Could Animated Movie Characters Drive Children's Preferences in Choosing A Product?

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ABSTRACT

Television is one of modern culture media, which seen by almost people within ages. One of the segments who watch TV is children. Children watch animated movie and have favorable animated movie characters. They might choose something based on their favorable animated characters. This behavior is seen as the opportunity by marketers for years. Some researches explained the issue of child marketing. Thus, the companies use animated movie characters to encourage children's purchase request. This study aims at understanding the children's preference in choosing a product which using animated movie characters and how efficiently the animated movie characters in creating brand awareness in children's mind. The research used a qualitative methodology. The in depth interviews and observations of the participants from 3 preschools are conducted in collecting the data. The result shows that animated movie characters can drive the children's purchase request and are not an effective way to create brand awareness in children's mind, since the children only remember the animated movie characters and product category not the brands. The research will contribute to better understanding of how and why children choose the specific products, besides to give the companies alternative way to build brand awareness to children.

Keywords: Animated movie character, Purchase request, Children's preference, Brand awareness

1. INTRODUCTION

Since television invented in 1927, and start its commercial program on 1941 [1], television have become one of the most modern media, which seen by almost people within age. One of the segments who watch TV is children. Television offers children's programs such as animated cartoon, children series shows, etc. Animated cartoon as children's favorite program, has been existed and entertained people more than 100 years. The first animated film was Humorous Phases of Funny Faces, which released by Vitagraph in 1906 [2]. For years, many of cartoonist creates cartoon characters and many animation companies were established, such as Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (1924), Disney (1922), Marvel Comic (1939), etc.

At the times, products for children are produced. In order to attract them, Company should determine the best strategy to influences children's behavior and decision toward product. As a consumer, children tend to be vulnerable because they lack of cognitive skills primarily for those who under eight years [3]. Psychologically, children in the infancy tend to process information from simple perception. Children will process the initial information starting from low-level featural information

[4] such as color, form, sound, movement, texture, and so on. Furthermore, animated movie also depicts children the real life or even imagination. Animated movie also gives pleasure, which sometimes cannot explain, funny and entertain. That's why cartoon can give higher impact on children memories.

Children have become potential market because they can influence parents to buy a product. The number of children primarily young children is getting bigger in few countries, e.g in Indonesia, for 2018 estimated at 47.61 million children, with ages between 0 – 9 years. Marketers use cartoon and animated characters as an attraction for children to choose the product for more than years. It because children watch animation movie and have favorable animated characters. In other words, cartoon becomes a part of children daily life and have an undefining bond [3]. These facts most continuing until those children grow up. Children usually choose something based on their favorable animated movie characters. As mention, this behavior seen as the opportunity by marketers for years. Marketers use cartoon characters in the advertisement, packaging or event product name (brand). Most of consumer goods which targeting children use animated movie characters such as snack, confectionary, junk food, children toiletries, children tableware, etc. Using animated movie characters give mutual benefit, both marketers and creators. Some

researchers found, using animation characters influence children preferences such as food preferences [5-7] including snack and taste [8, 9], brand preference [10], purchase request [11, 12] and purchase decision [13]. Furthermore, for animator or the company, the benefit come in the form of additional income from licensing animated movie characters. For example, Disney generated revenue $3.060 million in 2018 from Mickey and Minnie, Avengers, Frozen, Cars, Star War and Princess licensing while SanRio Japan generated revenue ¥21.7 billion or equal to $201 million in 2018 from its characters such as Hello Kitty, Cinnamoroll, Little Twin Star, My Melody, etc.

Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary defines animation as giving life or liveliness to something and the word cartoon as sketches or drawing similar to the one seen in newspaper [14]. Furthermore, animation cartoon can be defined as the making of movies by filming a sequence of slightly varying drawing or models that appear to move and change when the sequence is shown [15]. Animation cartoon makes everyone primarily child to keep sit and watch it until finish. Recently, animation divided into 5 types [16], those are 1) traditional animation such as 2D, Cel, Hand Drawn; 2) 2D Animation or Vector-based; 3) 3D Animation such as CGI and Computer Animation; 4) Motion Graphics such as Typography and Animated Logos; 5) Stop Motion such as Claymotion and Cut-Outs.

As consumers, children have unique habits in determine its purchase decision. If adolescence has passed 3-5 steps of decision making, children only passed 3 steps. The first step is identifying the problems. This step is really simple from children point of view. This occurs because whenever children feel they need or want something, they will speak to their parents. The second step is searching for information. In this step, children tend to use a few agents as their information resources. Those agents are parents, peers and mass media [17]. Mass media means television [18]. Through television, children see many programs and also commercial advertising. Children's exposure of any product information [19] will form and improve children cognitive about those products. The third step as the last step is making purchase decision. In this step, children is indirectly making purchase decision then they influence their parents to make decision and take action to purchase their desirable product. This study aims at understanding the children's preference in choosing a product driven by animated movie characters

2. METHOD

The research design is qualitative. The indepth interviews and observations of the participants from 3 preschool program are conducted in collecting the data. The participants consist of pre-school students aged 4 to 7 years and their parents.

We did in depth interview to all of the pre-school students in Indonesia and showed them some products which contain animated movie characters in product packages. The products are categorized into food and beverage, toiletries, personal care, tableware and bags. The researcher asked students to choose those products

which they already used or favorable products or desire product. In order to know more about their activities at home and who decided to choose what the student wants, we interviewed their parents. Furthermore, we analyzing the data used descriptive qualitative analysis. In processing data, researcher used NVIVo 12Plus as analysis tools.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

As mention, this study focuses on analyzing the animated movie characters which considered as children's preferences in choosing a product. The total participants for this study are 145 students (71 boys and 74 girls) which consisted of 8 students 4yr old; 37 students 5yr old; 67 students 6yr old and 33 students 7yr old and their parents (aged between 25 to 48) from 3 pre-school program Unfortunately, from total 145 students observed only 64 students' parent were willing to be interviewed, consisted of 55 mothers, 8 fathers and 1 person who have closed family relationship with the child. Most of parents have middle class incomes. The range of 20.3% of them was an income of IDR. 900,000 or $64.24 up to IDR. 2,000,000 or $142.74. per month. Furthermore, 18.8% of participants earning between IDR 2,000,0001 or $142.75 up to IDR 5,000,000 or $356.86 while the other 60.9% of participants with an income more than IDR 5,000,000 or $356.86 per month.

The responses show that 50% of parents subscribe to cable tv and 50% of parents does not. In Indonesia, currently there are 10 cable tv providers. Those are IndiHome, BizNet Home, First Media, MyRepublic, MNC SkyVision, OrangeTv, TransVision, NexMedia, BigTv, at price from IDR 90.000 or $6.42 up to IDR 3,000,000 or $214.12 per month. 50% of children whose parents is a cable TV subscriber, watch at least, few kids channel such as Nickelodeon, Disney Channel, Cartoon Network, Nick Jr, Disney Junior and Minimax. Although the other 50% of parents do not subscribe to cable TV, the children still can watch animated movie on FTA television channel (no need to subscribe) provided by the country (Indonesia) such as RTV, ANTV, MNCTV, TVRI, etc., which are airing the animated movies in certain time every day, while other station tv such as RCTI is airing it mostly in weekend.

3.1. Television and Cellullar Phones Exposure

Based on responses from participants, 90.6% of students like watching tv. In weekdays, 53.1% of students watched tv for 1 – 2 hours per day, 40.6% of students watched TV for 3-6 hours a day, 3.1% of students watched TV more than 6 hours, however there are 3.1% students who does not watch TV during weekdays. While in the weekend, the percentage was changed. There are 46.9% of students watched TV for 1 – 2 hours and 3 – 6 hours a day. And there are 2 students each who watch TV for more than 6 hours and does not watch TV at all. Seen from its content, all of them like to watched children TV programs such as cartoons, animated movies, education programs and children TV shows.

The other devices besides TV which can be used to watch their favorite programs is cellular phone. Around 87.5% of children like to use cellphones, whether parents' cellular phone, her/his older brother / sister, while 12.5% does not. We assume that children can do 2 things with the cellphone which are watching movies or videos and playing games. The result show that 53.1% of children use cellphone to watched movies or reality shows, while 46.9% played games, either online or offline games. Seen from its frequency, as much 50.8% of children use cellphone less than 1 hour per day, 46% spend time with cellphone for 1-3 hour per day. While 3.2% use more than 3 hours.

3.2. Animated Movie Characters

As mention earlier, children in their growth phase mostly interest in everything related to what occurs around them and tend to adopt what they see, hear and feel based on their sense. This is because of their brain is still developing. Most of children like to watch animated movies because it is funny and entertain. Evidently, not only for those simple reasons why children like animation cartoon. The other reason is because their brain needs low-level stimulus such as colours, sounds and forms, animated movie with good scenario, good song, right visual effects and attractive characters, especially when children start to like it and copycat all things related to the movie. In this research, children were allowed to mention their favorite animated movie characters for more than one. The result shows that 98.4 % of participants like to watch animated movies. Table 1 shows animation movie liked by participants.

Table 1 Animated Movie Characters

FTA Television Channel	Cable Television Channel	YouTube Channel
• Tayo The Little Bus • Little Pony • Marsha and The Bear • Tobot • Doraemon • Sinchan • Rainbow Ruby • KyuuRanger • SpongeBob • Kiko • Chibi Maruko Chan • Ultraman • Upin dan Ipin • Superwing • Toy Cop • Robocar Poli • Omar dan Hana	• Boboiboy • Vamperina • Spiderman • ButterBean • Avenger Cartoon • Moana • Sofia The First • Strawberry Short Cake • Frozen • Lion Guard • Elena and Sofia The First • Batman • Jack and Quack • Thomas and Friends • Bubble Guppies • Ben10	• Nussa dan Rara • Diva the Series

Based on Table 1, it shows that There are three main sources where children can watch their favorite animated movies, those are FTA television channel, cable television channel and Youtube channel. Generally, children's favorite animation character is depends on their favorite's animated movie.
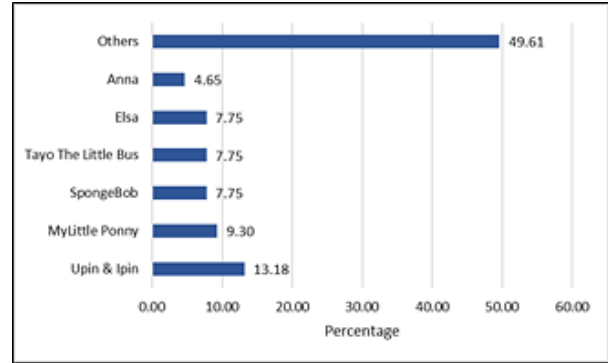

Figure 1 Children's Favorite Animated movie Characters.

Basically, children's favorite animated movie characters are based on their gender, e.g. for the boys, they mostly like superhero such as Batman, Spiderman, Hulk, Ultraman and Iron man. Furthermore, they also like robot and adventure animated movie. For the girls, they mostly like princess character such as Elsa dan Anna from Frozen, Ariel The Mermaid, Cinderella, Bella from Beauty and The Beast, etc. The colour also become a sign for children to show their gender, e.g pink and red for girls while blue for boys. However, gender not only one determination, the gender roles and story line of the movie also become the factors that underlying their preferences. Figure 1 shows animated movie characters liked by the children, it shows that Upin and Ipin characters have higher percentage that others characters, as much as 13.18%; then followed by MyLittle Ponny at 9.30%, the next are Tayo, Elsa and Spongebob, each of 7.75 %. The other characters liked by 49.61% of children which consists of various animation characters such as: Marsha, Sofia, Doraemon, Rainbow Ruby, etc.

3.3. Children Products and children's preferences

Nowadays, many products that are targeted the children offered by companies. Interview result show that parents give their children some products according to their age. Mostly the product used according to their age are personal care and toiletries such as, shampoo (79.9%); tooth brush (78.1%), tooth paste and soap (71.9% each), parfum (50%), powder (42.2%) and hair gel (15.6%). Those product choices based on its composition that suitable for their age.

Based on the observation result, most children choose those products because they parents inform them the product function, they like the package, they like the smell of the product and only 7 of 145 know the brand. This might occur because children prefer to mention animated movie characters rather than the actual brands. Furthermore, parents explained that children can have the product contains their animation characters as long as the product save for children. Figure 2 shows the nonfood products contain animated movie characters possessed by the children. As shown in the figure 2, bags have higher percentage of nonfood products with animated movie characters. The next product is clothes as much 80.60%, this is understandable because clothing is a daily basic needs. Whereas, shoes have the lowest percentage. It is only 27.40% of children who have shoes with their favorite

animated movie characters. Most of children said that they prefer to have bags and clothes contain animated movie characters since it is easy to get, primarily when the movie is on demand.
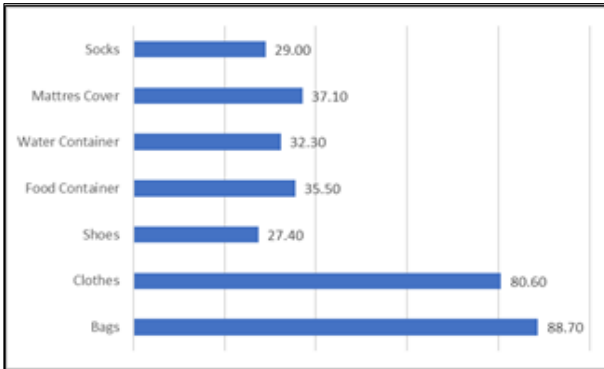

Figure 2 The Nonfood Products Contain Animated Movie Characters Possessed by the Children

Figure 3 A Food Container with Animated movie Characters

Many researches have been conducted related to animated movie characters and F&B products in marketing and health. Marketing uses animated movie characters in their products to attract children for more than years. On the others side, many F&B products have a negative effect to the children which is fueling the obesity.

In this study, we give a few samples of F&B products that contains animated movie characters in the packages such as flavored drinks, mineral water, bread, RTE sausage, chocolate, milk, and candy. All children choose milk, whether it is strawberry or chocolate or plain. The first reason is that they like the taste, most of them choose familiar brands with which they already knew. The second reason is about the packages. Dairy products that we show the children contains animated movie characters images, both super heroes and princesses. 99% of boys choose chocolate flavors with superhero on its packages, 1% of boys choose strawberry flavor with princess on its packages, while mostly girls choose milk with princess package. For the drinking water, 41.37% choose flavor drinks, 58,62% choose mineral water, of course with animation character on its package. For RTE sausage, 6.8% of them do not choose this product because their parent not allow it. 93.2 % of them choose it with the reason that

24.14% choose it because of its taste, while 75.86% is because the package and taste. Most children choose bread caused by its package. All children choose chocolate flavors because they like it. Nevertheless, they choose certain brand because of the bonus they got.

According to the parents, there few products their categories, which does not allowed for their children to consume. Figure 5 shows those categories. As seen in figure 5, ready to drink product e.g. ready to drink tea, flavor drink, soft drink has the highest percentage of food and beverages that are prohibited for children. The second position is food contains MSG such as instant noodles, chips, *chiki*, etc. After RTD and foods contain MSG, next are ready to eat, such as RTE sausages, candies, other foods which prohibited because of health and reason religions, each as much as 13,33%, while for confectionary contains artificial sugar and color are 8.89%.
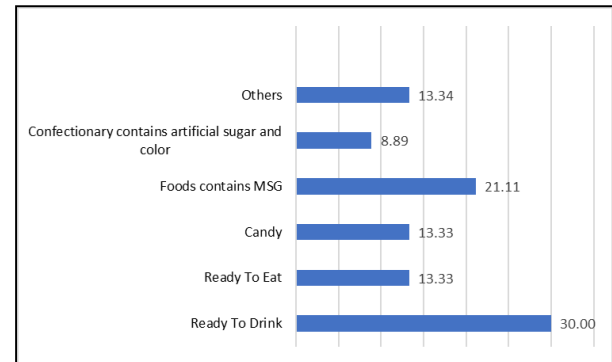

Figure 4 Products chosen by the children

Figure 5 Food & Beverages Prohibited for Children

3.4. Purchase Request and Buying Decision

The aim at using animated movie characters in children's products is to attract then to make them want to consume it. Since the children is still in growth phase, physically and mentally, not all decision can be made by themselves. Nevertheless, children can influence most of parents purchase decision. Young children's coercive behavior among preschoolers are highest [20]. Over time, this behavior will change through communication between children and their parents. It is also mentioned in the research, that as the age increasing, children most likely to be involved in purchase decision process.

Based on the observation and in depth interview to preschool students and their parents, we known that 76.6% of mothers and 1% of father choose the product for their children, and 22,4% of children choose their own products by themselves. Parents play an important role in deciding which product are allowed for their children for various reasons including health and phsychology. the others reasons why parents allow the children decide for themselves is for making their children happy and educating them to become independent. The result also shows that most of children request the product to their mothers and like to be involved in choosing and purchase decision process. On the other side, sometimes children also demand an explanation of prohibited products that cannot be consumed.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Animated movie characters can drive the children's purchase request and are not an effective way to create brand awareness in children's mind, since the children only remember the animated movie characters and product category not the brands. Media exposure and time frequencies determine how depth is the bonding between the children and their favorite animated movie characters. Parents primarily mothers play important roles in choosing children's products. Health issues become the main reason they choose the products for ther children.

A brand of product and animated movie characters can become inseparable for companies that market to children. The colours and animated movie characters become the main point in designing the package, beside that companies should not forget to create interesting design which easy to recognize ever since children expose to low-level featural informations. In choosing animated movie characters, companies have to consider the level of children's pleasure toward the characters. Always mention the product brand while advertise in electronic media or use jingle to easy recognize.

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