

IMPACT OF ADVERTISING ON CHILDREN

Dr. T.C. Simon

Associate Professor, MAMO College, Manassery Mukkom, Kozhikode, Kerala.

Ms. Sunu. K

Adhoc Faculty, MAMO College, Manassery Mukkom, Kozhikode, Kerala.

Abstract

Although advertisements help us to become aware of the products in the market, they have their negative impact especially on children. Children today are exposed to all types of advertisements on the various media like the television, print media and internet as well. They are innocent and not so mature. When a marketer advertises a product on television, they do not understand that it is a business and their main aim is to sell. They do not understand that advertisers try to push their products and market in such a way that children want to buy it. Children take everything at face value and believe without a doubt the messages in the advertisements. Advertisements are made in such a way as to attract the attention of children. Children do not understand it to be marketing strategy. Children are an extremely vulnerable target audience and get easily carried away.

Key Words: Advertisement, Medias, Buying Behaviour, Consumer Awareness.

“Doing business without advertising is like winning at a girl in the dark; you know what you are doing, but nobody else does”-Stewart H Britt. The very quote describes why advertising is so important. Advertising does not simply provide information about products and service but is an active attempt at influencing people to action by an avert appeal to reason or emotion. It is a part of total marketing which influences the sale of the product, as do the other variables of the mix. Children are those who are greatly influenced by advertising. It impacts in varied dimensions of children’s socialization. With the advent of television and other mass media, children have come into their own right as consumers and consequently they have become an important target market for the business. Advertisers are the first to recognize children’s value as consumers who are capable of influencing decisions on spending.

Advertising of nutritious food relate to health and advertising of guns and toys inculcate aggression even if these are provided for recreation and treated as play things by elders. Imaginative and intellectual ability are encouraged to be imbibed. Kline(1994) comprehensively analyzed such facts of advertising. He opines that advertising and marketing of children’s toys leaves a negative impact on the psychology of children. Even though they imagine themselves to be undertaking acts of bravery, they develop aggression as a part of their personality.

According to Bever Smith et al, an understanding of advertising intent usually emerges by the time most students are seven to eight years old. Although children can discriminate from commercials from the programmes by the time they are seven years old as noticed earlier, it takes few more years before children expand their knowledge base to include an understanding of advertisement’s persuasive intent. An investigation conducted by Dickinson into the food choices of eleven to eighteen year old with reference to the role of television, found that, there is undoubtedly large amount of advertisement of food on television, with an average of ten references to food in every broadcast hour. In programmes, the most common food group is fruits and vegetables; in advertising, it is fatty and sugary foods. He suggested that there is a good reason to suppose that television programmes as well as advertisements have to play key role in food choices.

The 1950s dates the modern era of children’s television programming when a deal between struggling television network ABC and Disney brought the Mickey Mouse club and Disneyland into children’s afternoon television programming. Four types of products advertised to children during the 1970’s were: toys, cereals, candies and snacks and fast food. Television advertising and its effects on consumption pattern, values and social integration have been hotly debated for many years.

There are many television advertisements targeted on children and it is found that children urge their parents to purchase what they want without a need. For a new generation of new age children, television is as influential as a teacher or a parent (Panwar, 2006). Even though companies realized that kids were avid consumers of certain products, they were not considered to be a big market on their own or to have such money to spend. Therefore, most of the advertisements relied on appealing to mothers to buy products for children rather than addressing kids directly. Eventually these markets shifted into something called pester power. Advertisements were not really approaching kids directly because they realized that the parents control the cash necessary purchases. But marketing was beginning to address children more directly. This becomes partly possible because advertisement had direct access to kids through children television programs. Children desire to possess products they have seen on television is said to 'pester power' which means that children pester their parents or other adults to buy things for them (Proctor & Richards, 2002). Children pestering can lead to family conflicts when parents refuse to buy products either because they cannot afford to buy them or because they believe them to be in-appropriate for their children, and this may lead to anger, frustration and disappointment (Atkin, 1978). Such is the significance of children's influence in commodity purchasing, whether they purchase themselves or through their parents that marketers have increased the volume of research they conduct among young consumers. Specialist agencies conduct research even among pre-school children. But some marketers have argued that pester power is not a source of conflict but more the basis for children-parent negotiation about what to buy (Pilgrim & Lawrence, 2001).

There are concerns about the advertising of particular products, particularly the promotion of food products. A large proportion of advertising aimed at children promote food or drinks; marketers reinforce stereotypes when they use idealized images to promote products. Young children are thought be particularly vulnerable to advertising because they know less about the intent of advertisers and the process of creating an advertisement. The assumption is that adults are less likely to be vulnerable to advertisement because they are aware that the purpose of advertising is to persuade people to buy products.

Marketer's sometimes use the phrase "getting older younger" (Cohen & Cahill,1999) which refers to the idea that toys and other products traditionally associated with teenage group are now being bought by/for younger children. There is little doubt that children and young people are adopting fashions and modern lifestyles at an earlier age than that in the past (Smith,2001) and therefore the concept of " getting older younger" has validity in terms of marketing the same products to younger children. As children become more independent viewers with access to their own television and videos, parents have less control over what children watch and less opportunity to discuss advertisements that might have been seen during family viewing. Indeed, parents themselves often lack sufficient knowledge of regulators and their regulatory responsibilities. Another way to increase children's understanding of advertising is through school education. The media courses designed to young children should include activities to increase advertising awareness (Cragg, 1992).

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