



Impact of Television Advertising on Children of Visakhapatnam City

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Abstract:

Children have come to constitute a very important consumer group that influences family purchases of various products in many ways. Marketers pay special to this group recognizing them as a primary market, an influencing market, and a future market. Due to dramatic changes taking pace in the society regarding technology, information processing and changing media environment, children are growing up much faster, are more connected and more informed than any other generation before them. The rise of dual income of parents, increase in working women, reduction in family size, rise in number of televisions in household especially children s bedrooms, more commercial pressure, arrival of new products in the market above all due to presence of immense media environment, children are able to experience consumption and purchasing at a much faster rate than ever before. The centrality of television in children s lives is indicated by the fact that 9 out of 10 children watch it almost every day. No, socializing agent has attracted more attention than mass media especially television, in children consumer behaviour literature. Many advertisements broadcasted on television are creations of brilliant minds which aim to persuade people to buy. These advertising messages get across the children minds due to the beautiful audio and visual effects. Advertising influences children purchase request and family dynamics. In this paper we would like to study the ability of children in understanding TV Ads and their attitude towards TV Ads.

Keywords: Television, Children, Parents, Advertising, Attitudes

I. Introduction:

Advertising is multi dimensional and has manifold aims to achieve. Leiss et al. (1986) believe advertising to be the most important social, economic and cultural institution in society – ‘a communication activity through which social change is

mediated’. Chunawalla and Sethia (1987) have described it as a form of mass communication, a powerful marketing tool, a means of financing the mass media, an instrument of business management, a field of employment, a profession, a social institution and a component of eco system. In simple



words, according to ASCI (Advertising Standards Council of India), an ad is defined as “any paid form of communication addressed to the public or a section of it, the purpose of which is to influence the opinions or behaviour of those to whom it is addressed”.

Advertisers have chosen TV as the predominant medium for reaching consumers to market their products for long. Dorr (1986) noted that TV is not only the most important medium of advertising but is also the most important source of information and recreation for the masses. TV's superiority over other mediums of advertising is due to its tri-sensory appeal; auditory, visual and kinaesthetic that influences mental faculties more piquantly than any other media and its effects are enduring and everlasting (Archana, 1988). According to Oates et al. (2003), advertising aimed at children may not be exclusively transmitted via TV, but still TV is the most visible medium of advertising. Mc Neal and Ji (1999) found that children gave highest rank to 'TV' as a new product information source out of enlisted various sources (like parents, store visits, peers etc.), with parents scoring second place.

TV has become a more effective socializing agent in comparison to peers and teachers due to children's extensive TV viewing (Huston-Stein and Wright, 1989). TV not only forms a part of family system but a part many can no longer imagine living without. It constitutes an important experiential component of a child's development. TV competes with

family, school, peers, religious institutions and society to provide role models and information that affect children's beliefs, values, behaviour, attitude and lifestyle (Winick and Winick, 1979; Rogge, 1989; Verma and Larson, 2002). TV is a permanent fixture in the lives of children nowadays.

A large number of ads are aimed at children as they are the most impressionable group in any society. Children are not only seen as an attractive market segment (Pechaux and Derbaix, 1999) but also an influential market as they exert influence on the purchasing habits of other family members. Lowden (1999) states that the motto of today's ad world is “Catch them young”, with the purpose to instil brand loyalty at a tender age so as to shape lifelong preferences. The past research indicates that although the effective ads can impress even the most rational adults, children are more vulnerable and advertising exerts substantial influence on their beliefs and attitudes. During the featuring of an ad, when an advertised product appeals to children, they are more likely to focus on the concrete aspects of the product and as a result overlook the abstract nature of relationship between the advertiser and the audience of the ad (Kunkel et al., 2004).

In India, a child is regarded as a blessing and most of the families are 'child-oriented'. Parents save or invest for child's future and sacrifice their own desires to fulfil children's dreams and demands. According to the survey carried



out by Unnikrishnan and Bajpai (1996), it was found that a large number of parents hated saying 'no' to their children, it was only when their children's requests were unreasonable that they were compelled to refuse. Though it leads to children's annoyance or sadness, it is not easy for parents also. Another area of concern is the impact on the parent-child relationship. The sheer volume of commercials on TV that influence the product choices and the intensity of these choices on children, and the fact that the parents cannot honour all purchase requests triggered by television advertising can lead to many conflicts between parents and children which can be avoided otherwise.

Parents obviously cannot honour all TV ads triggered purchase requests. Yuki and Fable (1990) found that children use various influencing tactics to persuade parents to comply with their requests. Robertson (1979) found the parent-child conflict arising out of refusal to child's purchase influence attempts is the biggest and worrisome side effect of impact of ads. Atkin (1975) found that more than 50 per cent of children reported arguing or becoming angry when their request for a toy was denied. Substantiating the results with another similar study, Atkin (1978) observed high rates of child disappointment and anger in response to the majority of parents' refusals at the super market to requests for cereals. Both Galst and White (1976) and Atkin (1978) found that amount of TV viewing was related to the frequency of children's purchase requests at the

super market. Other studies to confirm such patterns were by Sheikh and Moleski (1977) and Gorn and Goldberg (1977). Moreover research across different cultures confirms similar patterns. Robertson et al. (1989) conducted a cross cultural study based on families from Japan, England and US which shows a significant relation between children's amount of TV viewing and their purchase requests, although this relationship was highest in US. Buijzen and Valkenburg (2000) noted that TV viewing was deeply related to Dutch children's Christmas gift requests.

II. Research Methodology:

OBJECTIVES:

The specific objectives of the study are as under:

- To study the ability of children to understand TV ads.
- To find out children's attitude towards TV ads.

This study is an endeavour to find the impact of TV ads on children. For this purpose TV viewing habits amongst children, their level of understanding of ads, the aspects they like about TV ads, the products they buy or request from their parents after seeing ads, their attitude towards TV ads and the influence that ads have on children has been gauged. Television media has been chosen for this study due to its prime relevance from children's point of view. In this chapter, a detailed methodology followed for the conduct of the present



study is given. In order to develop a sound theoretical framework for this research, a review of literature was undertaken. It revealed that not much work has been done in the field of influence of TV ads on children in India. Therefore, this study tried to include and extend the important parameters taken up by foreign researchers. An effort has been made to include issues that are important to Indian marketing and social environment in order to provide insights to advertisers, marketers, policy makers and society.

UNIVERSE:

The universe of the study comprises of children from the different colonies of Visakhapatnam City. The children have been selected from reputed private schools catering to middle and upper socio-economic strata. The study is confined to the City of Visakhapatnam.

SAMPLE:

It was planned to have a sample of 450 (children) respondents but due to response errors and incomplete responses the effective sample has been 400.

Questionnaire:

It was decided to collect data through personal interviews in case of children and through survey method from their mothers (by sending questionnaire through children) by instituting a structured, non-disguised and pre-tested questionnaire. The effective sample turned out to be 400 of children and 400 of their mothers. The questionnaire was

divided into two parts. The first part was designed for children and the second part was for their mothers.

Sample Profile:

a. Background Information profile of Children:

1. Gender Wise Distribution of Respondents: (N= 400)

Table 1:

Sex	No. of Respondents
Male	206 (51.50)
Female	194 (48.50)

2. Age Wise Distribution of Respondents: (N= 400)

Table 2:

Age (years)	Number of Respondents
8 - 10	94 (23.50)
10 - 12	96 (24.00)
12 - 14	120 (30.00)
14 - 16	90 (22.50)

There are 51.50 per cent male children while the remaining 48.50 per cent of them are female children (Table 1). The study sample gives proper representation to both the genders.

The above Table indicates that in the sample of 400 children; four age categories have been formulated in the range of 8 to 16 years old (8-10 years, 10-12 years, 12-14 years and 14-16 years). The highest percentage of them (30.00%) belonged to the age group of 12-14 years, while the lowest percentage (22.50%) of them belonged to the age group of 14-16 years old. Thus, all the relevant age groups of children are fairly represented in the sample (Table 2).



3. Class wise distribution of respondents:

Table 3:

Class (Standard)	Number of Respondents
II	41 (10.25)
III	48 (12.00)
IV	52 (13.00)
V	43 (10.75)
VI	47 (11.75)
VII	37 (9.25)
VIII	44 (11.00)
IX	39 (9.75)
X	49 (12.25)

The selected children were studying from II standard to X standard (Table 3). The percentage of children selected range between 9.25 per cent in VII standard to 13.00 per cent in IV standard. From II standard, there are 10.25 per cent, III standard 12.00 per cent, V standard 10.75 per cent, VI standard 11.75 per cent, VIII standard 11.00 per cent, IX standard 9.75 per cent, and from X standard, there are 12.25 per cent of the total selected children.

4. Income wise distribution of respondents:

Table 4:

Family Income (Rupees per month)	Number of Respondents
Below 35,000	34 (8.50)
35,000 – 45,000	46 (11.50)
45,000 – 55,000	59 (14.75)
55,000 – 65,000	95 (23.75)
Above 65,000	166 (41.50)

The Table 4 indicates that the sample largely comprises those from financially well-off families. The highest number of the respondents (41.50%) belong to the families with monthly income above Rs. 65,000, followed by respondents (23.75%) with family income of Rs. 55,000-65,000, 11.50 per cent with Rs. 35,000-45,000, 14.75 per cent with Rs. 45,000-55,000, and the least percentage of them (8.50%) belong to the families whose monthly income was below Rs. 35,000.

III. Results & Conclusion:

The important findings of the study relate to the investigation of the pattern of TV viewing amongst children; their level of understanding of the TV ads; their interaction with parents regarding TV ads and the products shown in these ads; how and to what extent TV ads motivate them to buy advertised products; their choices and preferences over the kinds of ads they like and dislike; their attitude towards TV ads in general; and how their mothers feel about TV ads and the effects that TV ads have upon children. These findings are presented in summarized form in the forthcoming paragraphs.

It is seen that 32 per cent (128) of children have their personal TV sets, of which almost 73 per cent (94 out of 128) are of above 12 years old. Also, 69 per cent (276) children indulged in bed time TV viewing. The overall average score of frequency of watching TV is 3-5 days per week with the approximate average time



spent everyday is 2-4 hours. Female and older children watch less TV in comparison to male and younger children. Female and younger children watch TV with their parents and grandparents while male and older children prefer to watch TV alone. Most of the parents discuss TV programmes and ads with their children only when asked by them (36.25%), instead of taking initiative on their own. This is followed by 30 per cent of respondents where parents 'never/seldom' discuss TV ads with them and 27.50 per cent where parents 'sometimes' discuss the TV ads with their children. Only 6.25 per cent of the parents discuss TV ads with their children often. The frequency of discussion regarding TV programmes and ads by parents of female and older children is more as compared to parents of male and younger children.

Most children (38%) 'switch channels' during commercial break, followed by 'watch

TV ads as they don't want to miss the main show' (28.25%); 'leave the room/ do some work' (18%) and 'watch ads with interest as they inform and entertain' (10.75%). So, 39 per cent children exclusively watch ads during commercial breaks. Relatively, a higher percentage of male children (42.72%) 'switch channels' during the commercial break as compared to female children (32.99%). On the other hand, greater percentage of female children (34.02%) 'watch T.V. ads as they don't want miss the main show' than male children (22.82%).

About 75 per cent children watch TV ads. An overwhelming majority of the children (91%) claim that they understand TV ads to be different from TV programmes. These 91 per cent children were asked to point out two key differences between ads and programmes out of the given five options. They were told that all options are correct, but they have to select two options that according to them are more appropriate in comparison to others. Majority of the children (53.02%) select that TV ads are mere persuasive efforts to sell products and fetch more customers, whereas TV programmes are meant for entertainment and education. As many as 42.58 per cent of the children opt for the option that TV ads give product information and talk about real things available in the market whereas TV programmes are both for fantasy as well as real situations. Both of these options highlight most important differences between TV ads and TV programmes.

More male children watch TV ads (81.07%) as compared to the female children (70.10%) but as far as distinguishing TV ads from TV programmes is concerned, a significantly higher percentage of the female children (94.33%) claim that they understand it as compared to (88.35 %) the male children. Female children are also able to demonstrate superior level of understanding as significantly higher number of female (58.47%) than male children (47.51%) specify the most accurate option that ads are persuasive, while programmes are entertaining and



educative as a major difference. Age-wise analysis depict similar pattern in case of watching TV ads in all the four age groups, but as the children grow older they are sure to differentiate TV ads from TV programmes. The important difference that ads are persuasive but programmes are entertaining and educative is selected significantly higher number of times by older children as compared to the younger ones.

Children were asked to think about their favourite TV ad and select reasons for liking that particular ad. The advertised product itself or the goodness of the brand (58.50%) is the most important reason, followed by models (47.50%), story line/theme (45.25%), music/songs/jingles (44.75%), picturization/filming (40.50%), animation/cartoons (39.50%) and slogan/one liner (33.25%) used in ads. Relatively, a higher number of male children mention slogans and models as the reasons for liking a TV ad; while female children prefer advertised product and storyline/theme. As children grow older, they find goodness of the product, picturization and story line as valid reasons for liking an ad. As the age of children increases, the reasons that become less important for liking an ad are slogans, models and animation/cartoons. The advertised product itself or the goodness of the brand is the most important reason, followed by models used in ads. Advertised product is more important a consideration for female children and older children, while models are of more

importance for male children and younger children. Also, a review of the liking and disliking pattern of TV ads suggests that children like or dislike ads due to similar reasons.

Amongst the ad related factors/influences (54.75%) 'health and nutrition' conveyed through TV ads is the most important cause to influence the purchase decisions, followed by 'fun and happiness' (17.50%), 'adventure and thrill' (16.25%) and 'dream and fantasy' (11.50%) as depicted in ads. More number of female children consider 'health and nutrition' important and a greater number of male children get influenced by 'adventure and thrill' and 'dream and fantasy' depicted in ads. The influence of 'fun and happiness', 'adventure and thrill' and 'dream and fantasy' in messages is found to decline significantly with age; and the reason of 'health and nutrition' become more prominent as children grow older. Thus, it can be said that the advertising messages related to 'health and nutrition' exert greater influence on the product purchase behaviour of female and older children. Also, male and younger children get more carried away by 'adventure and thrill' and 'dream and fantasy' depicted in ads.

Most children (41%) buy/ask for the products 'sometimes' after watching TV ads; followed by those who buy/ask the products 'rarely' (31%), 'often' (15.25%) and 'never' (12.75%) in that order. Almost 20 per cent male children state that they 'often' buy themselves or ask their parents for advertised goods in comparison to about 10 per cent female



children. Both the extreme options 'often' and 'never' are more opted for by male children (19.90% and 13.59% respectively) than female children (10.31% and 11.86% respectively). The mid track options 'sometimes' and 'rarely' are more opted for by female children (42.78% and 35.05% respectively) as compared to male children (39.325 and 27.18% respectively). As children grow up, there is a rise in percentage of children who 'rarely' buy or ask for products after watching ads from 21.28 per cent (8-10 years) to 61.11 per cent (14-16 years). On the contrary, the percentage of children opting for the extreme options: 'often' and 'never'; falls down drastically as children grow older (from 27.66% and 14.89% to 4.44% and 2.22% respectively). Hence, as children grow older, their frequency of asking parents for products after watching ads, comes down.

Around 36 per cent of children buy clothes or footwear after watching related ads on TV, followed by 24 per cent who buy stationery/books/CDs, 21 per cent toiletries, 20 per cent toys/games, 15 per cent soft drinks/health beverages and about 14 per cent eatables/food products. It is found that if food items and drinks are clubbed into one category then there are 29 per cent children who buy them. Relatively, a higher percentage of female children buy stationery/books/CDs etc. (25.73%) and toiletries (24.27%) as compared to male children (19.90% & 16.50% respectively) after watching TV ads. It is seen that toys/games,

clothes/foot wear and eatables/food products are such categories which are more popular amongst younger children. On the other hand, as children grow in age, they buy/request for more stationery/books/CDs etc. and toiletries after seeing ads.

The foregoing findings and discussion reveal that this study has theoretical and practical implications for the manufacturers, marketers, government policy makers and parents of the children. On the basis of the findings, the following recommendations have been made:

1. Children after crossing 12 years of age become independent viewers as majority of them possess individual TV sets. Further, older and male children prefer to watch TV alone than in the company of family elders. TV advertisers and programmers should make such broadcasts that are specifically meant for older and male children.
2. A little before bedtime is a very suitable time for children oriented programmes and ads to take place because a large number of the children surveyed watch TV before retiring for sleep at night.
3. 'Entertainment' followed by 'learning and education' are the prime reasons for which children watch TV. Hence, both ads and programmes should keep the dual objective of entertainment and education in mind. If the older child audience is desired, the emphasis should be more on learning; and for younger child



- audience the focus should be entertaining time pass. Also, more female children in comparison to male children cite 'learning and education' and 'combating loneliness' as reasons for watching TV. So, the programmes meant for them should be more empathizing and should perform the role of providing company to the female children.
4. The advertisers should make honest ads as majority of the children can logically understand the difference between ads and programmes and also the selling intent of the marketers behind ads. Especially, while targeting ads towards female and/or older children, the advertisers need to be extra cautious, as they have better understanding of TV ads and are more sceptical towards them.
 5. Children most often buy or request 'clothes or footwear', followed by 'stationery/books/CDs etc.', 'toiletries', 'toys/games', 'soft drinks/health beverages' and 'eatables/food products' after watching ads on TV. Female and older children buy more of 'stationery/books/CDs etc.' and 'toiletries'. Young children buy more of 'clothes or footwear', 'toys/games', 'soft drinks/health beverages' and 'eatables/food products'. This can be of consideration for marketers aiming different segments of children for various products.

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