

# Parent's Perception about the Stakeholders Role in Minimizing the Negative Effects of Television Advertising on Children in India

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**Abstract:** *This study examined Indian parent's perception about the stakeholders role in minimizing the negative effects of television advertising on children. A survey had been conducted on 3600 parents from 6 selected cities with the aid of structured questionnaire. Children age group was 7 to 11 years. Tabulation of data was used to analyze the study results. Marketers stood top followed by School, Parents, and Government in the role of minimizing the negative effects of television advertising on children as per the Parent's perceptions. The need of the hour is an integrated approach by involving all stakeholders in regulating the advertising to protect the children against negative effects of television advertising.*

**Keywords:** *Children advertising, Advertising regulations, advertising negative effects, Role of marketers, Role of Government*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Children exposure to television commercials has exponentially grown in the recent years due to the exclusive channels targeted towards them. Increase in the number of nuclear family structure, and lack of outdoor

sports facilities compelling the children to spend more hours watching television programs. According to Turner International survey on 7000 children and parents across India, television viewing activity ranks the highest in media consumption at 97% among the children. There are many negative effects on children due to the exposure to television commercials. The main areas of negative effects of advertising on children are increase in purchase requests, parent-child conflict, unhappiness, unhealthy eating habits, increase in materialistic attitude and values, and increased negative self perception.

## 2. Literature Review

Television commercials promote poor health behaviors and knowledge among the children (Signorielli & Lears, 1992). Children's advertising exposure will create materialism (Greenberg & Brand, 1993; Liebert, 1986; Wulfemeyer & Mueller, 1992) and purchase requests among them which are treated as negative effects (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2003a, 2003b). Advertising exposure creates parent-child conflicts which is an unintended effect (Atkin, 1980; Robertson, 1979). Advertising exposure also creates negative self-perception

particularly among young female adolescents (Martin & Kennedy, 1993). Research suggests that advertising may cause unhappiness in children due to the mismatch between the real world and advertising world filled with beautiful people and desirable products (Atkin, 1980; Richins, 1991; Martin and Kennedy, 1993) and when products do not meet the children expected performance (Atkin, 1980; Robertson et al., 1985; Ward et al., 1977). Parents' active mediation and concept-oriented family communication pattern were most effective on children in reducing the negative effects of advertising namely materialism, purchase requests, and conflicts with their parents (Buijzen and Valkenburg, 2005). Young, B., De Bruin, A., & Eagle, L. (2003) conducted a study to find the attitude of parents from United Kingdom, Sweden, and New Zealand about children exposure to television commercials. Many parents expressed concern about their children over exposure to television commercials resulting into pestering the parents to buy unwanted products. Parents opined the inability of children in understanding of television commercials and need for strict regulations of television commercials.

Furnham, A. (2000) opined that rather than strict advertising regulations parents can intervene in children understanding of television advertisements. Craggs, C. E. (1992) suggested that schools should help the children in understanding the advertisements through the participative activities. Media Smart (2007) found that though children have considerable understanding about advertising they lack access to teachers to discuss about the

advertisements not properly understood by them. Brown, J. A. (2001) media literacy needs critical viewing skills with respect to aesthetical, social, cultural, psychological, educational, economic, and regulatory aspects of television programs. Dorr, A., Graves, S. B., & Phelps, E. (1980) proved advertising literacy programs helps the children in better understanding of television advertisements. Schlesinger, P. R. (1995) analyzed the differences in advertising regulations from country to country are due to the prevailing political, social, and cultural systems. Dibb, S. (1996) expressed concern about the functioning of regulatory bodies in controlling the promotion of unhealthy eating habits among the children in United Kingdom. Adams, J., Tyrrell, R., Adamson, A. J., & White, M. (2012) studied the exposure of children to high fat, salt or sugar (HFSS) advertising by implementing scheduling restrictions. Since the restrictions did not meet the objectives it is recommended to explore further interventions to reduce the quantum of unhealthy food advertising exposure to the children. There is strong evidence that television advertising influences the food and beverage preferences and purchase requests among the children aged 2-11 years causing diet related health issues (McGinnis et al., 2006). Students improved their knowledge in many components of advertising literacy including source of advertising, selling intention of advertisements, persuasive strategy, and target audience due to the implementation of advertising literacy classes in schools (Nelson, 2016). Interventions through activities related to understanding of advertising in schools empowered the children as consumers

in dealing with advertisements (del Mar Pàmies et al., 2016).

### 3. Research Methodology

A survey was conducted on parents from 6 selected cities (Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai, Indore, Delhi, and Guwahati) with the aid of structured questionnaire with a sample size of 3600. Children age group was 7 to 11 years. From each city total of ten schools were selected through convenience sampling. Internal consistency of the constructs were measured through the Cronbach's alpha value and found acceptable with a value greater than 0.7. Results were tabulated in a table to analyze the parents perceptions about the stakeholders role in minimizing the negative effects of television advertising on children. Total sample size = 6 (cities) X 10 (Number of schools) X 5 (Number of classes) X 12 (Parent's of the students) = 3600 parents.

### 4. Data Analysis

Out of 3600 distributed questionnaires, 3108 questionnaires were found to be fully filled, and the rest 492 questionnaires were discarded due to incomplete information. 96.2% of parents expressed their opinion that marketers should design the advertisements to avoid the negative influence on children according to the research results. This indicates the growing concern of parents towards their children about the unintended effects of advertisements on them like poor health behaviors (Signorielli & Lears, 1992), materialism (Greenberg & Brand, 1993; Liebert, 1986; Wulfemeyer & Mueller, 1992),

**Table 1: Parent's perception about the stakeholders role in minimizing the negative effects of television advertising on children**

**N = 3108**

Rank by % of agreement	Statements	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
1	Marketers should design advertisements that do not create negative influence on children	96.2%	3.8%	0%
2	School should conduct consumer awareness programs to students for proper understanding of the advertising messages	83.4%	5.7%	10.9%
3	Parents should help their children in proper understanding of advertising messages	78.2%	21.5%	0.3%
4	Government should regulate the advertising industry to reduce the negative influence of advertisements on children	63.1%	23.6%	13.3%

negative self-perception (Martin & Kennedy, 1993), and unhappiness (Atkin, 1980; Richins, 1991; Martin & Kennedy, 1993).

Conducting consumer awareness programs for children in school was the second important interventions expressed by the parents with 83.4% agree. Past research (del Mar Pàmies et al., 2016; Nelson, 2016) also indicated children

improved advertising literacy by conducting consumer awareness programs in schools. Next in the order 78.2% of parents agreed that parents should help their children in understanding the television advertising messages. Parent's active mediation helped the children in reducing the negative effects of advertising namely materialism, purchase requests, and conflicts with their parents (Buijzen and Valkenburg, 2005 & Furnham, 2000).

Finally 63.1% of parents agreed about the Government should regulate the advertising industry to reduce the negative influence of advertisements on children. In U.K. also there is a growing concern about the functioning of advertising regulatory bodies (Dibb, 1996).

## 5. Discussion

Parents perceived that marketers should design the advertisements properly to minimize the negative influence of the advertisements on children. Among the four stakeholders marketers, school, parents, and Government parents gave top priority to the marketer's interventions in minimizing the negative effects of advertising on children and Government got least priority. Parents gave more importance to schools in creating consumer awareness to the children than their role in this regard. Integrated and collaborative efforts should be made by all the stakeholders namely marketers, parents, school, and Government in minimizing the negative effects of television commercials. Consumer literacy programs should be conducted at the schools to make the students as better consumer literates in understanding the

television commercials. Government should enforce proper advertising regulatory mechanism to minimize the negative effects of advertising on the children.

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