

BABY SCAM

MARKETING TO INFANTS & TODDLERS



*The media and marketing industries' assault on infants and toddlers begins "by training babies to depend on screens for entertainment and the things they sell for amusement and comfort. Before they can even ask for it, we decorate their cribs, clothing, toys and diapers with media characters and place them in front of screens at every opportunity."*¹

Branding Babies

- By six months, babies are forming mental images of corporate logos and mascots.² According to market research, babies are requesting brands as soon as they can speak.³
- Baby paraphernalia is routinely festooned with licensed characters—these same icons will sell them media, food, toys, and other products throughout childhood.⁴
- In their quest for “cradle to grave brand loyalty,” companies that manufacture products for adults also target babies. Examples include the “John Deere Little Princess Romper” and a Harley Davidson line of onesies.^{5, 6}

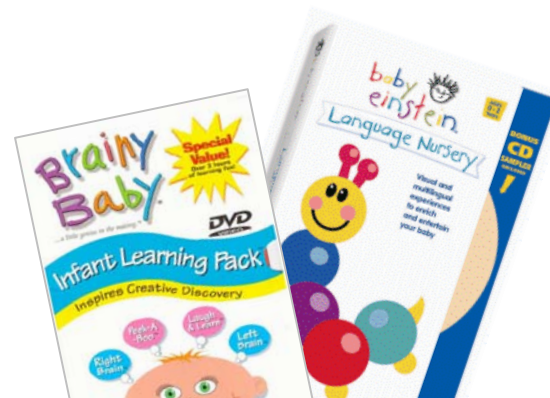


Screen Saturated Infants and Toddlers:

- By the age of three months, 40% of infants are watching screen media regularly. By the time children are two, the number jumps to 90%.⁷
- 19% of babies one year and under have a TV in their bedroom.⁸
- 14% of children under two spend more than 2 hours a day with screen media.⁹
- Marketers urge parents to soothe fussy babies with cell phone videos.¹⁰

The Baby Media Scam:

- Baby media companies routinely make unfounded educational claims to sell parents on their products. Brand names such as *Brainy Baby*, *Baby Einstein*, and *Baby Genius* are powerful—and deceptive—marketing tools.
- 56% of parents of young children believe that baby videos are good for child development.^{11, 12}
- The most common reason parents give for putting babies and toddlers in front of screens is that they are beneficial to children’s brain development.¹³
- Disney’s *Baby Einstein* has sold more than 20 million videos.¹⁴



THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS
RECOMMENDS NO SCREEN TIME FOR
CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF TWO

Screen Time is Not Educational for Babies and Toddlers:

- While television can be an effective teaching tool for older children, there is no credible evidence that babies and toddlers learn anything useful from screens.¹⁵

BABY SCAM MARKETING TO INFANTS & TODDLERS



- Screen media is not an effective means of teaching babies and toddlers the meaning of new words.¹⁶
- Unlike reading to babies, viewing Disney's *Baby Wordsworth* regularly does not promote language development.¹⁷
- What babies do learn from screen media is to recognize, and become attached to, commercialized media characters.¹⁸



Research Suggests Screen time for Babies May Even Be Harmful:

- Television, for babies, is associated negatively with cognitive development¹⁹ and regular sleep patterns.²⁰ It can also be habituating.²¹
- The more time babies spend viewing television, the less time they spend interacting with parents or engaging in creative play—two activities known to promote learning.²²
- For babies 8 to 16 months, watching baby videos is associated with slower language development.²³

In 2006, CCFC filed a Federal Trade Commission complaint against *Baby Einstein*, *Brainy Baby*, and *Baby FirstTV* for false and deceptive marketing. As a result, the marketing for *Baby Einstein* and *Brainy Baby* was substantially altered—eliminating many of the educational claims cited in CCFC's complaint. However, the FTC did not require the companies to acknowledge their deception or to compensate the parents they deceived. *BabyFirstTV* continues to market itself as an educational tool for infants and toddlers.

- ¹ Linn, S. (2008) *The Case for Make Believe: Saving Play in a Commercialized World*. (New York: The New Press) 190.
- ² McNeal, J. & Yeh, C. (1993, June). Born to Shop. *American Demographics*, pp 34-39.
- ³ Hood, D. (2000). Is advertising to kids wrong? Marketers respond. *Kidscreen*, November 15.
- ⁴ Thomas, S. G. (2007) *Buy Buy Baby: How Consumer Culture Manipulates Parents and Harms Young Minds*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. 109-135.
- ⁵ http://www.wegotgreen.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=product.display&Product_ID=1627 and <http://www.bikersden.com/shop/shopdisplayproducts.asp?id=44&cat=Harley+Davidson+Baby+%26+Infant+Girl%27s+Clothes&websess=71855492084468>. Retrieved August 4, 2008.
- ⁶ <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/107/2/423>, retrieved August 6, 2008.
- ⁷ Zimmerman, F.J., Christakis, D.A., Meltzoff, A.N. (2007) Television and DVD/video viewing in children younger than 2 years. *Archives of Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine*. 161(5): 473-9.
- ⁸ Rideout, V. & Hamel, E. (2006) *The Media Family: Electronic media in the lives of infants, toddlers, preschoolers and their parents*. Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation
- ⁹ Rideout, V. (2006), p. 10.
- ¹⁰ Carvajal, D (2005 April 18). "A Way to Calm a Fussy Baby: 'Sesame Street' by Cellphone," *The New York Times*, sec. C, p. 10.
- ¹¹ Rideout, V. (2007) *Parents, Children and Media: A Report from the Kaiser Family Foundation*. Menlo Park, CA: Kaiser Family Foundation, p. 15.
- ¹² <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/107/2/423>, retrieved August 6, 2008.
- ¹³ Zimmerman, F.J., Christakis, D.A., Meltzoff, A.N. (2007) Television and DVD/video viewing in children younger than 2 years. *Archives of Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine*. 161(5): 473-9.
- ¹⁴ Becker, A. (2006 Feb 13) Can Disney's Little Einsteins teach preschoolers, outdo Dora—and make money? *Broadcasting & Cable*. <http://www.broadcastingcable.com/article/CA6306790.html?display=Feature&referral=SUPP&referral=SUPP>. Retrieved August 4, 2008.
- ¹⁵ Anderson, D. & Pempek, T. (2005). Television and Very Young Children. *American Behavioral Scientist*. 48(5): 505-522.
- ¹⁶ Krcmar, D., Grela, B., & Lin, K. (2007) Can Toddlers Learn Vocabulary from Television? An Experimental Approach. *Media Psychology*. 10 (1): 41-63; Kuhl, P.K., Tsaw, F, Liu, H. (2003). Foreign-language experience in infancy: Effects of short-term exposure and social interaction. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*. 100: 9096-9101.
- ¹⁷ Robb, M., Richert, R., & Wartella, E. (in press). Just a talking book? Word learning from watching baby videos. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*.
- ¹⁸ Thomas, S. G. (2007) *Buy Buy Baby: How Consumer Culture Manipulates Parents and Harms Young Minds*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. 109-135.
- ¹⁹ Zimmerman, F. & Christakis, D. (2005) Children's television viewing and cognitive outcomes: A longitudinal analysis of national data. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*. 159(7): 619-625.
- ²⁰ Thompson, D.A. & Christakis, D. (2005). The association between television viewing and irregular sleep schedules among children less than 3 years of age. *Pediatrics*. 116 (4): 851-856.
- ²¹ Christakis, D.A. & Zimmerman, F.J. (2006). Early Television Viewing Is Associated With Protesting Turning Off the Television at Age 6. *Medscape General Medicine*, 8(2): 63. <http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/531503>. Accessed June 6, 2006.
- ²² Vandewater, E.A., Bickham, D.S. & Lee, J.H. (2006, February). Time well spent? Relating television use to children's free-time activities. *Pediatrics*, 117(2): e181-191.
- ²³ Zimmerman, F.J., Christakis, D.A., & Meltzoff, (2007, August) Associations between Media Viewing and Language Development in Children Under Age 2 years. *The Journal of Pediatrics*. 151(40): 364-368.