

# Impact of Advertising on Children's Health

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## Synopsis

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.

## Research Design

The area of our research is to study how advertising has an impact on impressionable minds of the children & how it affects their psychology & health. Advertising comes in different forms such as television, print, radio & internet. So using such various communicating devices how the products are advertised to the so called new segment in the market. Our research project usually deals with various studies about the nature of the children, his likes & dislikes, parent's role in the decision making & the influence of advertising on the buying habits seen by the kids.

The data collection was done using convenience sampling in the form of questionnaire & personal interview. We had used various secondary sources for gathering data related to the research report. Analysis of data has been done using quantitative methods such as Arithmetic mean. Those analysed facts & findings are presented in different forms for ease of understanding by use of pie charts, chronological order.

Our research report just does not concentrate on the findings but also suggests corrective measures to be taken up to minimize the after effects of the advertising world which will be always on the upsurge. The number of children exposed now to the ad world will surely increase as newly found segment will be heavily dosed for surviving in this competitive market. So our report aims at taking precautionary steps in the government's front, ethical front of the advertisers and of course on the parental & children's front.

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## History of Literature

The term advertising is derived from the original Latin word ‘advertere’ which means ‘to turn’ the attention. Every piece of advertising turns the attention of the reader or the listeners or the viewers or the onlookers towards a product or a service or an idea. According to the New Encyclopaedia Britannica, “Advertising is a form of communication intended to promote the sale of a product or service to influence the public opinion to gain political support or to advance a particular cause”. Our research paper deals with children in the age group of 5-15 years which is now forming the new segment for the marketing companies.

Advertisement is the major source of marketing the product. So Companies spend huge amount of money to promote their product in the competitive environment. Advertising in print media grew 14.7% in 2004 compared to TV ad growth of 13%. During January-December 2004, ad spend in press accounted for 46% of the total advertising pie of Rs 11,800 crore followed by TV at 41%, outdoor 7%, cinema 3%, radio 2% and internet 0.5%.

According to the new "India Media Market 2007" report from Heernet Ventures, the Indian media market is expected to grow from revenues of \$9.2 billion in 2007 to \$17 billion by 2012. That converts to an estimated INR415.4 billion in 2007 rising to INR766 billion in 2012, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 13%. Accounting for 43% of total ad spending, newspapers are the largest advertising channel in India, followed by television, at 35% of the total, with the other media channels far behind. Online advertising currently accounts for only 3% of total spending.

Internet, another important source of enriching knowledge for children which also became a medium for marketing their product as this is the major time spent area after media. The concept of online marketing was introduced & products are sponsored on frequently visited sites & some odd ways like Pop Ups. This leads the buyer (children in this case) to a new world of market & sometimes even to pornographic material at the adolescent age. Now the child is attracted to the product advertised which are designed strategically and thus become the new segment for the marketing company. Although internet marketing is still evolving in India, it is better we wake up to this future problem and take some steps in that direction.

Since we are more diverted towards looking at the negative impact, let us not forget the positive ones created on the minds of children. Social advertising is a very good example of positive advertising. The objective of social advertising is to change public attitude and behavior and stimulate positive change. The polio ad campaign coincided with the immunization of additional six million children at the polio booths across the state between November 2002 and February 2003. A research study in UP commissioned by Unicef found that more than 94 percent of respondents reported that they came to the polio booth after seeing the spots on television which was endorsed by celebrities like Amitabh Bachhan, Shahrukh Khan, Sachin Tendulkar & Jaya Bachhan . Around 112 cases has been reported in the year 2003 compared to 1600 cases in the year 2002. A Unicef-supported television and radio campaign won a silver medal at this year’s EFFIE Awards given by the advertising industry. Similarly advertisements of iodized salt generate the awareness among people to buy it, which avoids the prevalence of Goiter.

Advertising also helps the children’s health in a positive way- be it a kid of 3 yrs or a little grown up of 12 yrs. Advertising provokes children to stay clean which are advertised by soap companies like Dettol, Lifebuoy etc. Brushing twice a day was a marketing strategy for more usage of product but such advertisement always helps the children to keep his teeth clean, healthy and germ-free. Even the use of some cartoons or sometimes small ideas like “Pepsodent Germicheck – Dhishum Dhishum” encourages the child to use the product to realize the benefits shown in the advertisements. Companies such as Amul and Nestle are advertising milk products to the young generation as something cool & refreshing, e.g. Amul Kool. Although the motto behind the launch and its subsequent advertising is to capture the youth segment of the market but still intake

of any milk product is always a good diet for the body of children. It is much more vitamin -rich and useful than other products like soft drinks which are actually harmful to the health.

Now we can throw some light on advertisements having negative impact on the children's health. Most aired advertisements are of the celebrity famed Soft Drinks which contain pesticides almost 27 times higher in India than the EU norms according to the findings of Delhi based NGO, Centre for Science & Environment. Intake of such products is found normal with the growing children who nowadays take it as a part of regular diet or a good partying option that is readily available to them. But after the reports by CSE about the findings of pesticides, the amount of pesticide contained has reduced but not up to the desired level till now.

Burgers & pizzas & the mouth watering fast foods pave its entries in the most no. of advertisement which are shown mainly during the children's program. These products are mainly advertised as the complete diet food which claims to include all the required nutrients by a human body. All these junk food items are easily accessible to the school going kids having working parents who don't have time to cook. Fast food chains often target their advertising at children and teenagers or the young who more or less have the required purchasing power and who most of the times influence the purchasing behaviour of parents and who can become the target market for their products for long. For example McDonald's happy meal which always has a toy attached with it and a newly released children's movie. Children are very fond of clowns and cartoon characters which form the advertising mascot for the target audience. The early onset of diabetes is mainly due to the changing food habits. A couple of years ago, people in the age group of 20-35 years used to suffer from diabetes. But now, children aged anywhere between three months and 17 years are also developing diabetes, which is a cause for great concern. Fast food habits may lead to obesity among children. Obesity per se is not a serious health problem, but it is a prime precursor of many non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases (CVDs), gall bladder ailments, cancer, psycho-social problems, breathlessness, sleep disorders, asthma, arthritis, weak bones and reproductive hormone abnormalities. Iron deficiency can result into anemia.

Research has proved that children decide on what kind of clothes they want to wear & such demands of the child are often fulfilled by the pocket-full parents who don't have a say in such decisions. And all the child's buying decisions are influenced by the advertisement shown all over media, billboards & magazines. But also cause a threat to the parents who have budget constrain to satisfy their children's need causing emotional distress among them.

If you ask a kid, who would you like to look like? And the obvious answer would be I want to be a Barbie doll, an every girl's fantasy. But the stick thin Barbie doll image helps the kids grow in a way that they think will make them like their role models and even makes them health conscious. All the girls want to have a Barbie doll image & by doing that they hamper their physical health. Sometimes the efforts to emulate their heroes land these children in serious trouble that may be dangerous to their lives.

Another important aspect of advertising is the way in which a particular lifestyle or the 'status sought to make' someone demanded and important in society is sold through the use of attractive and appealing advertising. E.g. the liquor and wine industry. India's two largest breweries spend \$200 million on advertising each year. On an annual basis, teenagers see between 1000 and 2000 beer commercials carrying the message that 'real' men drink beer. Convincing data suggest that advertising increases beer consumption, but now a ban on alcohol advertising has led to a decline in alcohol consumption.

Tobacco products are not advertised directly on television in India. Smoking Advertisement always creates a Macho image of the person who smokes & these are most of time depicted by the real time superstars like Akshay Kumar. However now a ban has been deployed on advertisement of tobacco or cigarette on television & now even in movies.

## Data Collection

### Primary data

A questionnaire was prepared for getting the view of parents and their kids on the purchasing choices and eating habits of kids. It was mainly directed towards what kind of impact does the advertising has on the impressionable minds & how advertisement decides their buying and eating habit. The survey had to be done at the point of purchase. So it was carried out in food malls where the brands are sold & places like McDonalds & places like schools where we can actually meet the parents. Another part of the survey was conducted online by designing a questionnaire in a format so that it can be easily answered on-line by the parents and children of different age groups.

### Technique

Non Probability Sampling Technique was used & in that Convenience Sampling was done. A total of about 100 different people were interviewed with the questionnaire at different places of purchase. Hence a convenience sampling technique was decided upon which would enable using personal judgment to conveniently approach the parents and children.

### Secondary Data

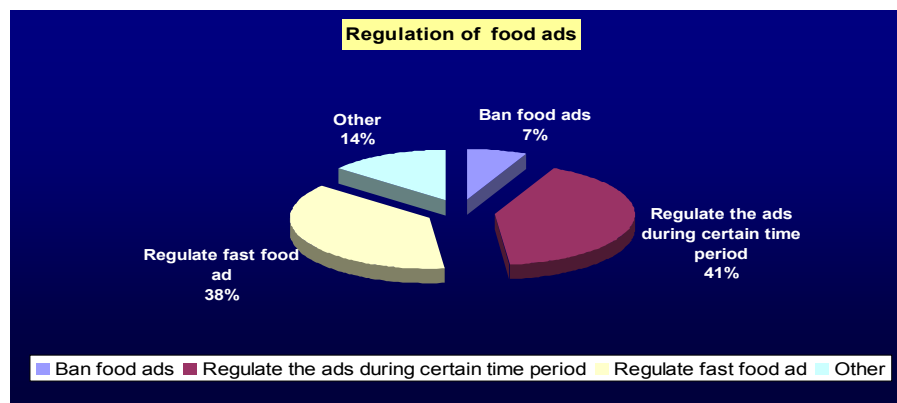
The secondary data are those which have already been collected by someone else and which have already been passed through the statistical process. The following sources of secondary data collection were used.

- Internet for getting information on rules & regulation on advertising.
- Internet for getting the contents of the foods targeting children.
- Magazines to get some relevant information on kids.

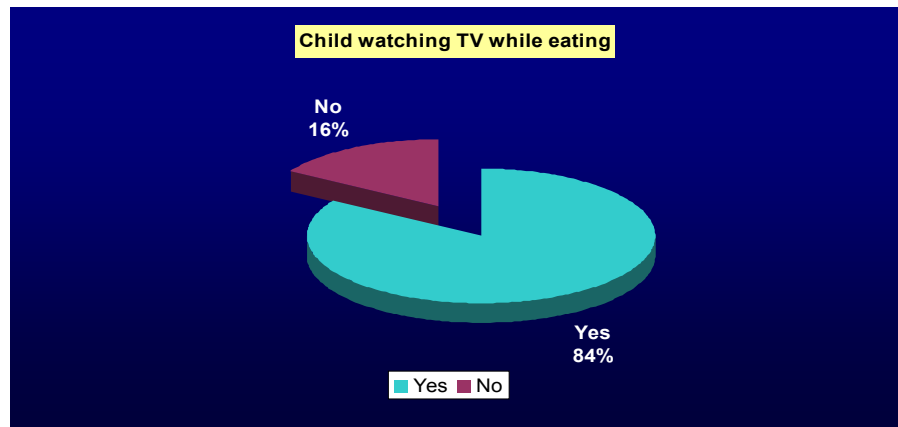
## Analysis of Findings, Tabulation & Presentation

### AJ Primary Data Findings

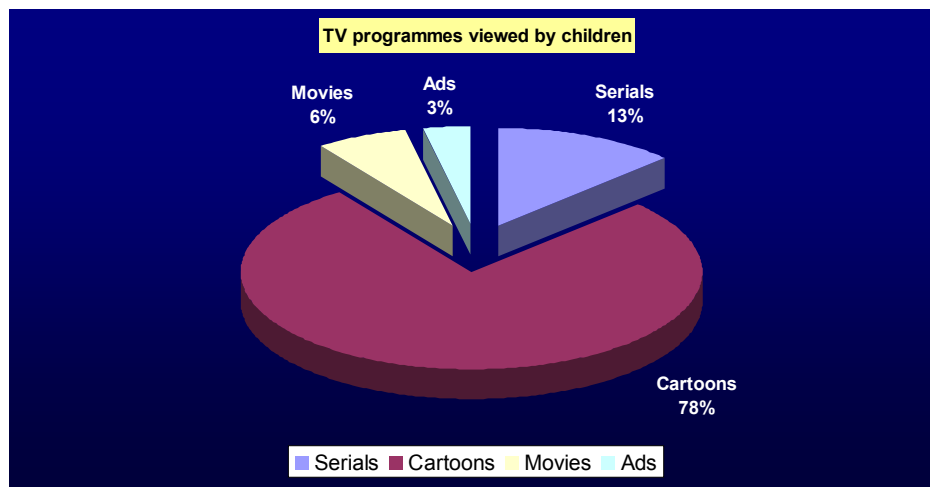
1. When asked the parents of children if their child helps them while making any shopping decision, in 55% of the cases it was found that the child used to influence the buying decision of the parents particularly buying clothes, food items, toys, FMCG items including cosmetics and fashion accessories.
2. 86 % 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.



3. Around 84% of children watch TV while eating which may affect their food intake.

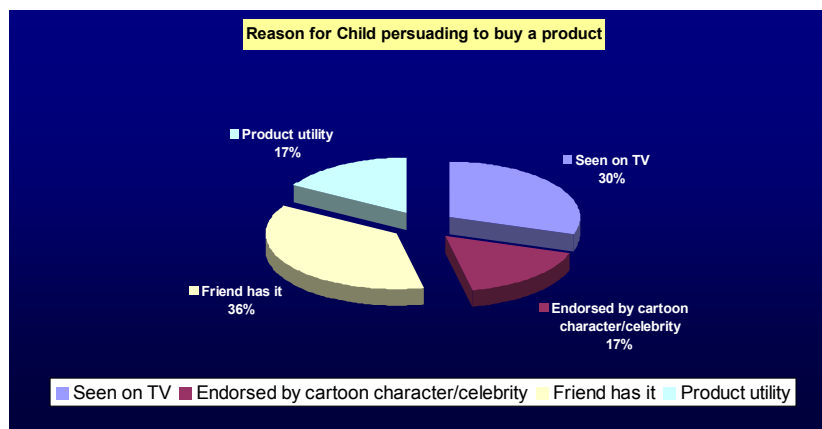


4. Around 78% of the children watch cartoon channels, so they are more exposed to the characters shown there and the products endorsed by these cartoon characters which may imbibe bad food habits in children as most of the ADs projected are fast food and cold drink related and not about healthy diet!

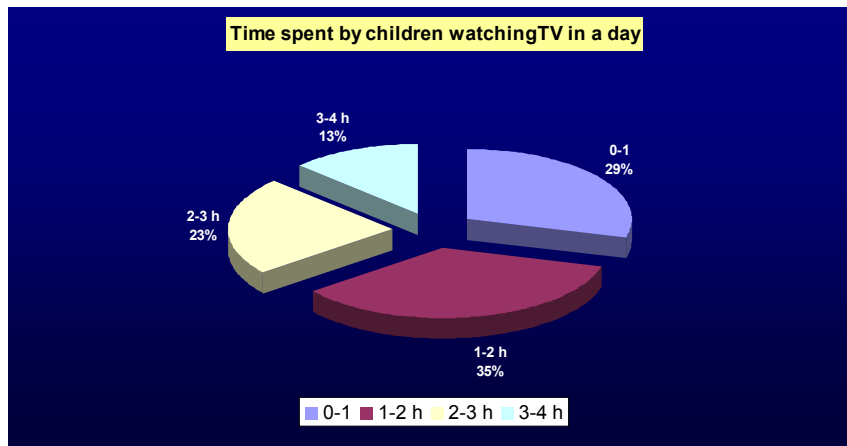


5. Around 62% of the parents surveyed said that they do discuss the advertisements related to fast foods, cosmetics and funny ADs but rarely the social and health related ADs with their kids.

6. The kids buy a particular product mostly because he has seen it on TV or some of his friend has it.

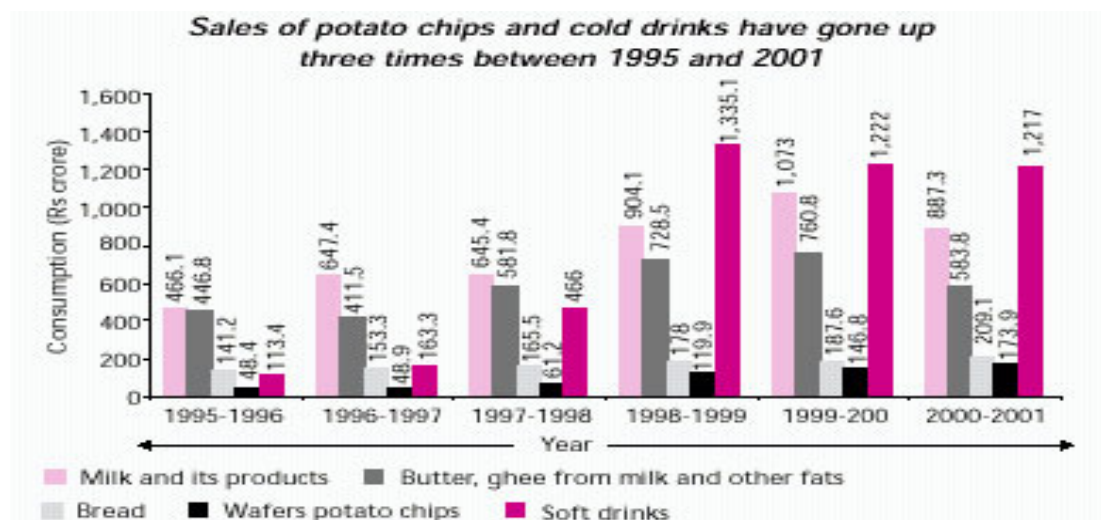


7] An average Indian child watches 14 hrs of Television each week.



**B] Secondary Data Findings:**

- 1] Size of Advertising industry in India: Rs.16300 crore (ET 26/02/07)
- 2] Snack food market size: Rs.4500 crore (ET 26/02/07)  
 Branded snack food market size: Rs.1300 crore (ET 26/02/07)
- 3] More than 60% of commercials promote sugared cereals, candy, fatty foods and toys.
- 4] Pan Cheese Pizza contains 46.6 % of fats in 2 slices of Pizza whereas a normal body intake should be of 10-20 % calories from fat.
- 5] According to the new "India Media Market 2007" report from Heernet Ventures, the Indian media market is expected to grow from revenues of \$9.2 billion in 2007 to \$17 billion by 2012.
- 6] After the pulse polio ad campaign only 112 cases of lack of vaccination were reported in comparison to 1600 cases before the campaign.
- 7] 70% of parents agreed that the child influences them while buying products.
- 8] Only 2% of the amount goes into Research and development of the product but almost 50% goes into Advertising in India.
- 9] A leading nutritionist in AIIMS, in a Delhi survey of well-to-do schools found that about 27 per cent of school children were overweight and seven per cent obese.
- 10] Fast food consisted of 83% of the advertised product.
- 11] Increasing Sales of fast food & soft drinks over previous years.



Source: Parna Dasgupta 2004, Director, Confederation of Indian Food Trade & Industry (CIFTI), New Delhi.

12] Advertising Regulation in different countries.

Advertising laws in India, or the lack of them, are in strong contrast with advertising standards in Europe or in the US where concerned parents and governments closely monitor what their children are learning and picking up from TV in the form of advertisements. In Sweden and Norway, TV advertising and sponsorship of programmes aimed at children below the age of 12 are prohibited. In Greece, the advertising of toys on television is banned between 7.00 a.m. and 10.00 p.m.

In Germany and Denmark there are bans on certain forms of toys. In Austria and the Flemish part of Belgium no advertising is permitted 5 minutes before or after programmes for children.

Sponsorship of children's programmes is not permitted in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden while in Germany and the Netherlands, although it is allowed, it is not used in practice. Australia does not allow advertisements during programmes for pre-school children.

## **Regulation and Suggestions**

### **1] Legal Implications:**

In India, there are no specific advertising laws that relate to children and food-related advertisements in particular. A host of laws and Acts like the 'Cable TV Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995' and the 'Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles and Infant Food Act' deal with children-related advertising in a vague way. Not only are there advertisements that are targeted at children but a host of them that feature young children, even babies.

In most parts of the world, there are few or no specific rules concerning food advertising to children beyond the rules which must apply to all advertising. In India, even general rules pertaining to advertising are very lax. Also, there are no regulatory bodies that monitor TV advertisements. Apart from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting that decides to intervene when it wants to, there are only voluntary groups like the 'Advertising Agencies Association of India', and the 'Advertising Standards Council of India', both of which are business organizations and can only put moral pressure on advertisers and companies to withdraw objectionable advertisements. There is urgent need for voluntary and government pressure groups to seriously take note of the situation. The government needs to draft and implement laws that do not deal with advertising in general but are specific and relate to every aspect of advertising, especially those that target young children and pertain to food. In other parts of the world, there exist voluntary groups like the 'Adbusters' and 'Mothers groups' that watch and pressure governments to clamp down on aggressive and intrusive advertising.

At present there are various laws implemented by government under various ministries.

The various laws are as follows:

#### **1. Prevention of Food Adulteration Act (Ministry of Health)**

The act lays down specifications for various food products. It is mandatory.

#### **2. Agriculture Produce (Grading & Marking) Act (Ministry of Rural Development)**

This Act is commonly known as AGMARK and is voluntary. The Act lays down the specifications for various agricultural commodities including some processed foods.

#### **3. Laws being operated by Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)**

BIS is the standard body for formulating standards for various food items. These standards are also voluntary.

#### **4. Essential Commodities Act**

### **Harmonization of Food Laws:**

It is very essential to have one unified and logical law for food regulation than having numerous laws for the same. Following action is being taken by various ministries at present:

1. The paper brought out by The Ministry of Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs, it is recommended for BIS to formulate standards for all food items in India, which is a good step towards harmonization.

2. As per the task force set up by Prime minister under the chairmanship of Shri Nulsi Wadia, a suggestion has been made to set up a Food Regulation Authority (FRA) to formulate and update food standards for domestic and export market. Also, Harmonization of Indian standard with quality norms of Codex and WTO.

Hence it is important that unified law is developed as early as possible.

### **2] 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.

People should be more aware to what kind of advertisement are shown to the children & when some company say that the product have nutritional value and stuff, it should be verified from the trusted source and in case of any difference in statements the matter should be reported to the AAI or MIB. Be an alert citizen is the message. Parents should be educated with respect to what should be healthy food as per proper nutritional intake for their children.

### **3] 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.

### **4] Statutory Warning**

Since the intake of junk food & carbonated drinks causes numerous diseases such as obesity, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases (CVDs), gall bladder ailments, cancer, psycho-social 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."

**5] Advertisement Code** to be monitored by an organization which 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] Broadcasting codes for AIR/ Doordarshan**

Advertising Code:

AIR and Doordarshan has responsibility to ensure that the advertisements shown either in terms of contents, tone or treatment, do not mislead the listeners and viewers as well as the consumers are not repugnant to good taste. The earnings of commercial revenue are not the sole criteria of



Prasar Bharti. Thus the code has stricter provisions and the main features of the code are as follows:

- (a) Tobacco products including 'Pan Masala' and liquors are not permitted.
- (b) The goods and services advertised should be in consonance with the laws of the country enacted to protect the rights of the consumers.
- (c) The commercial should never project a derogatory image of women and should not endanger the safety of children.

Such code of conduct should be made compulsory to private channels also. Government has enacted 'The Commercial Advertisements on Electronic Media (Regulation) Bill, 2005' which lays down standards for advertisements on electronic media.

7] From the **Primary survey** we would like to suggest that the ADs should be regulated by following the required norms & should be properly fine tuned to avoid undue influence on the kids.

From the Primary survey we conducted, it was found that Cartoon Channels are the most watched channels by the kids & so the ADs which feature on such channels should be fine tuned & the proportion of ads related to junk food & soft drinks should be limited on such channels.

8] The government should indulge more into **Social Advertising** as its positive impact on kids & society is enormous. Laws related to Advertising should be made more stringent as in the case of foreign countries such as Europe & America.

### Conclusion

Advertisement is integral part of the industry which wants its product to be reached to the customer & then converts those customers into consumers. But in this process they should not forget that its their social responsibility to take care of the future of the country which are been targetted tactfully to earn profits. Parents should make the kids more aware of the surrounding so that start 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.

### Annexure B

#### Daily Nutritional Allowances for Children of 4-12 Years Age (ICMR, 1981)

Age Years	K Calories Gm	Protein mg	Calcium mg	Iron mg	Vitamin A mg	Thiamine mg	Riboflav-in mg	Vitamin C Mg
4-6	1720	29.4	400-500	20-25	300	0.9	1.0	40
7-9	2050	35.6	400-500	20-25	400	1.0	1.2	40
10-12	2420	42.5	400-500	20-25	600	1.2	1.5	40

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