



## The Force of Television Advertising on Children's Healthiness

### KEYWORDS

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**ABSTRACT** Advertising has become so integral part of our life & society that we cannot imagine any event, newspaper, magazine, TV serial, Cinema etc. without advertising. Advertising is a vital marketing tool as well as powerful communication medium. The basic objective of any advertisement is to stimulate sales, direct or indirect by trying to make tall claims about product performance. The degree of impact of advertising on adults may be problematic but the outcome is devastating for children. Advertisers of children's television used to appeal to the parents earlier but now they appeal directly to children who do not have the emotional or cognitive tools to evaluate what's being sold to them. Television is no more just a source of entertainment for children. They showcase the must haves for a kid making them a consumer even before they have reached the age of 3 Thus the influence of the media on the psychosocial development of children is profound. Thus, it is important for the parents to know their child's exposure to media and to provide guidance on age-appropriate use of all media, including television, radio, music, video games and the Internet. The objectives of this research paper are to explore both the beneficial and harmful effects of media on children's mental and physical health, and to identify how the advertising industry can be regulated by formulating unified laws to prevent the over-exposure of children to the ad world. We are also emphasizing on directing children's towards imbibing healthy food habits in them by suggesting parents to be more aware & regulating the advertisement targeted on children. We also have taken a review on what kind of regulations are implemented in some parts of world regarding advertisements targeting children's & what kind of steps are being taken in India in this direction.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Marketing race to put the brand on the top of the mind, creating brand equity, maintaining the brand loyalty has extended its net to influence the children to a extent that it has lost its path and walking on the unethical grounds, leaving our children in a vulnerable conditions. Of all marketing weapons advertising has the leading impact as its exposure is more, and is the most attractive media for children. The need is to establish certain standards to restrict advertising aimed at children.

The desire to restrict advertising aimed at children is based on three concerns, first, it is believed that advertising promote superficiality and values founded in material goods and consumption. Second, children are considered inexperienced consumers and easy prey for the sophisticated persuasion of advertisers. Third, advertising influences children demand for everything from toy to snack food. These demands create an environment of child-parent conflict. Parents' finds themselves having to say no over and over again to children whose desire are piqued by effective advertising.

This paper seeks to link between television advertising and its influence on child health and family spending. Television advertising found to influence diet habit particularly in terms of tendency to buy unhealthy food. The second factor is family disturbance due child influence on family spending

#### 1.1 Children are Defenseless

Children are innocent and not so mature. When a marketer advertises a product on television, they do not understand that it is a business and their main aim is to sell. They do not understand that advertisers try to push their products and market in such a way that children want to buy it. Children take everything at face value and believe without a doubt the messages in the advertisements. Advertisements are made in such a way as to attract the attention of children. Children do not understand it to be marketing strategy. Children are an extremely vulnerable target audience and get easily carried away.

#### 1.2 Junk Food Advertising and Children

Research has shown that junk food advertisements influence

children greatly leading to an increased demand for junk food by children. When children watch young adults in good shape eating junk foods in the advertisements they assume that it is good for the health. They do not know that junk food is not good for health. They are unaware of the fact that junk food does not contain nutritional value. They may even think that by eating these junk foods they might become like the thin and fit models in the advertisements. A research conducted has shown that children increased their consumption of junk foods after seeing these advertisements. They are seen to be so influenced by these ads that they almost doubled their consumption of these unhealthy snacks and foods.

#### 1.3 Resulting in the Nag Factor

Children may pester their parents for the products advertised. They may insist on a particular pair of branded jeans only and be against the other brands of clothing in the store. They may also insist on living a life as portrayed in advertisements. Children may make excessive demands on their parents for the products they see in the advertisements. At times, they cry, pinch, pull and will not keep quiet till the parents purchase the product. Some parents who cannot control their children may give in to the tantrums of children left with no choice. When children see these advertisements it gives a wrong impression on their young minds and they start giving a lot of importance to materialistic joys.

#### 1.4 What Parents Can Do?

Nowadays, with so much openness and exposure in media and commercials parents are often worried about what all their children are watching. It has been noticed that children are often able to remember messages targeted towards adults also. Kids remember the content in advertisements aimed at adults. A few countries have banned marketing and advertising targeted at children below the age of twelve. One country has banned advertising of toys before 10 p.m. as it is at this time that children are mostly awake. Previously advertisers marketed children's products towards parents. Parents were their target audience for these products. But nowadays, marketers aim their messages directly at children. Advertisements are made specifically in such a way that they draw the attention of children. The marketing messages are aimed directly at the children. Parents should teach their chil-

dren of how to be critical of ads and how to become less influenced by the messages in the ads. Parents need to teach their children the importance and value of money.

### 1.5 Positive Effects of Advertisement on Kids

- Advertising makes the kids aware of the new products available in the market. It increases their knowledge about the latest innovations, in the field of technology as well as otherwise.
- Convincing ads, which center around healthy food products, can help improve the diet of a child, if they are attractive enough.

### 1.6 Negative Effects of Advertisement on Kids

- Advertisements encourage the children to persuade their parents to purchase the products shown in the commercials, whether useful or not. The little ones tend to get adamant, if they are not bought the product.
- Children often tend to misinterpret the messages conveyed in commercials. They overlook the positive side and concentrate more on the negatives.
- Many advertisements in the present times include dangerous stunts, which can be performed only by experts. Even though the commercials broadcast the statutory warnings with the ad, the kids often try to imitate the stunts at home, with fatal results.
- The flashy advertisements broadcast in television generate impulse shopping in children.
- Children, after watching the glitter of commercials, often lose the ability to live a life without materialistic joy.
- The kids usually get more attracted towards the costly branded products, such as jeans and accessories. They disregard the inexpensive, but useful, ones that are not shown in the commercials.
- Advertisements have an indirect effect on the behavior of children. They might develop temper tantrums, when deprived of the latest toys and clothes that are shown in the commercials.
- The personal preferences in clothing, toys, food and luxurious of children are altered by the advertisements, to a great extent.
- Junk foods, such as pizzas, burgers and soft drinks, are heavily promoted during children's TV viewing time. This develops a craving for fatty, sugary and fast foods in kids, thereby affecting their health adversely.

## 2. Review of literature

Children, who watch television extremely, tend to be obese because they indulge less in healthy and fruitful tasks including running, cycling jumping and exercise. Furthermore, these children take food, high in sugar, salt and fat (SSF) such as candy, snacks, sugary cereals, beverages and fast food items (Macklin, 1987). Sometimes commercials could be endorsed as deceptive. As most commercials targeting children are of candy, snacks and fast food, such advertisements therefore act as catalysts in persuading children to demand these unhealthy products as compared to home cooked food.

Children food preference is highly dependent on television advertising. However, it conveys an imbalanced nutritional message. The research has established a positive relationship between food advertisements children remember and the number of foods like soft drink, crisps and savory snacks that children eat (Borzekowski & Robinson, 2001). Role of the family, its composition, eating patterns & habits, control of parents plus their education level and socio-economic status are also important factors in the development of overweight in children around the globe. The primary agent of socialization for the children and adult regardless of nationality, ethnicity and race is the family. Although the impact of media on children varies from age to age but a strong correlation was found in television viewing habits, poor diet, poor health and obesity among both children and adults. While watching television one remains physically inactive, this reduces metabolic rates and displaces physical exercise (Livingstone and Helsper, 2004).

## 3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- 1) To study television advertising and its influence on child health.
- 2) To study television advertising and its impact on family spending.

## 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of study random sampling method is used. The sample size was limited to 200 parents of child aged between 3-12 years in coimbatore district of Tamilnadu. Correlation tool is used to analyze the relationship of television advertising and its force on child health and family spending.

**Table 4.1 Regulation of food Ads**

S.No	Regulation	No of respondents	Percentage
1	Ban food ads	21	7
2	Regulate fast food ads	114	41
3	Regulate the ads during the certain time period	123	38
4	Other	42	14

### Sources: Primary data

It is clear from the above table majority 38 % of the parents surveyed feel that there is need for regulation as far as food related advertisements are concerned. Of these about 7% say that all the food ADs targeting children should be banned, about 41% say that ADs should be regulated during certain time period while children's programmes are being telecasted and around 38% feel that only fast food ADs should be regulated.

**Table- 4.2 Child watching TV while eating**

S.No	watching TV while eating	No of respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	252	84
2	No	48	16

### Sources: Primary data

It is evident from the above table when asked the parents of children majority 84 % watching TV while eating it was found that the child used to influence the buying decision of the parents particularly buying clothes, food items, toys, FMCG items including cosmetics and fashion accessories

**Table 4.3 TV programs viewed by children**

S.no	TV programs viewed by children	No of respondents	Percentage
1	Cartoons	234	78
2	Serials	39	13
3	Advertisements	9	3
4	Movies	18	6

### Sources: Primary data

From the above table around 78% of the children watch cartoon channels, so they are more exposed to the characters shown there and the products endorsed by these cartoon characters which may imbibe bad food habits in children as most of the ADs projected are fast food and cold drink related and not about healthy diet!

**Table- 4.4 Reasons for child persuading to buy a product**

S.no	Reasons for buy a product	No of respondents	Percentage
1	Product utility	51	17
2	Seen on TV	90	30
3	Friend has it	108	38
4	Endorsed by cartoon character / celebrity	51	17

### Sources: Primary data

From the analysis around 30 % and 38% of the parents surveyed said that they The kids buy a particular product mostly because he has seen it on TV or some of his friend has it.

**Table-4. 5 Time spend by children watching TV**

S.no	Time spent	No of respondents	Percentage
1	0-1 hour	87	29
2	1-2 hour	105	35
3	2-3 hour	69	23
4	3-4 hour	39	13

Sources: Primary data

It is evident from the table majority 35 % of the parents said that 1 to 2 hours per day children spend time on watching TV and only 13 % of the children spend 3 to 4 hours in a day.

**Table 4.6 Correlation Analysis on the basis of Age group, Diet and Family Spending**

Influencing factor	3-6 years	6-9 years	9-12 years
Mean hours spend watching television	2.32	3.12	3.45
Influence of television advertisement on diet habits of children	0.32	0.51	0.38
Influence of television advertisement on family spending	0.23	0.38	0.69

Sources: Primary data

The above table clearly shows that surprisingly children from the age group of 3-6 years, (most of whom who cannot distinguish between advertisements and programs) who do not have the emotional or cognitive tools to evaluate what's being sold to them also demand for product of their choice (most of the times advertised products). They want the advertised product which give pleasure because its glorified, fantasy and puffery appeal.

It is clue from the above table survey was conducted, which reveals the close association of television advertising with the child's diet habits and family spending Correlation is measured as; 0.32, 0.51 and 0.83 for age group of 3-6, 6-9, and 9-12 years respectively.

## 5. SUGGESTION

### 1) Education and parental involvement

Parental involvement in determining desirable programming is the best choice. Parents have to monitor and control their children's viewing habits. Studies show that parents play an important role in their children's social learning, but if a parent's views are not discussed explicitly with children, the medium may teach and influence by default. Other media, such as magazines, radio, video games and the Internet, also have the potential to influence children's eating habits, exercise habits, buying habits and mental health. If children are allowed to be exposed to these media without adult supervision, they may have the same deleterious effects as television.

### 2) Role of schools

Schools can also play a very active role in making sure that students get healthy diet at its canteen. It is very important that schools do not stock junk food in their canteen, by getting lured by approach of fast food and soft drink companies to stock their stuff. Since children spend most of their time in school, schools can imbibe on children's mind what a healthy diet should consists of.

### 3) Statutory Warning

Since the intake of junk food & carbonated drinks causes numerous diseases such as obesity, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases (CVDs), gall bladder ailments, cancer, psychosocial problems, breathlessness, sleep disorders, asthma, arthritis, weak bones and reproductive hormone abnormalities. So it should come with statutory warnings as in the case of cigarettes & milk powder such as "Intake of this food more than twice a week is not good for health."

### 4) Advertisement Code

To be monitored by an organization this will take care of the following:

- A) Before any AD is aired on television, the most sought medium by children some code of conduct should be followed. Any food ADs should be scrutinized with regards to the claims they are making & the food ingredients should meet some standards laid down by recognized organization like WHO.
- B) The stipulated time limit for advertisement is followed by the companies or not. TV Channels generally do not follow any rules regarding advertising air time. Doordarshan poses a limit on advertising time which is a maximum of 7.5 minutes of advertisements in a 30 minute programme. Private TV channels are free to air as many advertisements they like. This is primarily the reason why on some private channels, a 30-minute TV programme gets stretched to 45 minutes or even more.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This paper discusses the television advertisement and its force on child health and family spending. The study has revealed a positive co relationship exists between time spent with television and its impact on the buying behavior of a child and its influence on family spending. Parents should make the kids more aware of the surrounding so that starts taking proper & logical decision. Parents should be aware that advertising is going on, and it's influencing their children more than they think. Also government's role is important here. It can do it by implementing proper food laws and harmonization of various laws into single unified law.

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