

# **Effects of Television Advertisements on Children**

## **Introduction**

Television is one of the highly effective mediums that are used for marketing communication and advertisements. Marketers prefer to advertise their products on television as it helps them to reach a wide range of potential buyers (Das et al., 2018). However, adults are not the only one who is exposed to advertisements. Children watch television programs and during that time they come across these promotional ads too and as children are not capable of finding out differences between good and bad, even after not having any direct purchase power they get highly influenced by advertisements and influence the buying behaviors of their parents (Barrie Gunter et al., 2005). This current essay will discuss the effects of television advertisements on children.

## **The overall impact of television advertisements on children and related issues**

Television can be identified as one of the predominant mediums that are used for advertising to children as it can reach a wide number of children in their homes and there is very little control over the advertisements that are seen by them (Barrie Gunter et al., 2005). Even though children do not always pay full attention to the advertisements that are running on the TV but they are highly exposed to the ads that are associated with the programs they watch. A study disclosed that in the United Kingdom, two-thirds of the children aged between seven to ten years, have access to television in their bedrooms, and children aged between eleven to fourteen years have access to video recorders as well that allows them to record the programs (Barrie Gunter et al., 2005). It was also argued by Barrie Gunter et al. (2005), that whether the advertisements are responsible for exploiting the children, and in this context, it was observed

that advertisements do pursue children to buy goods that are not really their necessity and they indulge in spending money on things that they would not have if they were not exposed to those specific advertisements. This scenario can be better observed when it comes to a branded product where the advertisements do not just pursue a child in buying a certain product but a certain product with a brand label and studies show that children are able to recognize brand logos even before they can start reading (Barrie Gunter et al., 2005). After children watch advertisements on television they tend to “pester” adults, particularly their parents to buy those things for them therefore, it can be said that ads lead children to have high “pester power” and it was also seen that in the United Kingdom, parents spend around £7- £10 more when they take children to supermarkets. This can leave a long-term impact when children start making demands for specific products or toys for their birthdays or festivals like Christmas (Barrie Gunter et al., 2005). Moreover, research showed that there are several negative impacts of this pestering habit. For instance, when parents refuse to buy something they think is inappropriate for their kids or cannot afford to buy, it leads to conflict between the parents and the kid that paves the path toward anger issues, disappointment, or even frustration (Barrie Gunter et al., 2005).

### **Positive and negative impacts of television advertisements on children**

There are both positive and negative impacts of television advertisements that could be observed among children. As pointed out by Das et al. (2018), as a positive impact of advertisements, it can be stated that TV ads make children aware of the newly launched products in the market which increases their ideas and knowledge regarding the current innovation in the domain of technology. Moreover, there are certain advertisements that promote healthy living and the benefits of healthy eating which can improve the current diet of a child. Many advertisements come with a strong message that influences children to follow their goals and

helps them in having a passion for their future life prospects and makes them understand the importance of education as well (Das et al., 2018). Also, there are certain TV ads that promote good hygiene such as toothpaste advertisements that create awareness for maintaining hygiene among kids, and then there are cautionary advertisements that promote the consequences of smoking and consumption of alcohol. So, children can understand the health risks associated with these products and stay away from the same (Das et al., 2018).

However, Das et al. (2018) pointed out that there can be certain drastically negative impacts of television advertisements on children. For instance, children tend to misinterpret the messages of the advertisements and they are more prone to focus on the negative sides of the message conveyed through the commercial rather than the positive side. Also, the commercial advertisements increase the habit of impulse buying and encourage the children to make their parents buy the products for them. Also, it has been observed that people get easily attracted to high-end brand products such as clothing, shoes, schoolbags, etc and they also try to imitate dangerous stunts shown in some advertisements. Even though these commercial ads come with statutory warnings, kids do not understand those (Das et al., 2018). Moreover, many junk food producers advertise their products, and children get easily attracted to those which impacts their food habits and lead them towards an unhealthy life once they start consuming those fast-food items. It increases the chances of the prevalence of diabetes and obesity among children at a very young age (Das et al., 2018). Finally, as more numbers of TV commercial advertisements keep targeting children, it increases confusion among them and distorts their sense of reality as well (Das et al., 2018).

## **Impact of television advertisements on the behaviors of children**

A study by Narasimhamurthy (2014), found that television advertisements leave a huge impact on the future buying behaviors of children as they tend to develop "consumption motives and values" once they are exposed to the ads. Children start gaining knowledge of the products and brands which influence them in developing strategies for making purchase demands and negotiations with parents. Narasimhamurthy (2014) also opined that several studies exposed that usually children do not understand the persuasive nature of TV advertisements and they become the biggest targets for different "commercial persuasion". These children also tend to think that everything in TV advertisements is accurate and trustworthy. As noted by Narasimhamurthy (2014), the attitude of children toward TV ads does not only determine their purchasing behavior but also influences their other behaviors. The demands of the products that are advertised on television are usually influenced by the behaviors and attitudes of children that they show towards those specific advertisements. Moreover, there are other cognitive changes that contribute towards forming different attitudes towards advertisements on television among children from different age groups (Narasimhamurthy, 2014). Marikar & Abeydeera (2017) argued that advertisements often show a fantasy world that is full of beautiful products with happy people whereas in the real world everything is not as colorful and happy as shown in the advertisements. Ads lead to conflicts and as a result of the same, sometimes male children display violence while the female ones apply buyers. During bargains, conflicts occur between the children and their parents. When it comes to food items, many advertisers use different promotional tactics to attract children such as free gifts, free toys, and stickers and it was found that 42% of the parents believe that these promotional items are always in great demand among children (Marikar & Abeydeera, 2017).

## **Role of television advertisement in influencing product or brand choices among children**

According to a study by Gbadamosi et al. (2012), advertisements on televisions influence product and brand choices to a great extent. The findings of the study indicated that entertainment features of a television advertisement emerge great likeness for those ads among the kids. A child would be interested in the products or brands that make advertisements on television featuring popular songs, cartoon characters or animals, or even dancing and singing. It makes the children remember the ad along with the description vividly and it does not even apply to the products that are only made for children. The study is based in Africa and some of the great examples of the same were sanitary pad advertisements, Dettol antiseptic liquid ads, and even the advertisement of Union Bank (Gbadamosi et al., 2012). Another interesting finding of this study suggested that celebrity endorsement in advertisement also influence the choices of products and brands among children. Children were observed to be highly attracted to the television ads that featured celebrities. It happens because children want to be like those "heroes" and when the advertisement features a celebrity using a certain product or recommending something, it triggers children and they get strongly attracted to these (Gbadamosi et al., 2012). It was also found from the study that children get excited when they come across a TV ad that incorporates local languages and as a result, it strengthens their liking for this form of marketing communication. This is an approach to making TV commercial ads that makes the advertisement highly memorable and entertaining for the children (Gbadamosi et al., 2012). This is how children get highly influenced by the television commercial advertisement and they hook onto certain products and brands. Eventually, they start to pursue their parents so that they can buy those products for them and that is why parental control over the exposure of children to television commercial ads is very necessary.

## **Responsibilities of parents toward children in order to mitigate the negative impacts of television advertisements**

Studies have suggested that to protect children from the negative impacts of TV advertisements, parents need to take responsibility. First of all, it is recommended that to minimize the impacts of TV ads, parents need to limit their screen time. That way they can lessen the number of advertisements that their kids are being exposed to. Also, they need to keep a track of the programs that their children are watching (Das et al., 2018). It is also suggested that parents should put the effort into making their kids understand the difference between the television programs they are watching and the advertisements and what the actual motives of those advertisements are. When children pursue their parents to buy them certain products from a certain brand, they should ask them the source of the information and if they believe that product is not appropriate for them, then rather than simply refusing, they should discuss why they think it is inappropriate for the kids and make them understand the same (Das et al., 2018). A healthy conversation between the parents and their children can lower the negative impacts of television commercial advertisements.

### **Conclusion**

Advertisements have adverse impacts on children both positive and negative, therefore, it is highly important to educate children about television advertisements. In recent times, marketers are more focused on making advertisements to get the attention of the children as they can pursue their parents in buying those products for them. It was seen that as a long-term negative impact it can influence conflicts among parents and their kids and leads to mental health issues such as frustration and triggers anger issues among the kids as well when they do not get their desired product. In this situation, parents need to be highly responsible and educate their

children about the persuasive nature of advertisements and the negative impacts of the same along with impulse buying.

### **References**

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