ever present, such as perception of the risk of exposure to certain contents (harmful) and the knowledge, values and beliefs of the parents.

This complex reality is also affected by peer groups and the educational and social environment, which leads us to recommend the development of three basic courses of action by the so-called ‘public powers’: (a) support the strategies carried out by other non-profit making institutions to establish bases of good practice in the use of the Internet by C&A, (b)

(4) From the initial idea of Kotler y Zaltman (1971), who considered Social Marketing to be “the design, implementation and control of programs calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas or group practices”, it has evolved towards a Socially Responsible Corporate Marketing which refers to “the activities developed by a company or sector for the purpose of obtaining consumer commitment to a particular type of socially responsible behaviour, while at the same time directly favouring company interests in regard to market position and image” (Kotler, 2000).

encourage an improvement in parental ability and knowledge of the Internet and (c) favour, within the framework of the actions towards the society of information, a social responsibility by companies in the use of the Internet.

From a family point of view, parents should consider these same three points, but applied within and for their environment: (d) encourage in their children a responsible use of the Internet, (e) improve their own knowledge by interacting with the medium and involving their children in their learning and (f) develop a greater family responsibility in the children's Internet exposure. It is not just a question of parents using technologies to control contents, but also one of avoiding (or at least reducing the possibility of) a perception of the Internet as an unknown world and, therefore, something to be feared.

Finally, the third aspect to be considered is the role of business organisations and their use of the Internet as a means of attracting, communicating and selling products. Companies are becoming ever more aware of their social responsibility and the clear influence of their actions. Along these lines, we believe it is very important to (g) develop plans of encouragement and compromise with good practice, where content quality seals, self-regulation in advertising, and compliance with regulations and improvements in accessibility are basic criteria for a more profound and universal development of this medium.

From our point of view, these proposals cover fundamental aspects which we believe would help to reduce the level of uncertainty and both the generation and the knowledge gap that exists concerning the Web. If parents develop abilities and adopt the Internet as just another medium, this will facilitate a more evaluative mediation and an improvement in attitude. This will also help the individual use and socialising role of the Internet to be seen as just another activity which complements traditional leisure, learning and information activities.

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