

The Impact of television advertising on child health and family spending - A Case Study

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Abstract

Evidence is mounting that marketing to children is harmful. Nearly every aspect of children's lives has been adversely affected by recent trends in advertising and marketing. Research links advertising to increased violence, obesity, and eating disorders in children, as well family stress and negative values. Children are especially vulnerable to persuasive messages.

Advertisers of children's television used to appeal to the parents but now they appeal directly to children -- who do not have the emotional or cognitive tools to evaluate what's being sold to them. They are a showcase for "must have" items that parents are expected to buy, teaching our children to become consumers before they've even reached the age of three. This paper seeks to link between television advertising and its influence on child health and family spending.

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. [1].

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.

Objectives 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.

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. Correlation tool is used to analyze the relationship of television advertising and its impact on child health and family spending.

Marketing process

Marketing to children is a planned process which starts at early age and continue till he/she become loyal customer or drop the product as a result of his analytical ability to understand the message and content of product and advertising. Normally child get exposed to the advertising at early age of 2 years (there are circumstances where in age is even less than 2 years), when the child starts recognizing shapes and images. Advertising gradually build the strong relationship between brand and the child. Over a period of time child will become the consumer and then the loyal consumer.

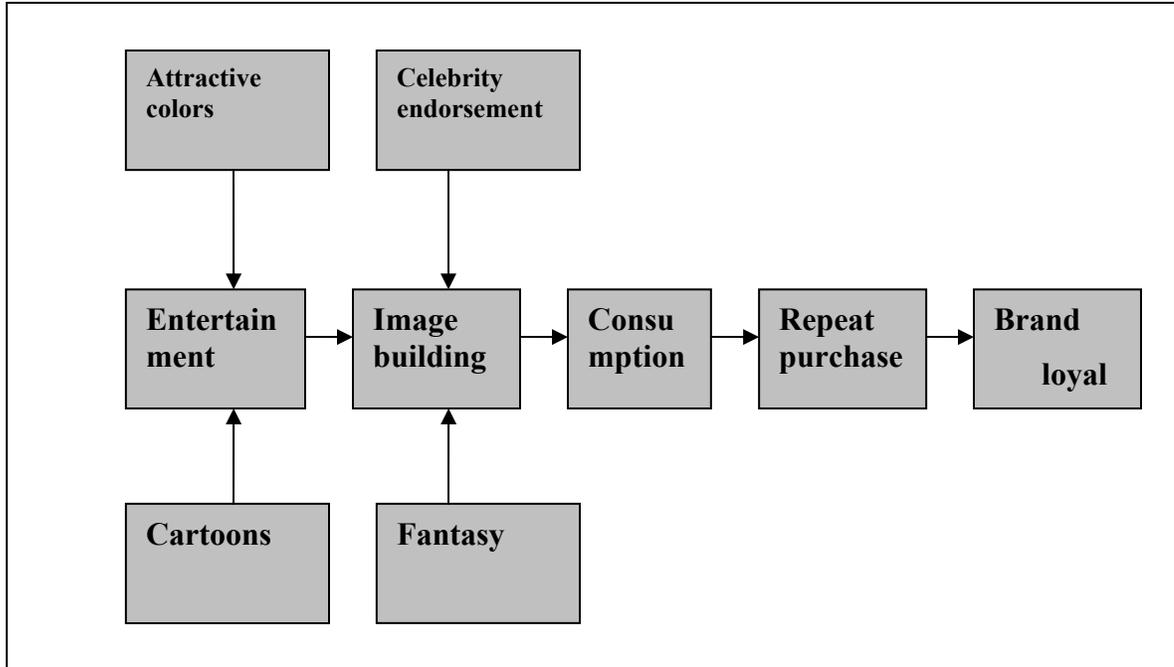


Chart-1: Marketing process and development of child as consumer

Marketing goal and advertising tools used to attract the attention of the child

Children represent three different markets. In addition to the direct money that children spend and the money they influence, children also represent a third major market and perhaps the most significant and that is the future market [2]. Advertisers recognize that brand loyalties and consumer habits formed when children are young and vulnerable will be carried through to adulthood. Retailers and marketers also aware of the fact that those who switch are less likely to be loyal than those who are nurtured from childhood [3].

Looking at the wide market opportunities throne by this segment marketer tries all the techniques and tools that are available to pursue the children. Some of them are listed below:

Entertainment

Before four or five years old, children regard advertising as simply entertainment. The qualitative research found, children actively enjoy television advertising. It entertains them and is part of the pleasure they derive from watching television. It is also part of a shared culture with family and friends [4]. At early age ‘feel good’ advertisements associate child memory with brand which will be nourished by series of advertisement messages in years to come.

Bright colors, cartoon characters and celebrity endorsement

Between four and seven, they begin to be able to distinguish advertising from programs. Younger children remain relatively unengaged by the message content but may still be persuaded by the status of its celebrity source or the intensity of the message (color, sound). Consequently advertisers may appeal to younger children through the use of bright colors, lively music and the involvement of cartoon characters or celebrities and take the advantage of the affection children feel for those characters [5].

Witty and stylish imagery message

The majority children have generally grasped the intention to persuade by the age of eight, while after eleven or twelve they can articulate a critical understanding of advertising [6].

Tweens (age group 9-12) and teens are more likely to pay attention to the content of the message, and be persuaded because they attend to, and engage with, the arguments put forward for a proposition or product. Hence advertisements for tweens/teenagers are more likely appeal through witty or stylish imagery and subtle messages. Celebrities as role models are likely to continue to have an influence.

There are several issues associated with television advertising and its impact on child. Research reveals following concerned areas in this regard.

- Physical health of child
- Mental stress for not owning the product of his choice,
- Diet habits,
- Family stress (as a result of influence on family spending)
- Violent behavior,
- Consumption of alcoholic drink, and
- Smoking

This study is confirmed with only two influencing factors, first influence on child health and secondly influence on family spending .

Television advertising and child health

Modern life style has frozen the family size in the Indian society. Nuclear family has taken place of the joint family. Lifestyle trends in urban India (rising incomes, longer working hours, more working mothers, time-poor/cash-rich parents) tend to support a 'convenience time pass and food culture'. Which lead the child to watching television and the increased consumption of HFSS food (High in fat, salt and sugar). In addition the advertising industry makes junk food seem irresistible, and it may well be, as recent research shows that children could become physically addicted to junk food. In a recent study, Dr. Robert Lustig from the University of California, San Francisco suggests that childhood obesity arises from foods that are high in fat and fructose and low in fiber. When children eat these “insulinogenic” foods, the insulin not only increases the effects of the pleasure-chemical dopamine (making the child want to eat more of the same food) but also reduces the effects of the hormone leptons, making the child want to eat more and be less active [7].

Impact of long time spending with television

Television pumps in lot of junk food and snack advertisements. Indian child on an average get exposed to not less than 20 attractive messages of these product. More time spent with television viewing more exposure to these messages (Repeat advertisements message result into placing the brand on top of the mind) will result into buying the brand illustrated in the advertisements.

If we screen the table we can note on an average child from age group 3-6years spend 2.32 hours, 6-9 years spends 3.12 hours and a child from 9-12years spends 3.45 hours. More time spent more will be advertising exposure (source field work from the author).

Table 1. Classification of data on the basis of age group and influencing factors correlation

Influencing factor	3-6years	6-9years	9-12years
Mean hours spend watching television	2.32	3.12	3.45
Influence of television advertisement on diet habits of child. r =	0.32	0.51	0.83
Influence of television advertising on family spending. r =	0.23	0.38	0.69

Consumption pleasure

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 [8] 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.

Easy availability and convenience

Pre-prepared, convenience foods, take-aways and eating out, reduce parents control over what goes into food, making it more difficult to monitor HFSS content.

In the light of above quoted factors, the survey was conducted, which reveals the close association of television advertising with the child's diet habits. Correlation is measured as; 0.32, 0.51 and 0.83 for age group of 3-6, 6-9, and 9-12 years respectively.

Television advertisement and its impact on Family health

Another source of animosity is the family budget. Advertising makes kids want things -- it creates desire --which puts a lot of pressure on parents. Television is a showcase for "must have" items that parents are expected to buy [8].

Levin says, "Kids and parents always have to struggle about purchases. When a parent says, 'No, I can't buy that, I don't have enough money', there's an underlying sense that the parent is not meeting the child's needs and is depriving the child of what he or she needs to be happy." [9]

At the same time, the youngster is learning how to get parents to respond to his or her wishes and wants. This may take the form of a grunt, whine, scream, or gesture--indeed some tears may be necessary--but eventually almost all children are able on a regular basis to persuade Mom or Dad to buy something for them.

The survey reveals that most of the time children determine the family budget. There is greater influence on food items and toys. There are certain families where in the purchase decision regarding buying of cars, electronic equipments are also to the extent influenced by children. The correlation is measured as 0.23, 0.38 and 0.69 for age group of 3-6, 6-9 and 9-12 years respectively. With the increasing income, reduction in the number of children and shrinking size of the family, the Indian child is also becoming influencing consumer for today and powerful buyer for tomorrow.

Conclusion

This paper discusses the television advertisement and its impact on child health and family spending. The study has revealed a positive corelationship exists between time spent with television and its impact on the buying behavior of a child and its influence on family spending. For better understanding the situation the further deeper and wide research has to be undertaken to come up with remedial measures to reduce the adverse impact on kids.

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