

Advertising Literacy: 30 Years in Scientific Studies

Alfabetización Publicitaria: 30 Años en Estudios Científicos

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ABSTRACT

The evolving media ecosystem underscores the pressing need for media literacy within the population. Numerous academic research initiatives typically focus on competencies such as mobile device management and the identification of fake news on social networks, among others. This paper seeks to uncover how academic research tackles advertising literacy, a facet of media literacy that promotes the development of critical consumers. Advertising literacy is increasingly recognised as a crucial competency in today's world, given the ubiquity of advertising messages and their potential to influence purchasing decisions, worldviews, and cultural perceptions. A systematic review was conducted, drawing on both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, of articles on the topic published in Social Science academic journals indexed in Scopus. Significant findings suggest that advertising literacy has been a subject of analysis for over three decades, and that journals publishing on this topic, along with the affiliations of authors, are predominantly based in Europe and the United States. Additionally, it was observed that applied research, especially surveys and experiments, has superseded theoretical research in the analysis of this subject. The studies practical implications, alongside their theoretical contributions, are noteworthy. The conclusion drawn suggests that advertising literacy is a research area with substantial growth potential, warranting the attention of the educational and media industries.

RESUMEN

El ecosistema mediático, en constante evolución, evidencia la necesidad de alfabetizar mediáticamente a la población. Diversas investigaciones y proyectos académicos suelen centrarse en competencias como el manejo de dispositivos móviles, el reconocimiento de «fake news» en redes sociales, entre otras. El presente artículo se propone conocer cómo la investigación académica aborda la alfabetización publicitaria, componente de la alfabetización mediática que aboga por la formación de ciudadanos críticos desde su papel como consumidores. La alfabetización publicitaria es una competencia fundamental actualmente, los mensajes publicitarios son omnipresentes y pueden influir en nuestras decisiones de compra, percepción del mundo y cultura. Desde los enfoques cuantitativo y cualitativo, se realizó una revisión sistemática de los artículos publicados sobre el tema en revistas académicas de Ciencias Sociales indexadas en Scopus. Entre otros resultados relevantes, se encontró que la alfabetización publicitaria se analiza desde hace más de 30 años, y que las revistas que publican sobre el tema y la filiación de los autores se ubican principalmente en Europa y Estados Unidos. Asimismo, vemos que la investigación aplicada, especialmente encuestas y experimentos, ha dominado el análisis del tema frente a la investigación teórica. Destaca también la incidencia práctica de las investigaciones, así como los aportes teóricos. Se concluye que la alfabetización publicitaria es un campo de investigación con amplio potencial de crecimiento, que necesita y merece atención de las industrias educativa y de medios.

KEYWORDS | PALABRAS CLAVE

Advertising Literacy, Media Literacy, Advertising, Social Sciences, Meta-research, Critical Consumers.

Alfabetización Publicitaria, Alfabetización Mediática, Publicidad, Ciencias Sociales, Metainvestigación, Consumidores Críticos.

1. Introduction

The media ecosystem's evolution has resulted in an urgent need for media literacy among the population. Media literacy is a broad concept that encompasses capabilities such as recognizing and understanding information, using mobile devices, and critically assessing digital information, including advertising content (Livingstone, 2004). Advertising is an essential variable in media literacy because it constitutes a form of communication that influences individuals' attitudes and behaviors; it is permanently present—with increasing intensity—in people's daily lives, promoting cultural values, lifestyles, and consumption patterns. Thus, media literacy is necessary to develop individuals' critical and reflective capacity when facing advertising messages, so that they can identify advertisers' means and persuasion strategies, adequately assess advertising content and its impact on society, and make informed decisions about their consumption habits.

Modern advertising has evolved into a cultural tool that uses different communicative resources to not only promote products and services but also construct and legitimize social discourses affecting people's daily lives (Horky, 2021; Jansson, 2019). It is important to bear in mind that consumers need to have the skills to interpret messages and visual representations in advertising (Livingstone & Helsper, 2006). Although media literacy and media education have been emphasized, little attention has been paid to advertising (Almansa-Martínez & Broullón-Lozano, 2020; Linares et al., 2021).

While advertising literacy has been a topic of interest for decades, there is a need for more studies to gain an understanding of its link to media literacy (Vizcaíno-Alcantud, 2023). Advertising is considered an integral part of media literacy in many textbooks (Potter, 1998; Silverblatt, 1995); although some research studies have been conducted on consumer advertising literacy (Mattelart, 1991; O'Donohoe & Tynan, 1998; Ritson & Elliott, 1999), its conceptualization and modeling are still in the early stages of development. Therefore, there is a need for research in this area, so that the concept of advertising literacy can be further clarified and developed (Katz & Wedell, 2003).

Many researchers have recognized the importance of advertising literacy. As Austin et al. (2016) posit, 'advertising literacy can help consumers better understand advertising messages, identify misleading advertising, and make informed purchasing decisions' (p. 7). Along the same vein, advertising literacy can also have a positive impact on society as a whole by enabling people to understand the impact that advertising has on culture, the economy, and society as a whole (Livingstone & Helsper, 2006).

Several studies have been conducted in different areas of advertising literacy. Some have investigated the impact of advertising on consumer perceptions (Hwang et al., 2018), while others have focused on the development of advertising literacy skills in children and adolescents (Feijoo & Sádaba, 2021). These studies not only provide valuable information for consumers to better understand advertising and make informed purchasing decisions but also inform policies designed to protect consumers from deceptive advertising (Austin et al., 2016; Livingstone & Helsper, 2006).

Therefore, this article aims to analyze how academic research addresses advertising literacy and proposes new lines of research in this area. For this purpose, a systematic review of articles published on the topic in academic social science journals indexed in Scopus was conducted. Understanding how advertising literacy is approached is essential for developing effective media literacy programs, and we hope that this study's contributions are useful in this regard.

1.1. Advertising Literacy as A Social Science Research Topic

In recent years, the concept of advertising literacy has been extensively researched, and the importance of developing a comprehensive understanding of its different components has been made clear. Some studies have focused on the development of advertising literacy education, which is based on three main components: content literacy, grammar literacy, and structure literacy (Katz & Wang, 2019; Wang & Katz, 2019). Content literacy involves an understanding of the messages and themes conveyed by advertisements, while grammar literacy focuses on the visual techniques and other persuasive strategies used by advertisers. Finally, structural literacy involves an understanding of the broader economic and social factors that influence the production and distribution of advertising, such as ownership and revenue models (Hudson & Hudson, 2016).

According to Pérez-Sánchez et al. (2021), advertising literacy is defined as 'the set of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to understand and critically analyze the advertising information

we receive and to make informed decisions about the consumption of goods and services' (p. 305). Similarly, Livingstone and Helsper (2006) note that advertising literacy is 'the ability to critically analyze and evaluate advertising, including an understanding of advertising messages, the techniques used, and the goals of advertising'.

Advertising literacy has been a subject matter of research in a variety of disciplines, including psychology, sociology, communication, and education. From a psychological perspective, research has been conducted on the effects of advertising on consumers' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. For example, some studies have shown that advertising can influence consumers' memory and attention (Golombisky & Hagen, 2014), while others have examined how advertising can influence purchase decisions (Mittal, 2018).

From a sociological point of view, research has been conducted on how advertising is a reflection and reproduction of the culture and society in which it is produced. According to this approach, advertising reflects dominant values, norms, and social relations and reproduces stereotypes and social inequalities (Kilbourne, 1999). Advertising can also be used as a tool for social change, as seen in advertising campaigns on environmental, health, and human rights issues (O'Reilly & Kitchen, 2014).

From a communication perspective, researchers have explored how advertising uses different strategies and techniques to persuade and draw consumers' attention. Advertising messages can be analyzed in terms of their language, image, sound, narrative, and context (McQuarrie & Phillips, 2005). The relation between advertising and the media has also been studied (Jhally & Livant, 1986), as well as how consumers interpret and respond to advertising messages.

From an educational perspective, there has been research on ways of teaching advertising literacy in schools and communities. Advertising literacy involves the responsible and effective evaluation and production of advertising messages (Rozendaal et al., 2011). In addition to encouraging critical reflection and informed decision making, educational programs may include the analysis, production, and discussion of advertisements (Livingstone, 2004).

2. Methodology

This research aims to identify how social science research has dealt with literacy in advertising and suggest lines of future research that would be beneficial to science, advertising, and society. Thus, the following specific goals have been proposed:

- (1) Identify who the most published academics are in the field and the number of authors per collaboration.
- (2) Observe how the publication of articles on the subject has evolved over time.
- (3) Determine which subtopics are addressed within the general topic.
- (4) Determine which countries have the most publications on the topic.
- (5) Distinguish which journals have the most publications on the subject and the scope of these journals within the area of social sciences.
- (6) Identify research trends at the methodological level on the subject (types of methodology and tools).
- (7) Identify the scope of the articles published on the subject in the theoretical and methodological fields and their practical incidence.
- (8) Recognize the theoretical and methodological limitations of the articles published on the subject, as well as their practical implications.

Thus, this descriptive research study is based on a systematized review of the scientific articles published from 1991 to 2021 on the subject of advertising literacy. This review is a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches using variables and categories created for the study. The qualitative variables seek to address goals three, seven, and eight listed above, and the quantitative variables address the remaining ones.

A systematic literature review (Grant & Booth, 2009) was conducted to identify the main trends and currents (Codina, 2018) of academic research in the area of interest. Previous research on the study of communication matters in the field of social sciences, such as those of Atarama-Rojas et al. (2022) and García-Orosa et al. (2023), has been referenced in this study.

For the sample, only Scopus-indexed journals (Delgado-López-Cózar & Repiso-Caballero, 2013) were selected for their quality, rigor, and visibility, which ensures solid academic support and a recognized knowledge base, thus increasing the robustness and validity of the results. Notably, this international database

overlaps significantly with Web of Science journals (Chaparro-Martínez et al., 2016). The search used the following criteria:

- (1) Type of document: articles.
- (2) Area: social sciences.
- (3) Keywords: *advertising literacy*, *advertising*, *media literacy*, and *digital literacy*.

The application of these selection criteria yielded a total of 117 articles, of which 83 were identified as being relevant to the subject under study, after filtering the abstracts. Similarly, as 1991 is the date of publication of the first article, it was decided to frame the analysis between 1991 and 2021 because the publications from year 2022 (the date on which this research was carried out) were not closed at the time of this study.

The categories of analysis (quantitative and qualitative) applied to the sample of 83 articles are shown in Table 1.

Variables	Categories	Type
Item data	Authors	Quantitative
	Number of authors	
	Year of publication	
	Title	
Journal data	Topics	Qualitative
	Name	Quantitative
	Country of publication	
Scope within the social sciences		
Methodology	Theoretical research	Quantitative
	Applied research	
Analysis tool	Content analysis	
	Discourse analysis	
	Survey	
	Interview	
	Case study	
	Observation	
	Focus groups	
	Experiment	
Others		
Object of study	Theoretical research (reflection and academic literature)	Qualitative
	Persons	
	Cases	
Scope of research	Theoretical	Qualitative
	Methodological	
	Practical impact	
Research limitations	Theoretical	Qualitative
	Methodological	
	Practical impact	

Note: Prepared by the authors based on Atarama-Rojas et al. (2022) and García-Orosa et al. (2023).

To ensure reliability, it was decided that the analysis of the 83 articles would be conducted by a single reviewer. Thus, especially in the qualitative analysis, possible biases that could be caused by different reviewers were avoided and concordance in the results was sought (Tejedor Calvo et al., 2022).

3. Results

3.1. Authors

Below is a list of the authors who have published the most on advertising literacy in social science journals during the period under study. Each of them published two or more articles on the subject. The exact number of articles they published is as follows:

- (1) Hudders, Liselot (Universiteit Gent, Belgium): 5
- (2) Austin, Erica Weintraub (Washington State University Pullman, United States): 4
- (3) Cauberghe, Veroline (Universiteit Gent, Belgium): 4
- (4) Rozendaal, Esther (Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, The Netherlands): 4
- (5) Ponnet, Koen (Universiteit Gent, Belgium): 4
- (6) Pinkleton, Bruce E. (Washington State University Pullman, United States): 3
- (7) De Pauw, Pieter (Free Universities of Brussels, Belgium): 3
- (8) Vanwesenbeeck, Ini (Tilburg School of Humanities and Digital Sciences, The Netherlands): 3
- (9) Walrave, Michel (Universiteit Antwerpen, Belgium): 3
- (10) Hust, Stacey (Washington State University Pullman, United States): 2
- (11) Belova, Nadja (Universität Bremen, Germany): 2
- (12) Eilks, Ingo (Universität Bremen, Germany): 2
- (13) Chan, Kara (Hong Kong Baptist University, China): 2
- (14) Clarke, Barbie (University of Cambridge, United Kingdom): 2
- (15) De-Frutos-Torres, Belinda (Universidad de Valladolid, Spain): 2
- (16) Del Moral Pérez, M. Esther (Universidad de Oviedo, Spain): 2
- (17) Villalustre, Lourdes (Universidad de Oviedo, Spain): 2
- (18) Wakefield, Melanie (Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences, Australia): 2
- (19) Núñez, Patricia (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain): 2
- (20) Feijoo, Beatriz (International University of La Rioja, Spain): 2
- (21) Sádaba, Charo (University of Navarra, Spain): 2
- (22) Jones, Sandra (Australian Catholic University, Australia): 2
- (23) Kervin, Lisa (University of Wollongong, Australia): 2
- (24) Buijzen, Moniek (Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, The Netherlands): 2
- (25) Stanley, Susan L. (Moraine Park Technical College, United States): 2
- (26) Lawson, Chris (University of Wisconsin, United States): 2
- (27) Verdoodt, Valerie (London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom): 2
- (28) Zarouali, Brahim (Universiteit van Amsterdam, The Netherlands): 2
- (29) Poels, Karolien (Universiteit Antwerpen, Belgium): 2

Liselot Hudders of Ghent University in Belgium is particularly important in this list because she published five articles on the subject. It should also be noted that the five authors who have published the most articles on advertising literacy—that is, four to five articles between 1991 and 2021—belong to institutions in Belgium, the United States, and the Netherlands.

The authors who published the most on this topic are members of institutions located in Europe (20 authors). Fewer authors belong to institutions in the continents of North America (five authors), Oceania (three authors), and Asia (one author). None of the authors who published the most on advertising literacy were affiliated with a university in Central America, South America, or Africa.

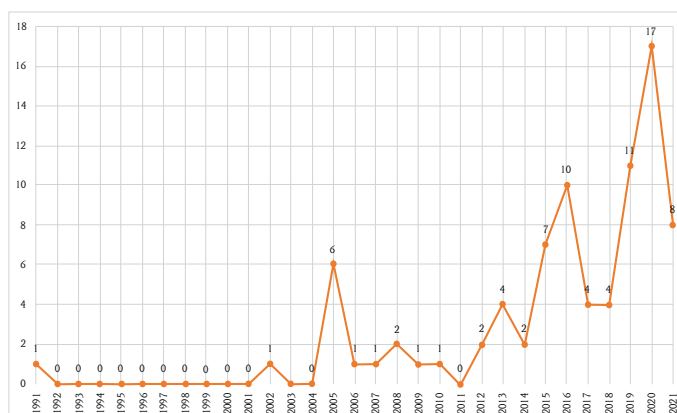
Regarding the number of collaborators per article, it was found that most articles (75) were co-authored by up to four authors. Among these, the most common are three-author collaborations (25). These are followed by two-author collaborations (20) and articles written by a single author (17). Moreover, there are very few articles on advertising literacy written by five authors (4) and six authors (3). Only one article was written by seven authors.

3.2 Year of Publication

The study also sought to understand how the publication of articles on advertising literacy in social science journals evolved over the 30 years of the analysis period. As shown in Figure 1, 2020 was the year with the highest number of articles published on the subject, with a total of 17 articles. The years 2019 (11), 2016 (10), 2021 (8), 2015 (7), and 2005 (6) also had a significant number of publications. In contrast, between the years 1992 and 2001, there were no publications on advertising literacy in social science journals. The same was the case for the years 2003, 2004, and 2011.

Thus, although there is no obvious continuous increase in the number of publications over the course of time, there is a slight upward trend. This is mainly due to the fact that in the last years of the analysis, between 2012 and 2021, at least two articles have been published on the matter.

Figure 1: Number of Articles on Advertising Literacy Published per Year.



Note: Prepared by the authors.

3.3. Subject

This category was analyzed using a qualitative approach; therefore, no numerical results are presented. From reading and interpreting each of the articles, it became clear that the most recurring themes were literacy and education—specifically, media literacy and advertising literacy. These were, in turn, related to other themes, such as certain population profiles, of which children, teenagers, young people, parents, and women were highlighted.

The articles addressed topics related to the audiovisual and digital world such as television, the digital revolution, the Internet, and social networks, as well as phenomena and social issues under debate, such as privacy, data protection, manipulation, sexualization, and alcohol consumption. There have also been articles on advertising issues, such as advertising consumption, advertising influence, public perception, and the skepticism it can generate.

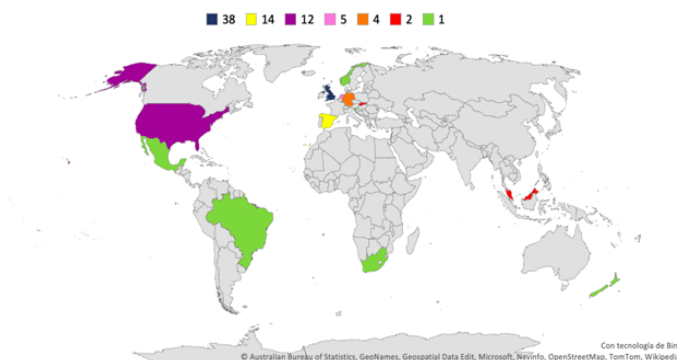
3.4. Journals and Countries of Publication

We also identified the countries in which advertising literacy has had the most publications during the analysis period by compiling the location data of social science journals that published articles on the matter between 1991 and 2021.

The analysis showed (Figure 2) that most articles on advertising literacy were published in journals from the United Kingdom, Spain, and the United States (34, 14, and 12 publications, respectively). Together, they account for more than three-quarters of the total production (64 out of 83 articles) on the subject.

Far behind these three countries are the Netherlands with five articles on advertising literacy, followed by Germany with four; Slovakia and Malaysia with two each; and South Africa, Brazil, Norway, Mexico, and New Zealand with one each.

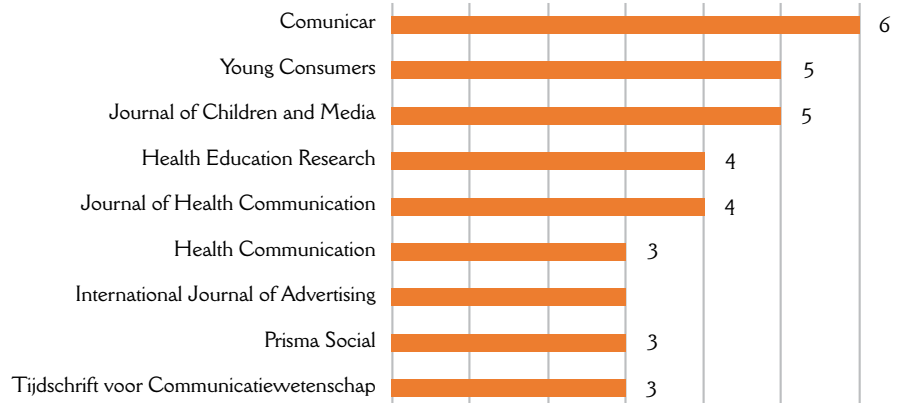
Figure 2: Number of Articles Published on Advertising Literacy, by Journal's Publication Location.



Note: Prepared by the authors.

The journals that published the most articles on the subject during the period under analysis were in the United Kingdom and Spain. Specifically, as can be seen in Figure 3, the journals that between 1991 and 2021 registered the highest number of articles on the subject were *Comunicar* (Spain) with six publications, *Young Consumers* (UK), and *Journal of Children and Media* (UK) with five publications each.

Figure 3: Journals That Have Published the Most Articles on Advertising Literacy (Number of Published Articles).



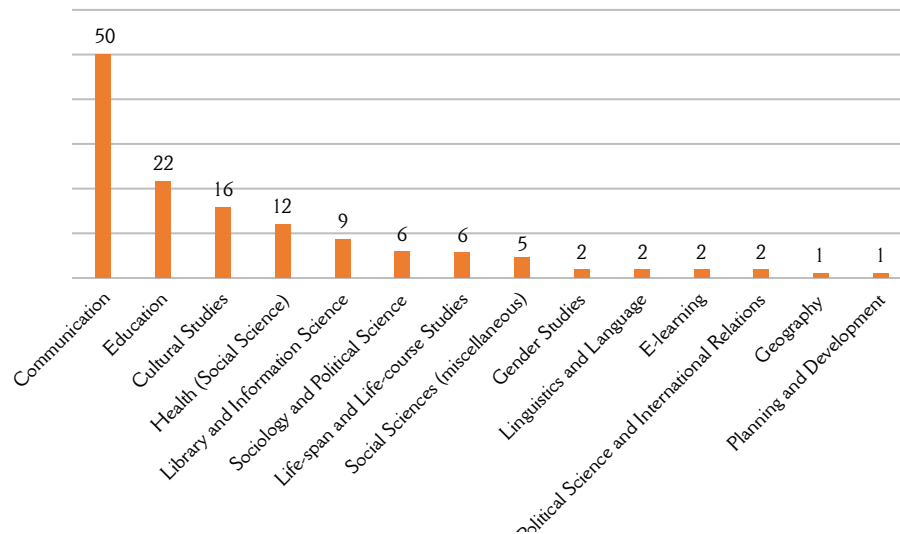
Note: Prepared by the authors.

3.5. Specificity of the Journal

There are a number of categories of journal specialization within the social sciences. It was possible to identify the specialization categories of journals publishing on the subject of advertising literacy during the analysis period.

Figure 4 shows that a large number of articles on advertising literacy (50) were published in journals specializing in communication during the analysis period. This was followed by journals specializing in education, which published 22 articles on the subject. Journals specializing in cultural studies are also highlighted, with 16 articles on this topic, and social science journals, with 12 articles on this topic.

Figure 4: Number of Articles According to the Specialization of the Journal of Publication.



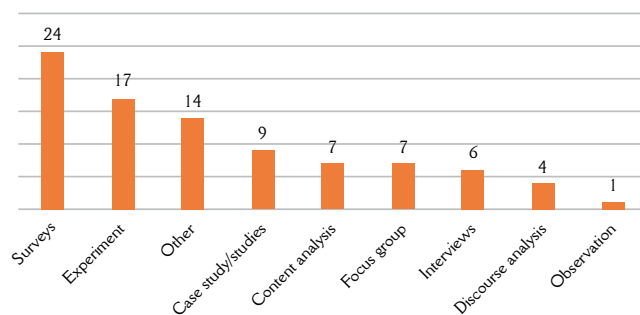
Note: Prepared by the authors.

3.6. Methodologies and Tools of Analysis

This study has also identified the types of methodology and analytical tools used in the scientific articles published between 1991 and 2021 on the subject of advertising literacy. Most of the articles (75 out of 83) used applied research methodology. In contrast, very few articles used theoretical research methodology (8 out of 83).

Similarly, regarding analytical tools (Figure 5), the most frequently used was the survey (24 papers). In 17 articles, experimental methods were used; case studies were presented in nine articles; and content analysis and focus group methods were used in seven articles each. Notably, 14 articles applied tools that are not very common in the field of social sciences.

Figure 5: Analysis Tools Used in the Published Articles on Advertising Literacy.



Note: Prepared by the authors.

3.7. Research Subjects

With regard to research subjects in the articles on advertising literacy published between 1991 and 2021, the majority of articles (59) focus on people. Following far behind are articles on cases (18). Finally, there are those dedicated to reviewing literature (8), which are directly related to theoretical research methodology, discussed in section 3.5.

3.8. Research Scope and Limitations

The last two variables under consideration were analyzed from a qualitative approach. Therefore, the results are presented in the form of an overview, along with the scope and limitations of some articles. Both variables have been analyzed for three categories: theoretical, methodological, and practical.

3.8.1. Theoretical Field

In terms of theoretical scope, it is assumed that all articles start with a common idea of what advertising literacy is and then provide a clear defense of it. Thus, articles were found that have contributed to the conceptual development of the term. Among these, Malmelin (2010) established a definition of advertising literacies and Salim and Abdullah (2017) developed four dimensions—informational, visual, rhetoric, and promotion—of advertising literacies. Similarly, works were found that constitute theoretical contributions related to the impact of advertising and advertising on children (Angeliqa & Sarwono, 2019; Beaufort, 2019; Feijoo & Sádaba, 2021) and young people (La Ferle & Chan, 2008; Rodgers et al., 2019). Meanwhile, Fernandes et al.'s (2020) study presents the impact of media literacy interventions on policymakers, advertisers, and consumers.

Finally, there are articles that, at a theoretical level, contribute to the development of strategies and recommendations related to the field of advertising literacy. Examples include the works of Mikhaleva (2019), who describes a set of didactic activities aimed at improving students' critical analysis of advertising messages, and Zarouali et al. (2020), who formulate recommendations for the establishment of policies or regulations at the European level to protect adolescents from advertising.

In terms of research limitations, there are still challenges to consolidating the theoretical foundations of the research area, especially because of its relation with the fluctuations of the media ecosystem and the changes in consumer profiles, despite more than 30 years of development of the research area in the social sciences.

3.8.2. Methodological Field

Contributions revolved around designing analytical models and using methodologies that can be replicated in further studies on advertising literacy. Molina-Rodríguez-Navas et al. (2014) provide a model for the analysis of film, television, and advertising products. Falcón et al. (2016) and Daems et al. (2017) defend the use of focus groups and the development of co-creation campaigns, respectively, as appropriate methods in advertising literacy interventions. Hoek et al. (2021) developed an indirect measurement tool capable of assessing children's advertising literacy activation.

In terms of methodological limitations, many studies raise questions about their replicability because of factors such as the specific audience analyzed (Austin et al., 2007; La Ferle & Chan, 2008) and the context and duration of the interventions (Liao et al., 2016).

3.8.3. Practical Impact

The results and conclusions of the studies have academic implications. They also have consequences on the advertising industry and society. For example, Rozendaal et al. (2008) and Vanwesenbeeck et al. (2020) focus on advertising comprehension in children of different ages and Zarouali et al. (2020) on adolescents. Austin et al. (2007), Levitskaya and Fedorov (2020), and Rey et al. (2017) promote media and advertising literacy to stimulate consumers' analytical thinking.

Several studies highlight that advertising literacy contributes to conscious decisions regarding the consumption of alcohol (Austin et al., 2016; Hindmarsh et al., 2015), tobacco (Austin et al., 2005; Perl et al., 2015), and medication (Kaphingst et al., 2005), as well as issues such as female sexualization (Sherman et al., 2020) and eating disorders (Hobbs et al., 2006; Mas-Manchó et al., 2016). Further, the influence of parents on children's literacy is highlighted (Angeliqa & Sarwono, 2019; Austin et al., 2015; De Pauw et al., 2018; Feijoo & Sádaba, 2021) and the use of audiovisual (Perl et al., 2015) and digital (Chan, 2021; Daems et al., 2017; Feijoo et al., 2021) media to promote advertising literacy is discussed.

The limitations of the studies indicate that there is still a long way to go before their practical application. The results, reflections, and proposed models can guide the advertising industry, educational institutions, and families in their actions. However, they stress the need for further work on policies and regulations of advertising campaigns.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of this descriptive research have provided valuable insights into advertising literacy in the field of social science. First, 2020 was the year in which the highest production of publications on advertising literacy occurred, which coincides with the acceleration of the digital transformation phenomenon triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic. This observation underlines the relevance that this subject has acquired in the contemporary context and suggests a significant influence of technological changes on advertising research and practice.

Second, 29 authors, most of whom are affiliated with institutions in Europe, were identified as having published two or more papers on advertising literacy in social science journals. This trend suggests potential opportunities for encouraging researchers from different regions of the world to collaborate and share knowledge.

Third, it was confirmed that journals specializing in communication were the main contributors to the publication of articles on the matter, followed by journals specializing in education, cultural studies, and health (social sciences). This distribution highlights the multidisciplinary nature of the field and emphasizes the importance of interdisciplinary approaches for a more comprehensive understanding of advertising literacy.

Fourth, in terms of the methodologies and analytical tools used in the studies, it was found that applied research methodology was the most common and the survey was the most common analytical tool. These findings provide insight into the dominant research practices in the field and point to possible areas for developing more diverse and complementary methodological approaches.

Fifth, as regards research topics, themes such as privacy, data protection, and other social issues like sexualization and alcohol consumption emerged as recurring approaches. Experts have often been interested in how these issues may affect the consumer–advertiser relationship and in identifying ways to protect consumers from potential harm, especially in relation to specific population profiles such as children, adolescents, young people, parents, and women. These approaches highlight the importance of

understanding how different demographic groups interact with advertising and how to protect consumers from potential negative effects.

Both audiovisual and digital issues have been considered. While television has been the subject of research for a long time (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008), digital media has been found to be increasingly important in everyday life (Castells, 2010). Digital research focuses on how consumers identify deceptive advertising (Calvillo & Igartua, 2019) and addresses issues such as privacy and data protection (Cohen & Donnelly, 2013). Studies seek to understand the impact of these aspects on the relationship between consumers and advertisers and look for ways to protect consumers (Napoli, 2015), thereby promoting more ethical and transparent interactions in digital advertising (Calvillo & Igartua, 2019; Cohen & Donnelly, 2013; Napoli, 2015).

Considering the scope and limitations of the research in this area, significant progress has clearly been made in the conceptual development of advertising literacy, as well as in understanding the impact of advertising on different demographic groups. However, there is still a need to strengthen the theoretical foundations of the subject, especially because of the constant changes in the media ecosystem and in consumer profiles as a result of accelerated digital transformation.

In terms of methodological approaches, it is encouraging to see that models of analysis have been developed and methodologies have been proposed that could be replicated in future studies. In terms of practical implications, the results and conclusions of the studies can have an impact not only at the academic level but also on the advertising industry and society, in general. The studies reviewed have attempted to promote the development of media and advertising literacy as a tool for critical consumer thinking.

In terms of future lines of research, it would be worthwhile to continue investigating how children and adolescents interpret and process advertising messages. It is key to understand how advertising messages influence them and how we can promote their advertising literacy. As advertising is found on different platforms, it is important to analyze how young people interpret and process advertising messages in different media. It would also be useful to investigate how advertising regulations influence advertising literacy. Regulations may have an impact on the way in which advertising messages are presented and how people interpret and process these messages. Finally, it would be interesting to consider how cultural differences influence advertising literacy.

In summary, this study highlights the need for further research into advertising literacy and the need for a deeper understanding of its impact on society. It is of the essence to take a holistic approach in academia and advertising to promote more effective and ethical strategies that foster responsibility and critical thinking in the consumer–advertising relationship. This study aims to provide a solid foundation for future research that addresses emerging challenges in today’s advertising scenario. By incorporating additional analytical tools and complementary studies, this study aims to follow existing research lines and make a significant contribution toward understanding advertising and its impact on society.

Author Contributions

Idea, F.A., K.R.; Literature review (state of the art), F.A., G.L.; Methodology, K.R.; Data analysis, K.R., G.L.; Results, K.R.; Discussion and conclusions, F.A.; Writing (original draft), F.A., K.R.; Final revisions, G.L.; Reviewer comments, F.A., K.R. Project support and funding, F.A.

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