

Does Exposure to Television Advertisements Increase the Children Purchase Requests?

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ABSTRACT

Children are exposed to television commercials due to the penetration of satellite television channels in India. This paper explores whether the television commercials increase the children purchase requests or not?. Does the free gifts, celebrities and cartoon characters in the commercials influence the children or not in their purchase requests also examined. In accordance with the previous research findings it is found that exposure to television commercials increased the children's purchase requests. Free gifts shown in the television commercials stood first in influencing the children purchase requests followed by cartoon characters and celebrities.

Keywords: Children advertising, Children purchase requests, Free gifts, Television programs

I. INTRODUCTION

Today's children are acquiring knowledge about the products and brands by virtue of access to satellite television channels, internet, social media, and peer network. They influence the parents in the choice of brands, what attributes a product should have, and where to buy the product. Children between 4-12 years of age group spend over \$24 billion in direct purchases and influence the family purchases valued another \$188 billion (McNeal, 1998). According to McNeal (1992) markets are categorized based on children as market which children products are associated, children influenced market, and future market. Children influence the family purchase decisions and act as a big secondary market (McNeal, 1998). This leads to the increase in marketers' interest in children and adolescents (Kline, 1993; Turow, 2001).

Advertisers use creative approaches in making the advertisements to influence the children and encourage them to become a part in family purchase decision making process. The success of Rasna brand soft drink concentrate product category in India during 1980's was mainly due to the television advertisement targeted to children. From the beginning, Rasna's target was tightly focused on pre-teen children. The charming child model and the closing line 'I love you Rasna' pulled at the heart strings of parents, appealed to their emotion, and made them favorably disposed to the product (Rao, 1989).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Cooke, R. (2002) in his paper stated that during non-school hours children and teenagers in the United Kingdom and United States spend four and five hours a day watching some electronic media. Leonhardt and Kerwin (1997) estimated that children between the ages of 6 and 14 watch about 25 hours of television per week and are exposed as many as 20,000 advertisements in a year. Robinson et al., (2001) pointed out that on an average American children may watch as many as 40,000 advertisements annually. Kunkel (2001) also opined that children in the United States may watch more than 40,000 advertisements in every year. Thomas, L.M., & Dillenbeck, M.S. (2002) in their paper recognized television is the predominant way to reach children, though many new media channels like internet are available. Smith, C. (2001) in a survey aimed to find the kids media consumption found that three quarters of children aged 11 to 14 years have a television in their own room which allows them to access television advertisements. Dibb (1996) found in an international survey, the average number of advertisements in one hour of programming for children was about 10. In ascending order the number of advertisements per hour observed is Norway (0), Sweden (2), Netherlands (5), U.S.A. (24) and Australia (29).

The differences in the number of advertisements are partly due to the different regulations on television advertising in different countries. George, A. (2003) discussed the importance of advertising targeted towards children. On an average a child sees more than 20,000 television advertisements every year. This is due to the favorite activity after school hours for children are watching television. An average child spends 2.48 hours watching television per day and in

the weekends it is 3.47 hours (Mittal et al., 2010). Anderson et al. (1986) observed there was an increase in hours per week spent visually oriented toward television up to about 10 years age, with a subsequent decline thereafter. Children exposed to more commercials at home attempted more purchase-influence on their mothers at super market (Galst & White, 1976). Positive relationship identified between the children television viewing levels and frequency of purchase requests (Atkin, 1975; Adler, 1980). Children who are heavy viewers of television are more likely to be influenced by television commercials (Rossiter & Robertson, 1974).

Lawlor, M.-A., & Prothero, A. (2003) conducted exploratory study by conducting group discussions with children aged eight and nine with a sample size of twenty six to explore children's understanding of advertising intent. The key findings are children are able to distinguish between advertisements and television programmes with hints like relative length, the name of the programme, list of credits, a familiarity with the programmes, and the use of different people and characters in each. They also know about the commercial nature of advertising intent. Celebrities in the advertisements attracted the attention of the children and mere celebrity admiration resulted in purchase the product advertised. Yavas, U., & Abdul-Gader, A. (1993) assessed the advertising influence on children and found that advertisements with humor and cartoon characters have more appeal to children. Cartoon characters helped to draw the attention of children and also promoted trust in products. Roberts (2005) stated another popular message strategy is showing the premium offers i.e., free gifts such as free toys, stickers, and trading cards etc., inside the product packages.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A survey had conducted on parents from 6 selected cities (Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai, Indore, Delhi, and Guwahati) using a structured questionnaire with a sample size of 3600 to prioritize the consumer socialization factors among the children. 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. Chi square goodness of fit tests were conducted to check for significant differences between the percentage of the parents who agreed with the statements and the percentage of the people who disagreed for testing the hypothesis 1 ("Parent's think that exposure to television advertising increase the children request for advertised products"), hypothesis 2 ("Parent's think that content in the advertising influence their children product buying requests").

Total sample size = 6 (cities) X 10 (Number of schools) X 5 (Number of classes) X 12 (Parent's of the students) = 3600 parents

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

H1: Parent's think that exposure to television advertising increase the children purchase request for advertised products

Objective of the first hypothesis is to prove exposure to television advertising increase the children purchase request for the products shown in the advertisements. Parent's opinions were asked by 3 statements (Table 1) on Likert scale with strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree responses. Chi-Square Goodness-of-Fit Test was conducted along with simple frequency on the 3 statements to find the validity of the hypothesis 1 "Parents think that exposure to television advertising increase the children purchase request for advertised products". Among the responses from the parents, "strongly agree" and "agree" were combined into a single category "agree", whereas "disagree" and "strongly disagree" were combined as a single category "disagree". These 3 statements were ranked by the percent of agreement of the participants. Table 1 indicating that 67.4% of children were watching television daily and 27.9% children were not watching television daily. The reasons for not watching the television daily may be due to the academic pressures on the children put by the parents. Other reasons were children pre-occupied with extra-curricular and co-curricular activities resulting lack of time for watching television. It is also found that 61.6% children were watching the television for long hours during weekends. Previous studies (Mittal et al., 2010) also indicated an increase in television watching hours during the weekends by children.

65.6% of parents agreed that increase in television viewing increased the advertised product requests by their children. This is validated in many previous studies (Adler, 1980; Anderson et al., 1986; Atkin, 1975; Galst & White, 1976; Rossiter & Robertson, 1974). This is due to the behavioral effects of television viewing of the children (Rossiter, 1979).

Since majority of the respondents agreed for the questions in the construct and there is statistically significant differences exists between agreed and disagreed statements hypothesis 1 is proved that there is a relationship between the television advertising and children purchase requests.

Table 1: Parent’s perception about the relationship between the television advertising exposure and children’s purchase request for advertised products.

N = 3108

| Rank by % of agreement | Statements | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree |
|------------------------|---|-----------------|----------------------------|----------------|
| 1 | My child watch the television daily | 67.4% (2095) | 4.7% (146) | 27.9% (867) |
| 2 | The more advertisements my child watches, the more he/she will want products advertised | 65.6% (2039) | 10.4% (323) | 24.0% (746) |
| 3 | My child watch the television more hours during weekends | 61.6% (1915) | 15.7% (488) | 22.7% (705) |

Cronbach alpha = 0.723

H2: Parent’s think that content in the advertisements influence their children product purchase requests.

Objective of the third hypothesis is to prove that content in the advertisements influence their children in product purchase requests. Parent’s opinions were asked by 3 statements (Table 2) on Likert scale with strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree responses. Chi-Square Goodness-of-Fit Test was conducted along with simple frequency on the 3 statements to find the validity of the hypothesis 3 “Parent’s think that content in the advertising influence their children product buying requests”. Among the responses from the parents, “strongly agree” and “agree” were combined into a single category “agree”, and “disagree” whereas “strongly disagree” were combined as a single category “disagree.”. These 3 statements were ranked by the percent of agreement of the participants.

From Table 2 it is evident that 76.7% of the children buy the products with free gifts shown in the television advertisements. Similar to the previous findings (Atkin, 1978; Miller & Busch, 1979; Pettigrew & Roberts, 2006; Roberts, 2005). Free gifts are the popular method to motivate the children for buying the advertised products by the marketers. 62.4% of children were influenced by the cartoon characters shown in the television commercials to purchase the advertised products. The findings were in line with previous research findings (Yavas & Abdul-Gader, 1993). This is due to the representation of popular cartoon characters like Chota Bheem, Motu-Patlu, Spiderman, Superman, Ben10 in the advertisements which children likes them due to the attractiveness of the characters. Cartoon characters representing the brands shown higher influence in making the brand attractive to the children and in turn leads to the purchase the advertised products (Jose & Saraswathiamma; 2014). 42.1% of children were influenced by the celebrities who were shown in the television commercials to purchase the advertised products. Previous research (Bandyopadhyay; 2001) also claimed the similar findings. Though children like the celebrities in the advertisements, the credibility of the message offered by the celebrities was in doubt by the children.

Table 2: Parent’s perception about the advertising content influence on children’s product purchase requests.

N = 3108

| Rank by % of agreement | Statements | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree |
|------------------------|---|-----------------|----------------------------|----------------|
| 1 | My child likes to buy the products with free gifts shown in the television advertisements | 76.7% (2384) | 9.0% (280) | 14.3% (444) |
| 2 | My child likes to buy the products influenced by the cartoon characters in advertisements | 62.4% (1939) | 16.2% (504) | 21.4% (665) |

| | | | | |
|---|--|-----------------|----------------|------------------|
| 3 | My child likes to buy the products suggested by the celebrities (Example: movie stars, sports persons) in television advertisements. | 42.1% (1309) | 10.3% (320) | 47.6 % (1479) |
|---|--|-----------------|----------------|------------------|

Cronbach alpha = 0.714

Since majority of the respondents agreed for the questions in the construct and statistically significant differences exists between agreed and disagreed statements, hypothesis 3 is proved that there is a relationship between the television advertising content and children purchase requests.

V. DISCUSSION

According to the parent’s opinion higher exposure to television commercials influenced their children in making more purchase requests of advertised products. It is also found that many children watch television programs longer period during weekends. More than 50 percent of children were watching television programs daily. Changes in family values have made the parents to accept the children purchase requests in recent years. This could be the possible reason for the positive correlation between the television commercial exposure and children purchase requests. With the increased penetration and easy access to set top boxes and cable television subscriptions children are able to access television channels easily.

It was found that majority of children like to buy the products with free gifts shown in the television commercials. After free gifts, cartoon characters influenced the children and celebrities ranked last in influencing the children. This could be due to unfamiliarity with the celebrities and familiarity of cartoon characters among the children. Advertisers were successful in attracting the children attention by offering the attractive gifts with the products. It will create a curiosity among the children to try the products to avail the free gifts like toys kept inside the packaging. Children also like advertisements with cartoon characters as they already pre exposed to the characters through cartoon programs. This helps them to quickly connect with the advertisements. However due care has to be taken to attract the children while showing the celebrities in the advertisements as children shown difficulty in connecting with this kind of advertisements.

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