A Critical Analysis Of The Prevalence Of Effects Of Advertisement On Children Of Midnapur Town, West Bengal

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ABSTRACT
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.

Keywords: Advertisement, Children, TV, Effects, Health.

Introduction
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. In our daily lives, almost certainly we will never be separated from the "media trap". 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.

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. Advertisement is a form of communication for marketing and used to encourage, persuade, or manipulate an audience such as viewers, readers or listeners; sometimes a specific group to continue or take some new action. Through television, advertisers can reach a whole spectrum of consumers. Children are exposed to an overwhelming amount of advertising as there is little regulation controlling the programme to advertisement ratio. Children watch over eight hours of television a day during holidays, and are exposed to over two and half hours of advertisements a day. As Television is one of the strongest means of advertisement, due to its mass reach; it can persuade the individual’s mindset, conduct, life style, experience and other aspects like culture of the country as well as the study town and repeated exposure to real life may alter cognitive affective and behavioral processes. Children of course are the most dreadful fatalities of advertisement’s ways.

**Objectives**
The main objectives of this study is to investigate theoretically and experimentally the effects of advertising on children. Our specific objectives are-
1. To deliberate upon the impacts of advertising on children.
2. To identify these critical impacts of advertisement that lead to attitudinal, behavioral and lifestyle changes amongst children.

**Methodology**
The research will be based on primary data. A questionnaire was prepared for getting the view of parents and their children (5-14 Years) on the purchasing choices and eating habits of children. 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. Non Probability Sampling Technique was used & in that Convenience Sampling was done. A total of about 230 different parents were interviewed with the questionnaire at different places of purchase at Midnapur town of West Bengal during December 2010 to March 2011. Hence a convenience sampling technique was used for collecting the data, due to the time limitation and other constraints upon which would enable using personal judgment to conveniently approach the parents and children. The respondents of the study are the parents of preteen age children in Midnapur town of West Bengal. 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. Samples were collected at the purchasing points. Both children and their mothers were interviewed. The data collection was done using convenience sampling using the semi structure interview schedule. 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 frequency distribution and bi-variate cross tabulation. Those analyzed facts & findings are presented in different forms for ease of understanding by use of bar diagrams and pie chart, 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.

**Results And Discussion**
When asked the parents of children if their child helps them while making any shopping decision, in 58% 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. Figure 1 shows that among the 58% of children, 25% are involved in shopping decision most of the time.
While questioning on the regulation of food ads 86% of the parents surveyed feel that there is need for regulation as far as food related advertisements are concerned (figure 2). 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.

Figure 2: Opinion on brands on food Ads

Around 84% of children watch TV while eating which may affect their food intake. Around 81% 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 (figure 3). Apart from that, the remaining is engaged them by viewing TV Soaps, movies and other programmes. Those TV commercials which are frequently aired within those programmes affect on children psychology and behavior. The responses were multiple.

Figure 3: Different TV program viewed by children  

*Multiple responses
Among 62% of the parents said that their children are interested to do discuss the advertisements related to fast foods, FMCG and funny ADs but rarely discussed the social and health related ADs with them. It is found that most of the kids buy a particular product mostly because he/she has seen it on TV or some of his/her friend has it. Among 30% children convinced their parents for a specific product and remaining 17% are endorsed by cartoon characters. If any friends of specific children have any specific product then it became a great endorsement for a particular product. Only 17% are recorded that they listen to their parents at the time of buying products about utility (figure 4).

![Figure 4: Reason for Child persuading to buy a product](image)

### Conclusion

The focus of the study was to determine the effects of advertisement with special references to television advertising on children. Television advertising on children could influence determinants such as unnecessary purchasing, low nutritional food, and materialism. In today’s media oriented society, almost every children is bombarded continuously with mass media messages including over hundreds advertisements every day, from television, radio, movies, video/computer games, Internet, music CDs, billboards, newspapers, magazines, clothing, packaging and other marketing materials. Many of these messages include low nutritional food, violent and materialism contents that are usually attractive to children as they are largely intended target audience in most commercials and advertisements. Such daily exposure too many forms of the mass media has a tremendous impact upon thinking, values, purchases, food intake, attitude, and actions of children. 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 on children that will be always on the upsurge. So our report reveals to take precautionary steps in the government’s front, ethical front of the advertisers and of course on the parental & children’s front.

### References


