

'Ad' Factor: Influence of Television Advertising on Children

Arpita Singh

UGC NET Qualified (Mass Communication and Journalism), Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh

Email: arptasingh9@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Television broadcasting in India had a modest start but after the launch of the National programme on Doordarshan on August 15, 1982, it became a National Phenomenon in India. It has become an integral part of people's lives as it offers entertainment, information and education. TV is a powerful medium and a part of most children's lives. The amount of time spent in front of the TV as a kid may determine to reorganise children's thinking power and problem-solving ability. The purpose of this research is to find how television advertising affects kids, their overall personality development, and their perspective through the literature review approach. The main aim of this research paper is to study the effects of TV advertising on children, both positively and negatively.

INTRODUCTION

Television is considered the most effective medium as it has a large reach. It has a wide appeal and can convince all sections of society, age groups, illiterate or literate people. Meanwhile, advertising, which is a tool to reach the target audience to introduce their product, business, or service considers TV as the best medium. Advertising through Television is done to convey messages through commercials or make people aware of the latest brands.

Television is still considered a viable medium of media mix as diverse forms of advertisements are broadcast on it. Advertising through television is considered as trustworthy as it develops a persuasive and emotional connection among viewers. Often television viewers tend to be more engaged when watching their favorite programs. Advertisements that are placed strategically between the shows can capture the audience's attention, especially during high-interest programming like sports events, news or popular TV series.

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Television advertising is a powerful tool for businesses, ideas, services, brand promotions, and popularization of products are some main objectives. Undoubtedly, advertising has a significant role in shaping the ever-changing norms of society at a large scale but has impacted peoples' lives especially children in both positive and negative ways.

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

- To examine the impact of TV advertising on kids.
- To understand the positive and negative effects of TV advertisements on children's minds.
- To analyse the effect of TV advertisements in shaping the personality of children.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- Chatterjee. T, (2024, February 2) in the article "Influence of Advertising on Children" elaborated on the positive impact of advertisement on children and useful tips for parents to monitor the advertising viewing.
- In the article titled "Advertising: how it influences children and teenagers", the author stated, "Advertising affects children in many ways. How children handle advertising can depend on several things, including their age, knowledge and experience."
- Lapierre. M, Milici. F, Rozendaal. E, McAlister. A, Castonguay. J, (2017) through the research titled "The Effect of Advertising on Children and Adolescents" stated, "Advertisements channels to reach children have increased and marketers are using them, often blurring the distinction between entertainment and advertising."
- Worland. J, (2015, January 19) in the article "Here's What Alcohol Advertising Does to Kids," described the words of James D. Sargent, "its strong evidence that underage drinkers are not only exposed to the television advertising, but they also assimilate the messages."
- Swanson. W. (2012, January 23) in the study titled, "What Does TV Do to My Kid's Brain?" stated, "What content your child watches on TV matters: the more frenetic or

violent the TV show, the more likely your child will have attention challenges later in life.

Television shows that move at a typical pace may be far better for our children."

TELEVISION ADVERTISING AND FACTORS INFLUENCING CHILDREN

Television advertising often develops a sense of credibility and reliability of a brand among people. By advertisements, consumers conclude that the brand is established and trustworthy. The advertising companies spent millions of dollars on advertisements targeting children. Children consume advertisements in various forms such as -Television, YouTube, apps, radio, billboards, magazines, movies, the internet, online games, text messages, social media and other platforms. It becomes important for children to know that in one or the other form, advertisements are trying to make them buy something, influencing their thought process or trying to change their mindset about something.

TELEVISION ADVERTISING INFLUENCE ON CHILDREN

As per a recent study, children spend around 4 hours 30 minutes watching TV every day. Children are affected by advertisements on television. Children are daily bombarded with many advertisements without knowing its effect on their minds. Discussing the impact of television or any program on children's brains, Dr. Dimitri Christakis, stated, "Prolonged exposure to rapid image changes (especially in infants) during critical periods of brain development may precondition the mind to expect high levels of stimulation. This may then make the pace of real life less able to sustain our children's attention. The more hours a child views rapid-fire television, the more likely they will have attention challenges later in life."

The reaction of children towards these TV ads depends on various factors such as their age, environment, family, upbringing and a lot more. As per experts, children who watch more TV are likely to demand or want more toys. As per researchers, children between 3-6 years might not differentiate between entertainment and some type of advertisement on TV or YouTube – for instance, unboxing videos that include play with toy promotion. Children of this age generally tend

to think of advertisements as being entertaining and won't be critical of the claims that advertisers make.

Similarly, as per research, children between 12-13 years might understand the purpose of advertising, and can also use the information gained from advertisement to decide what they want. However, they might not be aware of how advertising makes things more expensive and not understand the tricky product placement strategies between TV programs.

ADVERTISING AND ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

Over the years, a lot of studies have been done on alcohol advertisements and its adverse effect on children. Nowadays, a subtle marketing technique has been adopted with the placement of certain products in films and TV shows. Such advertisements cannot just provoke children to form a certain belief or habit, but form unhealthy habits among children.

According to a study in the journal JAMA Pediatrics, "alcohol advertising that is presented to children and young adults helps lead them to drink for the first time—or, if they're experienced underage drinkers, to drink more."

Similarly, James D. Sargent, MD, study author and professor of pediatrics at Dartmouth's Geisel School of Medicine, stated, "It's strong evidence that underage drinkers are not only exposed to the television advertising, but they also assimilate the messages." "That process moves them forward in their drinking behaviour," he stated further.

SEXUAL APPEAL IN ADVERTISEMENTS

If we talk about the traditional concept of advertisements, women were usually portrayed as mothers or wives because that is how she was accepted by society considering her career choice mostly to be a housewife. So, this is how she was portrayed in the advertisements as an ideal housewife. Ideally, in the traditional advertisements, she used to endorse products related to household utility such as washing powders, bars, floor cleaners, brooms, incense sticks etc. But when it came to advertising cars, watches, and gadgets then men were considered to be endorsing

the product. Gradually, in the late 20th century women's portrayal in advertisements changed. Nowadays, she is often portrayed as a glamorous and sexual object.

Nowadays, from chocolate advertisements to cold drinks, almost every ad is sexual. This harms children as they start thinking they should look or behave that way to be accepted. Children and adolescents are both negatively affected by this in many ways. As a result of such body or sexual appealing advertisements children often become body conscious due to the depiction of men and women as slim and sexy in the ads. Due to the increased desire to look a certain way or like the famous personality in the ads, children often develop many eating disorders, anxiety etc.

NEGATIVE INFLUENCE OF ADVERTISING ON CHILDREN

As per research, there are many adverse effects of advertisement of ads on children. Some of them are mentioned here:

Influence of Marketing Communications on Children: The advertisement of unhealthy products on television, including unhealthy food, alcohol and tobacco, is directly linked to various negative outcomes for children. According to several researchers, it has been showcased that food advertisement increases children's consumption habits. As per research, there is a consistent relationship between advertising exposure, materialism, and parent-child conflict. Another study highlighted that the portrayal of thin-ideal women is directly related to negative body image among children, women and girls.

Children's Consumer Development: As per Piaget's theory of cognitive development, researchers in their studies have mentioned that until children are >7 years old, they cannot detect persuasive intent in advertising.

Marketing to Children in New Media Environments: The modern age advertisements are often qualitatively different from the traditional old advertisements. These days advertisements try to engage children actively through advergaming platforms (i.e., games featuring branded content) or through representation as brand ambassadors.

POSITIVE INFLUENCE OF ADVERTISING ON CHILDREN

Here are some of the positive effects of advertising on children:

Source of Information: Advertising can be a good source of information. Some advertisements such as public service announcements, current innovations and technological milestones can be a learning opportunity for children. Some advertisements are also meant to educate the child about new products in the market.

Presents Healthy Choices: Some advertisements promote healthy food choices thus it can prompt the child to opt for a more balanced diet instead of unhealthy food habits.

Teach Good Habits: Certain advertisements – such as the ones related to hygiene products can help children develop good habits and live healthy lives.

Motivate Them to Chase Their Dreams: Some advertisements also have motivating content that encourages children to select a profession or chase a specific dream thus helping them to develop a passion at a young age.

Promote a Sense of Community: Some advertisements carry hidden messages that are relevant to social change and help to promote empathy and a feeling of duty towards the community in children.

Encourage them to be Mindful: Few advertisements are related to environmental protection and can attract children's attention to the existing issue and motivate them to be part of the solution.

ADVERTISEMENTS AND PARENTS RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS THEIR CHILDREN

Considering the harmful effects of advertisements, it becomes the moral responsibility of a parent to protect their children from such ads by taking a few important measures. Parents can discuss with their children the way advertisements work to sell services, ideas or products. For instance, some advertisements link their product with a 'perfect' life in the ads which is not real.

It is also suggested to make them start thinking about the subtle influences of advertising. As a parent, you could encourage your child to think about how advertisements promote ideas about what type of lifestyle people of all genders should have, how they should look like, wear, eat, drink and do. They should be educated on how advertisement could influence their thinking, and how advertisement works on people's attitudes towards various things like prosperity, fairness and so on.

Some Questions to get Older Children and Teenagers Thinking:

- How real is the lifestyle in this advertisement? Do you know anyone who lives like that?
- Are the foods and drinks in advertisements healthy choices? Why aren't vegies and fruit advertised like burgers?
- What do advertisements say about gender, families, body shape and cultural diversity? Do they reflect real life?
- How does the information you post about yourself on social media influence the kinds of advertisements you see on social media?

CONCLUSION

Advertising affects children, their thinking, and their personality in both positive and negative ways. Unknowingly, children tend to develop some habits like smoking or alcohol consumption due to the adverse effects of certain ads on television. Directly or indirectly, advertisements are influencing children's decisions which is something serious and cannot be ignored. Advertisements often give a direct stimulus to consumers to buy a certain product and develop a desire among children for a product. This helps the producers in raising the aggregate level of the economy but at the same time harms children. In the long run, advertising probably plays a major part in making people addicted to a certain product by high level of consumption thus increasing the employment levels, directly and indirectly. Advertisements are good for economic growth but need to be regulated for the betterment of children and their personality development.

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