

# Impact of Television Advertising on Psychology and Health of Children

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## ABSTRACT

The present research studied how advertising on cartoon channels affects childrens' psychology and health. The data collection was done using convenience sampling in the form of the questionnaire and personal interview. Various secondary sources were also used for gathering data for research. The conclusion was that the advertising related to children should be regulated by the government by introducing appropriate laws, as suggested in the present research.

The advertising industry spends \$12 billion per year on ads targeted to children, bombarding young audiences with persuasive messages through media such as television and the internet. The average child is exposed to more than 40,000 TV commercials a year, according to studies. And ads are reaching children through new media technologies and even in schools--with corporate-sponsored educational materials and product placements in students' textbooks.

## Keywords

Internet, Media, Child

## Introduction

The National Readership Survey shows that in India the time spent on watching television has increased to more than 15 hours a week amongst all television viewers. This is a 20 percent increase since 2004. Audiences in households with access to satellite and cable channels spend 25 percent more time than before. Other sources of entertainment are radio, internet, video games, magazines etc. For cartoon viewing, the main source is television. Cartoon channels keep the children happy and help them relax and unwind. All the children's programme and the cartoon channels have advertisements slots. These advertisements have a definite influence on the tender minds of the children. TV advertisements attract the children towards their products, mainly fast food which may harm their health; also these products come in attractive packages whose cost is more than the food. While it is true that children are being exposed to goods and services geared to them at a very early age there are no studies so far that have looked at the affect of advertising on children. This is creating problems for children in a clinical setting with some children and their families facing depression, low self-esteem and other issues that come from not having what they want.

### **Materials & Methods:**

The main objective of the study was to understand the relationship between children's television advertising exposure and their food and beverage preferences. The area of research was to study the impact of advertising on the impressionable minds of children and how it affects their psychology and health. Various communicating devices are used to advertise the products for the so called new segment in the market. The research project generally studied the nature of the children, their likes and dislikes, parent's role in decision-making and the influence of advertising on the buying habits of the kids. The data was collected by using convenience sampling in the form of the questionnaire and personal interview. Also, various secondary sources were employed for gathering data related to the research. Analysis of the data was done by using quantitative methods such as ANOVA.

### **Questionnaire**

Two questionnaires were prepared:

- Questionnaire A was for children contained general questions regarding cartoon advertisements and their impact on children's social and mental health.
- Questionnaire B was for parents included general questions regarding reactions of children, reaction on blocking cartoons and measures for preventing children from watching cartoon advertisements by parents.

### **Children Entry Criteria for the Study**

Children in the 5-14 year age group were eligible. For better results the family status of all the children was included in the study as far as possible. An attempt was made in the study to stick to an average age of children.

### **Primary Data**

A questionnaire was prepared for getting the views of parents and their kids on their purchasing choices and the eating habits of kids. The aim was to know what kind of impact does the advertising has on the impressionable minds and how advertisements decide their purchasing and eating habit. The survey had to be done at the point of purchase. So it was carried out in food malls where brands like McDonalds have outlets, and also schools where we could meet the parents. Another part of the survey was conducted online by designing a questionnaire in a format that could be easily answered on-line by the parents and children of different age groups.

### **Techniques**

Non probability sampling technique was used along with convenience sampling. A total of about 100 different people were interviewed with the questionnaire at different places of purchase.

### **Results and Discussion**

- Around 84 percent of children watch TV while eating which may affect their food intake.
- Around 78 percent of the children watch cartoon channels, so they are more exposed to the characters shown on the screen and the products endorsed by them. The children may imbibe bad food habits as most of the ads projected are about fast food and cold drinks and not about a healthy diet.
- Around 62 percent of the parents surveyed said that they did discuss the fast food related advertisements and cosmetics and also the funny ads, but rarely the social and health related ads, with their kids.
- The Kids buy a particular product mostly because they have seen it on TV or some of their friends have.

### **Role of Schools**

Schools can make sure that students get a healthy diet at its canteen. It is very important that school canteens do not stock junk food, lured by the approach of fast food and soft drink companies. Schools can instill in children's mind what a healthy diet should consist of.

### **Statutory Warning**

The intake of junk food and carbonated drinks causes numerous diseases such as obesity, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, gall bladder, cancer, psycho-social problems, breathlessness, sleep disorders, asthma, arthritis, weak bones and reproductive hormone abnormalities. So, it should come with the statutory warning, as in the case of cigarettes and milk powder which say that "Intake of this food more than twice a week is not good for health."

### **Advertisement code to be monitored by an organization which will take care of the following :**

Before any advertisement is aired on television, it should follow some code of conduct. Food ads should be scrutinized with regard to the claims they make and the food ingredients should meet the standards laid down by a recognized organization like the WHO.

There should be a stipulated time for company advertisement. Private TV channels generally do not follow any rules regarding advertising air time. Doordarshan imposes the limit of a maximum of 7.5 minutes for advertising in a 30-minute programme. Private TV channels are free to air as many advertisements as 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.

### **BroadCasting Codes for AIR/Doordarshan**

AIR and Doordarshan have the responsibility to ensure that the advertisements shown are not repugnant to good taste and do not mislead the listeners and viewers, the consumers. Since earning commercial revenue is not the sole criteria of Prasar Bharati, it has a code of strict provisions:

- Advertisements of tobacco products including 'Pan Masala' and liquors are not permitted.
- The goods and services advertised should be in consonance with the laws of the country enacted to protect the rights of consumers.
- The Commercial should never project a derogatory image of women and should not put to danger the safety of children.

A Code of conduct like this should be made compulsory for private channels also. The government has enacted 'The Commercial Advertisements on Electronic Media (Regulation) Bill, 2005' which lays down standards for advertisements in the electronic media.

### **ASCI Guidelilnes**

Children's choice of diet (food and beverages) and level of physical activity, can impact their general health and well being. It can have a positive influence by encouraging a healthy, well balanced diet, sound eating habits and appropriate physical activity. Caution and care therefore should be observed in advertising of Foods & Beverages especially ones containing relatively high Fat, Sugar and Salt. Advertisements should not mislead consumers to believe that consumption of the product advertised will result directly in personal changes in intelligence, physical ability or exceptional recognition. Such claims if made in advertisements should be supported with adequate scientific substantiation. All nutritional and health benefit claims in foods & beverage advertisements are required to be substantiated scientifically.

### **Conclusion**

Advertisement is an integral part of the industry which wants that its products should reach the customer who then converts to consumer. During this process they should not forget that it is their social responsibility to take care of the future of the country which they target tactfully to earn profits. Parents should make the kids more aware of the surroundings so that they start taking proper and logical decisions. Parents should be aware that advertising is a reality and it is influencing their children more than they think. Also, the government's role is important here. It can implement proper food laws and harmonize various laws into a single unified law.

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