

FEAR-BASED MARKETING OF PARENTAL MONITORING TOOLS: REINFORCING OVERCONTROL AND CHILD DEPENDENCE

Le Bao Tram^{1*}

¹University of Rennes, France

*Corresponding author: Email: bao-tram.le@etudiant.univ-rennes.fr

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Appendix 1. General Information of Advertisements

| Advertisement | Product/Service Type | Fear Appeal Exploited | Threat Level |
|--------------------------|--|---|--------------|
| Bark – Parental Controls | Online monitoring app | Child may be exposed to cyberbullying, inappropriate content, or online predators | High |
| Qustodio | Monitoring app | Exposure to inappropriate content, online predators, digital addiction, suspicious messages | High |
| Norton Family | Online monitoring app | Parents’ fear of losing control over children’s online lives, exposure to manipulation | Normal |
| Canopy | Online monitoring app | Exposure to harmful content and behaviors; need to understand children’s online activities | Normal |
| Gabb Wireless | Mobile phone service & device (no internet, no social media) | Risk of exposure to harmful online content if unrestricted internet access is given | Medium–High |
| Find My Kids | GPS tracking app (phone & watch compatible) | Child may wander, face danger, or go missing; parents lose contact | High |
| Mobicip | Monitoring app | Exposure to adult content, inappropriate websites, and unregulated screen time | High |
| NetNanny | Online monitoring & web-filtering app | Exposure to inappropriate content, cyberbullying/predators, and excessive screen time | High |
| mSpy | Mobile monitoring app | Exposure to online threats (chat, social media, location, etc.) | High |
| Tack GPS | GPS tracking device | Fear of losing track of child or loved one; risk of wandering or being unreachable | Medium–High |

Appendix 2. Child description

| Advertisement | Child Description (Shown) | Child Description (Implied) | Role | Emotional Expression | Level of Agency |
|--------------------------|--|---|---------------------|--|---|
| Bark – Parental Controls | Young boy (~10–14) bullying victim | Boys and girls of school age exposed to online threats | Victim | Fear / Concern | Passive – Parent intervenes |
| Qustodio | Animated icons of children of different ages and genders | Children and teens at risk online | Monitored users | Concern / Fear | Very minimal – Parent controls |
| Norton Family | Two boys using iPads are briefly shown | All digitally connected children | Monitored users | Neutral / Curious | Passive – Requires intervention |
| Canopy | Four girls (~3–10) and one boy (~10) using devices | Children regularly using tech needing supervision | Users | Calm, happy, harmonious | Moderate – Parental guidance |
| Gabb Wireless | Children (~8–15) using simple phones | Children needing communication without online risks, spend time for real life activities | Protected user | Happiness / Comfort | Minimal – Strict device limits |
| Find My Kids | Child walking to school, later appears upset | Children at emotional/physical risk without supervision | Victim | Subtle distress / Concern | Passive – Relies on alerts |
| Mobicip | Children browsing web safely (implied) | Active users needing protection from harmful content | Active user | Neutral | Moderate – Uses device filters |
| Net Nanny | No specific child shown; interface and device visuals dominate | Children implicitly at risk of encountering harmful content | Protected dependent | Neutral / Implied safety after filtering | Minimal – Parent sets all access rules |
| mSpy | Teenage girl texting secretly, deleting the text to avoid parents | Children/teens potentially hiding online behavior, at risk of contact with strangers or harmful content | Protected dependent | Concern / Fear | Very low – monitored entirely through the app |
| Tack GPS | Various children engaged in their daily routines, such as going to school, playing, or spending time with friends. | Children are vulnerable to accidental wandering or danger in public spaces | Protected dependent | Subtle concern (parent visibly anxious) | Very low – location relies on device tracking |

Appendix 3. Solutions

| Advertisement | Solution Offered | Emotional Outcome After Use |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| Bark – Parental Controls | Real-time alerts (cyberbullying, risks), location tracking, screen-time and content monitoring | Sense of security, peace of mind |
| Qustodio | Blocks inappropriate apps, supervises screen time, tracks activity and location, monitors contacts/messages | Protected, reassured |
| Norton Family | Implied use of Norton parental control tools | Safety |
| Canopy | Online safety settings, screen time limits, and location tracking | Reassurance, confidence |
| Gabb Wireless | Phones with call, text, and GPS; no internet or social media | Relief, peace of mind, confidence in safety |
| Find My Kids | Real-time GPS, geofences, SOS alerts, audio monitoring, usage/battery alerts | Relief, peace of mind |
| Mobicip | AI web filtering, content blocking, screen time scheduling, social media monitoring, and geofencing | Reassured, empowered |
| Net Nanny | Dynamic internet content filtering, blocking harmful sites in real-time, parental dashboard | Reassurance, sense of control |
| mSpy | Comprehensive device monitoring (calls, messages, contacts, apps, keylogging, social chats) | Heightened sense of control and reassurance, though with privacy trade-offs |
| Tack GPS | Real-time GPS location tracking, safe-zone/geofence alerts, long battery life for continuous coverage | Peace of mind, confident in child's safety |

Appendix 4. Tone of voice

| Advertisement | Tone of Voice (Narration / Style) | Effect on Audience |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| Bark – Parental Controls | Emotional, serious, urgent; tense music, dark lighting, realistic threats | Triggers fear and anxiety; urges immediate protection |
| Qustodio | Neutral, informative, direct; calm voice focusing on features | Builds rational trust; appeals to logic |
| Norton Family | Calm, sincere, reflective; heartfelt storytelling | Evokes empathy and gentle concern |
| Canopy | Gentle, reassuring, thoughtful; warm pacing, soft music | Builds emotional connection, inspires confidence |
| Gabb Wireless | Warm, reassuring, family-oriented | Builds confidence; appeals to the desire for safe independence |
| Find My Kids | Gentle yet urgent; empathetic narrators | Evokes empathy; positions app as essential |
| Mobicip | Informative, confident, proactive; highlights AI protection | Instills trust; frames solution as reliable and empowering |
| Net Nanny | Informative, confident, slightly urgent; positions product as proven leader | Builds trust via authority; reinforces need for proactive filtering |
| mSpy | Informative, authoritative, somewhat urgent | Signals that vigilance and total visibility are necessary for safety; reinforces justified surveillance |
| Tack GPS | Calm, emphasizing safety and reliability | Evokes trust and security; normalizes constant awareness via tech |

Appendix 5. Summary of Research Questions, Key Findings, and Illustrative Evidence

| Research Question | Key Findings | Example Evidence |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| RQ1 | F1 (fear of losing control) dominates, followed by F2 (cyberbullying); layering of fears amplifies urgency | F1 in 9/10 ads; F2 in 6/10; common visuals include lost child in public (<i>Find My Kids</i>), bullying texts (<i>Bark, Net Nanny</i>), sneaky/deleted messages (<i>mSpy</i>) |
| RQ2 | Parents framed as vigilant guardians; children framed as passive victims/protected dependents, equating “good parenting” with surveillance and control; child agency remains consistently | Bullying victim (<i>Bark, Net Nanny</i>); secretive teen behavior/deleted texts (<i>mSpy</i>); lost child/public-space risk (<i>Find My Kids</i>) → parental tech-mediated intervention presented as necessary |
| RQ3 | Three main product/service models marketed to overcontrolling parents: comprehensive monitoring apps, GPS/location tracking solutions, and restricted-access/no-internet devices, each linked to a “problem → solution” promise of restored control | Monitoring apps: <i>Bark, Qustodio, Norton Family, Mobicip, Net Nanny, mSpy</i> ; GPS/location tracking: <i>Find My Kids, Tack GPS</i> ; restricted access/no-internet: <i>Gabb Wireless</i> |
| RQ4 | Products aimed at increasing parental control mainly share a core fear: loss of control (F1), then link it to “technological solutions” (especially surveillance/location tracking/filtering) to make monitoring the norm of “good parenting.” | Threat–resolution arc: urgent music/quick cuts + fear scenes → calm narration/warm family scenes; dashboards/GPS pings/filtering visuals (<i>Qustodio, Net Nanny, Canopy</i>) used to signal “control = reassurance” |