

Food Advertising Targeted at Children: Examining the Effects of Parent's Personal Moral Philosophy, Parenting Style, and Gender

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to test an integrative model that examines the role of parents in the interaction of food advertising and children. Specifically, the study intends to examine the mediating role of parenting style on the relationship between the personal moral philosophies of parents and attitudes towards food advertising (AA) targeted at children. Personal moral philosophies were examined in two aspects, namely idealism and relativism, while parenting styles are conceptualized as socio- and concept-orientation. The paper also considers the differential effect of parents' gender for this mediation context. Data were collected from 112 Turkish parents who have 3 to 8 year-old children via face-to-face questionnaire. A moderated mediation framework and Bootstrapping were used to test the proposed relationships. The results indicated that while socio-oriented parenting style mediates the relationship between idealism and AA, concept-oriented parenting style mediates the relativism-AA link. More idealist parents have more socio-oriented parenting styles as well as more negative attitudes towards food advertising targeted at children than relativist does and concept-oriented parents. The mediating effect of parenting style on the relationship between moral philosophies of the parents and AA was found to be moderated by gender of the parents. The study contributes to literature by examining the combining effect of personal moral philosophy of parents and their parenting style on attitudes towards advertising targeted at children considering parents' gender as moderator.

Key words: Personal moral philosophies, Socio-oriented parenting style, Concept-oriented parenting style, Advertising targeted at children, Food advertising, Gender

JEL Classification Codes: M40, K17

Çocuklara Yönelik Gıda Reklamları: Ebeveynlerin Bireysel Ahlak Felsefeleri, Ebeveynlik Tarzları ve Cinsiyetin Etkilerinin Araştırılması

Özet

Çalışmanın amacı, gıda televizyon reklamları ile çocuk etkileşiminde ebeveynlerin rolünün anlaşılması ve test edilmesidir. Çalışmada, ebeveynlik tarzının, ebeveynlerin bireysel ahlak felsefeleri ile çocuklara yönelik gıda reklamlarına ilişkin tutumları arasındaki aracılık etkisi incelenmektedir. Bireysel ahlak felsefesi idealizm ve rölativizm olarak ele alınırken; ebeveynlik tarzı sosyal ve kavram yönelimli olmak üzere iki boyutta ele alınmıştır. Ayrıca çalışmada, söz konusu düzenleyicilik ilişkisinde ebeveynin cinsiyetinin düzenleyici etkisi de araştırılmıştır. Analizlerde kullanılan 112 birincil veri, 3 ila 8 yaş aralığında çocuğu olan ebeveynlerden yüz yüze anket yöntemi ile elde edilmiş; ön görülen ilişkiler, düzenleyici aracılık modeli ve Bootstrap yöntemi kullanılarak test edilmiştir. Sonuçlar, sosyal yönelimli ebeveynlik tarzının idealizm ile reklama yönelik olumsuz tutum arasındaki ilişkide aracılık etkisinin olduğunu; kavram yönelimli ebeveynlik tarzının ise rölativizm ile reklama yönelik olumsuz tutum arasındaki ilişkiye aracılık ettiğini ortaya koymuştur. Bu sonuç, ebeveynlerin reklama yönelik olumsuz tutumlarının, sahip oldukları ebeveynlik tarzı ile birlikte, bireysel ahlak felsefelerinden etkilendiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Şöyle ki, daha idealist olan anne babaların daha fazla sosyal yönelimli ebeveynlik tarzına sahip oldukları; aynı zamanda, kavram yönelimli anne babalara kıyasla reklama yönelik daha olumsuz tutumlarının olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Söz konusu aracılık etkisinin anne-baba arasında da, diğer bir ifade ile ebeveynin cinsiyetine göre de farklılaştığı görülmektedir. Çalışma, bireysel ahlak felsefesi ve ebeveynlik tarzının birlikte etkisini incelemesi açısından literatüre katkıda bulunmaktadır. Ek olarak, önceki çalışmalarda yoğunlukla anne-çocuk ilişkisi üzerinde durulurken; ebeveynin cinsiyetinin düzenleyici etkisinin incelenmesi de literatüre katkı niteliğindedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bireysel ahlak felsefesi, Sosyal yönelimli ebeveynlik tarzı, Kavram yönelimli ebeveynlik tarzı, Çocuklara yönelik reklam, Gıda reklamları, Cinsiyet

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1. Introduction

The marketing of children-oriented products are considered as more profitable since children have an increasing power to influence the purchase of parents (Ahuja *et al.*, 2001). Yet, advertising activities targeted at children have been seen as one of the most argumentative areas of marketing. Food advertising sits at the center of this argument. The question of ethics becomes more significant when the market targets children, the most impressionable section of the society (Malik, 2012). Paid advertising to children primarily includes television commercials that focus on toys and food products, most of which are high in fat and sugar and low in nutritional value (Calvert, 2008). According to the World Health Organization, marketing activities targeted at children are one of the important contributors to the risk of child health¹. Children under eight may especially be vulnerable to advertising since they lack the cognitive skills to understand the persuasive intent of advertisements (Calvert, 2008). For instance, previous research show that breakfast and snack preferences of 5- and 6-year-old children are directly influenced from TV ads (Goldberg *et al.*, 1978). Therefore, parents generally intend to play a major role as gatekeepers as they control children's TV viewing time and content (Chan & Mcneal, 2003). They play a mediational role in children's consumption and TV exposure and may welcome interference from public policy makers (Wisnblit *et al.*, 2013).

Thus, the importance of parents' attitudes towards the impact of food advertising targetted at children has risen significantly in the last decade (Hudson *et al.*, 2008). Parents' attitudes in this context may be two-fold. Favorable attitudes about advertising may occur from the belief that advertising provides information and contributes to the independent socialization process of the children (Andrews, 1989). Parents with unfavorable attitudes, on the other hand, may argue that advertising promotes materialism, provides false or misleading information, and encourages an unhealthy diet (Pollay and Mittal 1993; Rose *et al.*, 1998). Therefore, understanding how parents' attitudes towards advertising targeted to children are shaped becomes more important to marketers. Several factors may influence the attitudes of parents about the issue including situational factors (i.e. age and gender of the children) and individual differences (i.e. moral philosophy, ethical judgments, parenting style) (Chan and McNeal, 2003; Bakir and Vitell, 2010).

Personal moral philosophy of the parents and their parental style, among others, may be seen as two of the primary antecedents in parent-child communication. Social information processing literature state that dispositional characteristics of individuals impact their cognitive associations and cognitive evaluations depending on their

¹ http://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/childhood_why/en/ (Date:29.05.2018)

characteristics (Trevino, 1986). They interpret environmental cues, meaningful signals or messages according to these characteristics (Park, 2005). As an individual characteristic, personal moral philosophy of an individual explains and typifies the moral judgments of individuals. Personal moral philosophy suggests that people take one of the two basic stances; idealism and relativism, regarding ethical issues which in turn influence the judgments reached (Forsthy, 1980). Thus, being an idealist vs relativist parent may frame the parent–child communication by affecting parental style as a basis for explaining differences in parent’s consumer socialization tendencies. Parental style encouraging concept- or socio-oriented communication pattern is seen as one of the strongest influence during the early stages of children socialization.

Moreover, parental style mediates the influence of other socialization agents such as mass media or peers (Bakir *et al.*, 2006). Given the importance of personal moral philosophy and parental style on parent-child communication pattern, understanding the influence of these constructs on attitude towards advertising could contribute to more effective marketing and advertising strategies. Thus, this paper attempts to examine the direct and indirect effects of parents’ personal moral philosophies on their parenting style and attitudes towards food advertising targeted at children between three to eight.

Although there are considerable amount of research on parent-child communication patterns, most of the research have been concentrated on only mother, or have not focused on mother-father differences (e.g. Carlson and Grossbart, 1988; Rose *et al.*, 1998; Chan and McNeal, 2003; Bakir and Vitell, 2010). This one-sided viewpoint is reported as the main limitation to an accurate knowledge of gender differences in the literature (Carapito *et al.*, 2018). This study attempts to fill this gap by examining the moderator effect of parent’s gender. More specifically, using a moderated mediation framework, this study examines the mediating role of parenting style between the personal moral philosophies of the parents and their attitudes towards advertising targetted at children; and the moderation role of parents’ gender.

2.Theoretical Background

2.1.Personal Moral Philosophy

Personal moral philosophy of an individual has been considered as one of the central constructs in ethical decision-making models (Singhapakdi *et al.*, 1999). It has been seen as an indicator to understand how an individual’s attitudes and ethical judgments are related to making decisions in ethical issues (Bakir and Vitell, 2010). In other

words, personal moral philosophies are similar to a conceptual system of an individual's attitudes, ethical beliefs and values (Forsthy 1992). Previous research suggests a number of different personal moral philosophies which they generally are contrasted in terms of relativism and idealism (Singhapakdi *et al.*, 1999; Park, 2005; Bakir and Vitell, 2010).

Idealism and relativism are considered independent concepts rather than contrary ones (Park, 2005). That is, rather than being either idealist or relativist, individuals can range from high to low in their emphasis on relativism or idealism (Forsyth, 1992). However, many researchers (Vitell *et al.*, 1993; Singhapakdi *et al.*, 1996; Marta *et al.*, 2001) have found contrasting relationships of idealism and relativism with ethical judgements, social responsibility, and behavioral intentions of individuals.

Idealism indicates the acceptance of universal moral rules. Basically, idealism defines the individual's priorities about the welfare of others (Bass *et al.*, 1998). Therefore, highly idealistic individuals believe that one should always avoid harming others and be careful about the negative consequences of behaviors or choices (Forsthy, 1992), and tend to believe that good consequences can always be reached by right actions (Treise *et al.*, 1994). However, if someone is less idealistic, he/she may believe harmful consequences can sometimes be unavoidable to reach positive ends (Forsyth, 1980).

On the other hand, relativism indicates an individual's degree of rejection of universal moral rules. Instead, relativism argues that moral standards are relative to one's culture or society and 'moral actions depend upon the nature of the situation and the individuals involved., more than the ethical principle that was violated' (Forsyth, 1980; Forsyth, 1992). Therefore, the base of the right and wrong actions are specific to the situation for relativistic individuals, while idealists defend universal rights and wrongs. Individuals who are highly relativistic argue that, in order to decide whether an action is moral or not, one should focus on the nature of the situation. They believe that ethically correct actions may also produce negative consequences as well as positive ones (Bass *et al.*, 1998).

Therefore, relativistic individuals can be very sceptical deciding on the right action. They believe that situational circumstances are more important than violating ethical principals while judging an individual or an action (Forsthy, 1992; Singhapakdi *et al.*, 1999).

2.2. Parenting Style

Parenting style, or parental socialization, is related to family-child communication patterns and defined as the interaction between parents, children, and their consumption environment (Chan and McNeal, 2003). It describes the preferences, priorities and guidance that parents adopt to improve child socialization to develop habits and values that are parallel with their culture (Baumrind, 1991). Parenting style differs from parenting practices. While parenting style describes a general parent child interactions across a wide range of situations, parenting practices represent specific implications such as parental control in child feeding (Kremers *et al.*, 2003).

Parental socialization is founded on the social learning theory. Socialization is defined as ‘the process by which young people acquire skills, knowledge, and attitudes relevant to their functioning as consumers in the marketplace’ (Mitchell *et al.*, 2015). Social learning theory explains consumer socialization by focusing on environmental influences impinging on the individual. Learning occurs during the interactions between individual and various socialization agents, including the family and television (Moschis *et al.*, 1984). Child’s socialization process basically starts with the communication between parent and child, and parent’s openness to the child’s needs and views (Evans *et al.*, 2013). In other words, parents can have a significant influence on their child's gaining consumption abilities and evaluations (Bush *et al.*, 1999). For instance, previous studies (i.e. Moore and Stephens, 1975; Bush *et al.*, 1999) indicate a positive relationship between parent-child overt communication and child’s consumer skills such as attitude towards advertising or price consciousness.

In the literature, parenting style is conceptualized in two different but similar ways: The first one is Baumrind’s (1967, 1971) classification of parenting in three styles, namely authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative. The second stream, which this study adopts, conceptualizes parenting style with two dimensions (Rose *et al.*, 1998) as socio-orientation and concept-orientation. Socio-orientation reflects relational concerns of parent and child communication and focuses on children’s respect to authority (Chan and McNeal, 2003). Socio-oriented parents tend to be more protective. They promote respect to parental authority, and also incline to monitor and control their children's consumption activities (Rose *et al.*, 1998). Socio-oriented parents are concerned with the effects of outside influences, particularly the media's influence on their children (Rose *et al.*, 1998). Therefore, one can expect that socio-oriented parents may focus more on parental control and be more likely to restrict children’s access to outside influences (Chan and McNeal, 2003). On the other hand, concept-orientation measures issues-related communication and reflects the degree of

independent evaluation of a subject by children (Chan and McNeal, 2003). Concept-oriented parenting emphasizes encouraging children to develop independent skills and reasoning (Rose *et al.*, 1998). Thus, it can be expected that these parents may be more likely to encourage children to develop an independent perspective and provide open discussion. Previous research support this notion. Foxman *et al.* (1989) state that when concept-oriented communication is high, the children have more influence on family decision making, while they have less impact when socio-oriented communication is high.

2.3. Attitude toward Advertising

Attitude toward advertising is defined as a tendency to respond positively or negatively to an advertising, including individuals' beliefs and affective reactions. Attitude toward advertising is seen as an important predictor of both attitude toward the brand (Rose *et al.*, 1998) and advertising response (Bush *et al.*, 1999). Therefore it is also accepted as an influencer of the purchasing intentions and behaviors of the consumers. Consumers' attitudes towards an individual advertisement or a particular advertising type are influenced by their attitudes towards advertising in general (Bush *et al.*, 1999). Thus the positive attitudes of consumers are taken as a serious factor to strengthen advertising effectiveness. Popovic *et al.* (2015) state the reason behind it as the cognitive ability of the consumer towards the advertising being restricted with their emotions and thoughts.

This study specifically concentrates on television advertising since it is seen as the most common and controversial form of children's advertising (Rose *et al.*, 1998). It has been argued that TV advertising may lead a child to prefer more material objects over more socially oriented ones and may increase conflict between parent and child (Bijmolt and Classen, 1998). Further, TV food advertising has been chosen since a large number of food advertisements are broadcasted on children programs and most of them contain nutrient poor or unhealthy food messages rather than to promote a healthy life style (Singh and Soni, 2015).

3. Research Hypotheses

3.1. Personal Moral Philosophy and Parenting Style

In the literature, studies state that parenting style regulates the parent-child communication while being affected from some personal and intellectual characteristics of the parents. Since parenting style reflects some basic personal, cultural and social differences on controlling outside influences on children (i.e. mass

media) (Chan and McNeal, 2003), based on the parenting style they adopted, parents may play different roles in their children socialization and development, including media-child interaction. In other terms, it is accepted that parents effort to socialize their children into consumer practices that are parallel with their values (Clarke, 2008).

Therefore it can be expected that parenting style may be affected from the personal moral philosophies of the parents. That is, idealist parents are tend to be more rule-oriented. They may prefer being a more authoritative parent compared to relativists. Highly idealist people tend to be more conservative in their position on moral issues and activities. They would also be more likely to object to legal, but ethically questionable, behavior (Forsyth, 1992). Thus, the conceptualization of these constructs might suggest that more idealistic individuals are more likely to have socio-oriented parenting style since they may give priority to respect the authority. On the other hand, relativist parents may think that their children's independent evaluation skills should improve to evaluate their environment in a healthier way. Therefore, relativists may tend to be more concept-oriented parents.

3.2. Personal Moral Philosophy and Attitude toward Advertising

It is proposed in this study that moral philosophies of parents and their parenting styles may shape the their attitudes towards TV advertising in general and advertising targeted at children in particular. That is, more relativist parents may evaluate children-oriented advertising on a case-by-case basis and generate an attitude depending on a particular advertising. On the other hand, idealist parents may believe that all kind of advertising activities targeted at children are wrong or unethical since they believe universal rights and wrongs. Thus, it is expected that idealism will be more dominant on child-related media activities than relativism.

3.3. Parenting Style and Attitude toward Advertising

Previous research also suggest that parents who have socio-oriented communication tend to be more skeptical about other socialization agents such as mass media that may interfere with their efforts to actively shape their children's consumer experiences (Carlson and Grossbart, 1988). On the other hand, concept-oriented parents are more concerned with encouraging children to develop independent skills and reasonings (Carlson and Grossbart, 1988). Concept-oriented parents may have positive (or less negative) attitude toward child-related advertising believing that the information gathered from TV advertising may contribute children's socialization

(Mukherji, 2005). Previous research state that highly concept-oriented mothers tend to discuss TV advertisements with their children more than others (Rose *et al.*, 1998).

On the other hand, more socio-oriented parents may have more negative attitudes towards TV advertising targetted at children, finding advertisements to be manipulative and as not telling the truth. Previous research (i.e. Crosby and Grossbart, 1984; Walsh *et al.*, 1998; Carlson *et al.*, 1994; Evans *et al.*, 2013) found differences regarding attitudes toward food advertising based on parental styles. That is, more authoritative parents being more concerned about food advertising targetted at children as compared to more laissez-faire parents. Similarly, for advergemes, Evans *et al.* (2013) found that authoritarian parents hold more negative perceptions and leanings toward advergemes compared to tolerant parents. Therefore, it is expected that socio-oriented parents would have more negative attitudes towards advertising than concept-oriented parents.

Taken together, these relationships specify a pattern among personal moral philosophy (i.e. idealism and relativism), attitude toward advertising targetted at children and parenting style (i.e. socio- and concept-orientation) which is consistent with the three conditions of mediation (Baron and Kenny, 1986). That is, being a relativist or an idealist may not directly and necessarily generate an attitude toward a brand or TV ads. Instead, personal moral philosophies together with the parenting style is the most likely cause of this attitude. Specifically, we argued that being an idealist may increase the tendency of being a socio-oriented parent which in turn would have a negative effect on attitude toward ads. On the other hand, a more relativist parent tend to have a less negative attitude toward TV advertising because of his/her concept-oriented parenting style. The reason behind this personal moral philosophy- parenting style- attitude toward advertising link is the primary role of personal moral philosophies. Since personal moral philosophies represent an integrated conceptual system of individual's attitudes, moral beliefs and values; they can be expected to have influence first on parenting style and second, together with parenting style, on attitudes toward advertising. Hence:

H1: Socio-oriented parenting style mediates the relationship between idealism and attitude towards food advertising targetted at children.

H2: Concept-oriented parenting style mediates the relationship between relativism and attitude towards food advertising targetted at children.

3.4. *The Moderating Role of Gender*

Gender is a key variable for marketers to generate their marketing strategies along several dimensions including information processing, ethical behavior, or advertising effectiveness (Wolin and Korgaonkar, 2018). Past empirical studies have demonstrated significant gender-related differences across a variety of tasks and traits (Darley and Smith, 1995). Gender differences are normally attributed to sociological, psychological, and biological sources. For example, Darley and Smith (1995) state that ‘...men and women occupy different social roles and are subjected to different social pressures; sexual hormones have been hypothesized to cause gender differences in perceptual-motor skills while variations in brain organization and functioning have been used to explain other gender differences’. Social role theory proposes that men and women behave according to the stereotypes associated with their social roles (Singhapakdi et al., 1999). In the case of advertising, there is evidence that suggests men and women process promotional information in a different way (Darley and Smith, 1995; Wolin, 2003). It is similar for attitudes toward advertising. For instance, Chan and McNeal (2003), found that mothers held more negative attitudes toward advertising than fathers.

Past studies also provide evidence for gender and moral philosophy interaction. For instance, McHoskey (1996) found women to be more idealist than men. Singhapakdi and Vitell (1994) reported that, when Machiavellianism is controlled, men have lower idealism and relativism scores than women. Studies examining gender differences state that men tend to be more ‘independent, masterful, assertive, and instrumentally competent’ (Eagly and Wood, 199) while women are more friendly, trusting, and unselfish (Eagly and Wood 1991; Feingold, 1994). Bakan (1966) state that while males are more self-oriented, females center their feelings more on others. Singhapakdi et al. (1999) state that these characteristics make women more communal and agreeable which is related to the ‘ethic of caring’ and this ethic is similar to being more idealist. Further, caring for others is also seen as a standing principle close to the idealism dimension of personal moral philosophy (Singhapakdi et al., 1999). Thus, it is believed that women may have higher idealism scores than men and men may have higher relativism scores than women.

Litreature provides limited and contradictory evidence about gender differences in parental style. Examining family communication patterns in a collective culture, Bakir et al. (2006) find that mothers have high socio- and concept-oriented communication while fathers have low concept-oriented communication with their children. Russell et al. (1998) state that mothers have more authoritative pattern while fathers use more authoritarian and permissive parenting styles.

Taken together, all the above findings indicate potential gender differences in parent-child communication patterns. Therefore, it is believed that moral philosophy-parenting style-AA link will be different for women and men. That is, since women tend to be more idealistic, it is expected that the effect of idealism on AA via socio-oriented parenting style will be stronger for women than men. On the other hand, since men tend to be more relativist, the indirect effect of relativism on AA via concept-oriented parenting style may be stronger for men than women. Hence,

H3. The indirect effect of idealism on AA via socio-oriented parenting style is stronger for women than men.

H4: The indirect effect of relativism on AA via concept-oriented parenting style is stronger for men than women.

4. Method

A moderated mediation model (Preacher *et al.*, 2007) was tested to examine the mediating role of parenting style; and the moderating role of gender on the relationship between moral philosophies and attitude toward food advertising targetted children.

4.1. Participants

The main population of the study is the parents who have children between 3 to 8 years of age living in Turkey. The reason of selecting this age range is the difference between normal programs and commercials can be perceived at the age between 3 and 8 (Bijmont and Classen, 1998). Further, it is stated that children-under-eight year old may be susceptible to advertising since their cognitive skills do not develop to understand the persuasive intent of advertisements (Calvert, 2008). Ethics committee approval was obtained and the parents were assured anonymity. They are informed about voluntarily participation. Snowball sampling technique was used to collect the data. A total of 280 parents were contacted and 120 of them were willing to participate to the study with the return rate of 42%. Eight questionnaires were excluded from the study since they are found unreliable because of incomplete or identical answers to all questions. The sample consisted of 52% female (mother) and 48% male (father) with the mean age of 32 ranging from 28 to 42. The majority of respondents had bachelor degree (67%). As for the income level, 76% of the participants defined themselves as ‘middle income level’.

4.2. Measurement

The data were collected through self-administered two-part questionnaire. The first part included the measurement items concerning personal moral philosophies of parents (idealism and relativism), their parenting styles (socio- and concept-orientation) and their attitudes toward advertising targeted at children. The second part included demographic questions, such as parent's gender and age, monthly household income, and education level.

All scale measurement items were adopted from the relevant literature and measured by 5-point Likert type scale (5 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree). The measurement items were translated into Turkish independently by the author and a professional translator. Another independent researcher fluent in both languages conducted back-to-back translation to determine whether the translated text reflects the intended meanings of the items

Personal moral philosophy was measured with two dimensions, namely idealism and relativism. Idealism and relativism were measured with ten items for each scale, which are adopted from Bakir and Vitell (2010). The relativism scale measures the degree of individual's rejection of universal moral principles such as 'There are no ethical principles that are so important that they should be part of any code of ethics'. Idealism measures one's perspective on positive and negative consequences with such items, such as 'A person should make certain that their actions never intentionally harm another even to a small degree'.

The measurement of *parenting style* was adopted from Kara Chan and McNeal (2003). Socio-orientation dimension was measured with five items indicating the extent to which parents request their children to obey the rules of parental standards, such as 'I want to know what my child did with his/her money'. Concept-orientation was measured with eight items indicating the degree to which parents encourage their children to develop their own rules about consumption. Items include, for example, 'I let my child decide which things he/she should or should not buy'.

The measurement of the variable *attitude toward food advertising* targeted at children was measured by seven items and adopted from the study of Rose et al., (1998). The scale focuses on general skepticism and reactions toward food advertising, such as 'Most television commercials are in poor taste and very annoying'.

4.3. Preliminary Analyses

Prior to hypotheses tests, the data were checked for normality, missing values, and outliers. It is revealed that all of the skewness and kurtosis values of measurement items were below the absolute value of 1, indicating normal distribution. Missing values were less than 5% of the data; therefore these values were replaced by mean. After that, the data were examined for reliability and validity. Cronbach's Alpha as the indicator of internal reliability was computed independently within each of the constructs. All reliability coefficients of Cronbach's Alpha exceeded the threshold value of 70% (Hair *et al.*, 2000) for social sciences. Results show that all correlation coefficients among independent variables are below the critical point of 0.70 indicating adequate level of discriminant validity (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013). Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients of the variables. Finally, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to test the data fit and convergent validity. The results showed satisfactory fit-indices [Chi-square (df 110) = 1.45, CFI = 0.92, GFI = 0.89, NFI = 0.88, and RMSEA = 0.06].

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Coefficients

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Mean (α)</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
(1) Idealism	4.07 (.87)	0.82	1			
(2) Relativism	2.65 (.81)	1.21	.282**	1		
(3) Concept-orientation	2.89 (.79)	0.77	.380**	.236*	1	
(4) Socio-orientation	2.65 (.76)	1.00	.040	.517**	.018	1
(5) Attitude toward Ad	3.82 (.91)	1.15	.303**	.785**	.309**	.513**
VIF			1.17	1.51	1.15	1.39

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.001$, **** $VIF < 10$ two tails

4.4. Test of the Hypotheses

The hypotheses were tested in two interlinked steps. For the first and the second hypotheses, a simple mediation model was conducted using the process developed by Baron and Kenny (1986). After, the moderator variable was integrated into the mediated model to test the H3 and H4. The moderated mediation hypotheses were tested using PROCESS application developed by Preacher *et al.* (2007), (PROCESS, v2.16.3, Model59). It produced direct and indirect effects in mediation and conditional indirect effects in moderated mediation models by constructing percentile based bootstrap confidence intervals for conditional indirect effects (Hayes, 2012).

Tests of Mediation: Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 proposed that parenting style mediate the relationship between personal moral philosophy and attitude toward advertising. According to Baron and Kenny’s (1986) mediation process, four conditions were examined to establish mediation: (a) Significant effect of Personal Moral Philosophy on Parenting Style; (b) Significant effect of Personal Moral Philosophy on Attitude toward Advertising; (c) Significant effect Parenting Style on Attitude toward Advertising; and (d) An insignificant or weaker effect of Personal Moral Philosophy on Attitude toward Advertising when Parenting Style is added. The regression results of mediation testing were reported in Table 2.

Results in Table 2 show that Condition (a) was supported for both H1 and H2. That is, idealism was positively related to socio-oriented parenting style ($\beta = .85, p < .01$) and relativism was positively related to concept-oriented parenting style ($\beta = .15, p < .05$). Table 2 also showed that idealism ($\beta = -.36, p < .01$) and relativism ($\beta = .72, p < .01$) had positive direct effects on attitude towards advertising, which supported Condition (b). Further, socio-oriented parenting style ($\beta = -.57, p < .01$) and concept-oriented parenting style ($\beta = .19, p < .05$) had significant direct effects on attitude toward advertising, providing the support for condition (c). For the mediation effect, after taking parenting styles into account, the effect of idealism on attitude toward advertising via socio-oriented parenting style had become weaker ($\beta = .21, p < .05$), but still significant, which suggests partial mediation. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported. Similarly, the effect of relativism on attitude toward advertising via concept-oriented parenting style became weaker ($\beta = .028, p < .01$), but the effect was still significant indicating partial mediation. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

Table 2: Regression Results for Testing Mediation in Hypothesis 1

Variables	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3		Step 4	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
Idealism→ socio-oriented PS ^b	.85*	.48						
Relativism→ concept-oriented PS	.15**	.05						
Idealism→AA ^c			-.36*	.11				
Relativism→AA ^c			.72*	.05				
Socio-oriented PS→AA ^c					-.57*	.09		
Concept-oriented PS→AA ^c					.19**	.08		
Idealism → C.O. → AA							.21**	.05
Relativism→S.O. →AA							.02*	.01

* $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$

Note: S.O. = Socio-Oriented Parenting Style, C.O. = Concept-Oriented Parenting Style,

Tests of Moderated Mediation: Hypothesis 3 and 4 predicted that gender moderates the strength of the relationship between personal moral philosophies and AA via parenting style. To assess moderated mediation, following conditions were examined based on Preacher et al. (2007):

The first condition considered a significant direct effect of independent variable (idealism and relativism) on dependent variable (attitude toward advertising). The results for H1 and H2 (Table 2) provided the necessary results for this condition, that is, both idealism and relativism had significant effects on AA.

Table 3: Moderation Effects

Predictor	B	SE	T
<i>Indirect Effects</i>			
Idealism x Gender → S.O.	.29**	.09	2.01**
Idealism x Gender → AA	-.29*	.24	-2.43
Relativism x Gender → C.O.	.11**	.11	1.97**
Relativism x Gender → AA	.28**	.11	2.56*
S.O. x Gender → AA	.19**	.18	1.86**
C.O. x Gender → AA	.40**	.17	2.31**

* $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$

Note: S.O. = Socio-Oriented Parenting Style, C.O. = Concept-Oriented Parenting Style, AA=Attitude Toward Advertising

The second condition had two requirements: Primarily, significant effects of interactions between the independent (idealism, relativism) and moderator (gender) variables on mediator (parenting style). After that, significant effects of interactions between mediator (parenting style) and moderator (gender) on dependent variable (attitude toward advertising) were required. Table 3 showed the results for the second condition. Accordingly, interaction term of idealism and gender was significant for socio-oriented parenting style ($\beta = .29$, $p < .05$), providing support for the second condition. Interaction term of relativism and gender was significant for concept-oriented parenting style ($\beta = .11$, $p < .05$). For the second part of the condition, results showed that, the interaction term of socio-oriented parenting style and gender had a positive significant effect on attitude toward advertising ($\beta = .19$, $p < .05$). The effect of the interaction term of concept-oriented parenting style and gender on attitude toward advertising was also significant ($\beta = .40$, $p < .05$). Taken together, the second condition was satisfied.

The third condition stated the direct effect of the mediator variable on dependent variable. The results of Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 (Table 2) provided support for

this condition indicating direct significant effects of both socio- and concept-oriented communication on AA.

The last condition for testing the moderation effect was that conditional indirect (CI) effects of independent variable (idealism and relativism) on dependent variable (AA) via mediator (socio- and concept-orientation) for the moderator variable (men and women). The results in Table 4 showed that for women, the CIs effect of idealism on AA via Socio-oriented parenting style was significant (zero is not in the 95% CIs) (.42; 95% bootstrap CI = .094 to .747) but was insignificant for men (.28; 95% bootstrap CI = -.052 to .618). Thus, H3 was supported. The CI effect of relativism on AA via concept-oriented parenting style was significant for both men and women but the effect was stronger for men (.884; 99% bootstrap CI = .719 to 1.04) than women (.598; 99% bootstrap CI = .450 to .745). Therefore, H4 was supported.

Table 4: Conditional Indirect Effects (Moderated Mediation)

<i>Mediator</i>	<i>Moderator</i>	<i>Boot Effect</i>	<i>Boot SE</i>	<i>Boot LLCI</i>	<i>Boot ULCI</i>
	Women	.420	.164	.094	.747
Socio-Oriented Parenting*	Men	.282	.169	-.052	.618
	Women	.598	.074	.450	.745
Concept-Oriented Parenting**	Men	.884	.083	.719	1.04

*Note: Bootstrap sample size: 1000, Level of confidence: 95, *Conditional indirect effect of idealism on AA at values of the moderator; ** Conditional indirect effect of relativism on AA at values of the moderator.*

5. Conclusion and Discussion

This study attempts to enrich existing consumer behavior and advertising literature by examining personal influencers of parents' attitudes towards food advertising targeted at children. To our knowledge, there is no study examining the moral philosophies and parenting style together as individual influencers of attitude toward food advertising targeted at children considering the gender of parents as the moderating variable. The results of this study contribute to the literature, first, by testing a moderated mediation model considering how parents, who have 3 to 8 year-old children, view food advertising targeted at children and how their moral philosophies

and parenting styles play a role on this attitude. The second contribution of the study is addressing the differential role of parents' gender on the relationship among personal moral philosophy, parenting style, and attitude toward food advertising.

5.1. Direct Effects

The results of this study have some insights for both parents and marketers. First, the results reveal that both idealism and relativism have direct effects on attitude towards food advertising targeted at children. The effect of idealism on AA is negative and stronger than the positive effect of relativism. This result shows that, while more idealist parents tend to have more negative attitude toward food advertising targeted at children, more relativist parents tend to have positive attitudes toward advertising. This result is in the line with previous studies (Treise et al., 1994) indicating that highly idealist individuals are more skeptical about the advertising. Chan and Leung (2006) indicate that idealism has a positive correlation with ethical sensitivity. Further, idealism argues that an action being right or wrong is independent of how it is applied, and believes that the good consequences can only be achieved by right actions (Treise et al., 1994). Therefore, it seems reasonable that idealist parents believe that food advertising are not ethical since they have a negative result for their children health.

This study also confirms that different parenting styles have different levels of negative attitude toward food advertising targeting children. While socio-oriented parenting style is negatively related to AA, concept-oriented parenting style positively influences AA of parents. This result supports the previous research indicating that concept-oriented parents may have positive (or less negative) attitude toward child-related advertising believing that the information which is gathered from TV advertising may contribute socialization of the children (Mukherji, 2005).

5.2. Mediating effects of parenting styles

Besides direct effects, this study expands the previous knowledge by providing mediation evidence for proposed relationships. The results reveal that idealism and relativism are partially mediated by the parenting styles. When socio-oriented parenting style is taken into consideration, the negative direct effect of idealism on AA gets weaker, meaning that the socio-orientation partially mediate the idealism-AA link by reducing the negative direct effect of idealism. That is, a parent's idealism level is expected to act as a dispositional variable, triggering the level of socio-oriented parenting, and in turn, manifests itself as a negative attitude toward child-oriented advertising. This partial mediation effect can be explained by Ethics Position Theory indicating that individuals' personal moral philosophies influence

their judgements, actions, and emotions especially in ethically sensitive situations (Forsyth, O'boyle, and McDaniel, 2008). More idealist parents see TV food advertising targeting children ethically questionable. It seems reasonable that idealist parents tend to behave against their children in a more disciplinary way and want to keep them under control to protect them from the harmful effects of TV food ads.

Similarly, concept-oriented parenting style partially mediates the positive direct effect of relativism on AA. That is, as a parent's relativism level increases, so does their intent to adopt concept-oriented parenting, which in turn, makes them more modest toward TV advertising. This mediation effect is congruent with the argument that highly relativist individuals' moral judgements may differ based on the characteristics of the situation or action they are evaluating (Forsyth *et al.*, 2008). Further, concept-oriented parents focus on issue-related communication and encourage children to develop independent skills and reasoning (Rose *et al.*, 1998). Thus, it seems reasonable that more relativist and concept-oriented parents perceive TV ads relatively less harmful and unethical.

5.3. The role of gender

Gender-based differences in parenting are seen as an important focus in social sciences and psychology literature (Russell *et al.*, 1998; Conrade and Ho, 2001). Most of the previous studies examining gender-based differences have focused on specific parent-child interactions such as the amount and type of parent-child play (O'Connor *et al.*, 1995). As an expansion to prior research, this study reveals that gender of the parents along with personal variables such as family communication style and parents' personal moral point of views can be an important consideration for marketing managers. That is, the indirect effect of idealism on AA together with socio-oriented parenting style was significant only for mothers. This result about the moderation effect of gender supports the past research indicating that mothers are more idealistic and more authoritarian than fathers (McHoskey, 1996; Chan and McNeal, 2003). When we look at the conditional indirect effect of gender on relativism, concept-orientation and AA relation, results showed that the positive indirect effect of relativism on AA via socio-oriented parenting style is stronger for fathers than it is for mothers. This result provides additional support for previous research explaining gender-based differences in parenting style based on the Role Theory. For instance, McKiney and Renk (2008) state that fathers' little involvement in and responsibility for childcare makes fathers and mothers use different parenting styles.

6. Managerial Implications

Previous research address that increasing our knowledge about a detailed parental perspective to uncover how parents make judgments on advertising directed at children might minimize the incongruity between parents and marketers (Bakir and Vitell, 2010). This study attempts to fulfill this gap for food marketing managers and offer several implications. First of all, it is apparent that for both moral philosophies and parenting styles, parents are concerned over potential impacts of food advertising targeting children. Therefore, marketing managers should promote food products in an appealing way, or at least acceptable primarily to the parents.

Results also highlight the concurrent role of parenting style and moral philosophies of the parents. The fact that parenting style mediates the relationship between personal moral philosophies and attitude toward food advertising targeting children has important implications in terms of communication messages. Since relativism and concept-orientation emphasize the importance of situations and ideas, rather than being exposed to TV ads, the propriety of the message source and context might be more important for them. For example, expertness of the source leads opinion change for the concept-oriented parents (Stone and Chaffee, 1970). Therefore, more utilitarian messages and expert opinions might work better for relativist and concept-oriented parents. On the other hand, socio-orientation highlights conformity of parental authority and prioritizes a hierarchical family structure (Schrodt et al., 2008). It also focuses on limiting outside influences over their children. Socio-orientation, together with idealism, generates more negative attitude toward food advertising targeting at children. Therefore, marketing managers need to first convince idealist and socio-oriented parents themselves before their children.

7. Limitations and Future Research

The findings of this study must be viewed in the context of its limitations. First, the use of snowball sampling technique as a non-probability sampling method prevents the generalization of the study results (Malhotra and Peterson, 2006). In addition, the sample size is relatively limited since parents tend to approach skeptically to child-related research. Therefore, our results are valid only for parents who participated to the study. Future research should replicate the proposed relations with a bigger sample size in different countries. Third, although survey method provides valuable and important descriptive information about individuals' attitudes and intentions, qualitative methods would offer more detailed information about parents' perceptions of moral philosophy and parenting style concepts (Bakir and Vitell, 2010). Future research may focus on qualitative techniques to expand the proposed relations in this study. Future research should also examine direct and indirect effects of factors other

than personal moral philosophy of the parents. For example, it could be convenient to extend the current study by examining the mediation effect of parents' moral intensity on the relationship between their personal moral philosophies and parenting styles. The buffering effect of regions where parents live in (i.e. urban vs. rural areas) on parenting style and attitude towards food advertising targeted at children could also be examined in future research. Finally, the subject of the study was only TV food advertising targeted at children. This may also prevent the results from being applicable to all TV advertisings in all sectors, since the sensitivity levels of the parents may vary for different types of goods and services for children. Future research should examine the proposed relationships for other products, such as toys advertising, and for other communication tools such as online advertisings.

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