

Chapter Six

Conclusion, Discussion and Suggestions

6.1 Conclusion and Discussion

Children watch commercials for visual gratification. Their level of understanding alleviates with the progression of their age. Children of 2-7 years do not understand the intentions of advertisements. Children below the age of approximately 7–8 years, by virtue of their limited cognitive development, typically lack the ability to apply such considerations to their understanding of television advertising (Wilcox et al, 2004). A sense of competitive possessiveness is also seen among children. The junk food culture is also prevalent among them. The advertisements may also contribute significantly to rise in the level of materialistic attitude in children, unhealthy food habit and conflict in parent child relationship. Parental involvement plays a crucial role in helping the child to understand the persuasive intentions of advertisements and helping the child to understand the functions of social service advertisements for formulating a socially conscious mind in the child.

Advertising is the most influential and powerful medium in the present commercial society (Rathod and Parmar, 2012). Since their inception, advertisements have been trying to transform the lives of its viewers. It was during 1970s, Indian spectators first witnessed television commercial. Enormous transformations were observed when Indians watched the Gulf war sitting in their couches. The post-liberalization period led towards a progressive growth in advertising industry. There is an unprecedented boom in the Indian advertising world because of the changing economic system (Vilanilam and Varghese, 2004). Through their innovative concept, appealing

appeals, advertisers allure its target group to take desired action. To a question put by 'The Hindu' correspondent as to how the advertising scenario in future could be envisaged, F.T. Khorakiwala, Chairman of Advertising Standards Council of India replied that the scenario would be more aggressive because of severe competition in Indian market initiated by global players (Vilani and Varghese, 2004). Moreover technological innovations have ushered a new dawn in the field of television advertising.

Advertising directed towards children has become omnipresent in Indian landscape. From a very young age children are exposed to television. Every advertisement is an exaggerated and emotionally highly charged brief burst of information, which is directed to a specific target group (Bergler, 1999). Children are exposed to numerous advertisements from a very early age and are most likely to accept the ideas advertising promote (Mittal, 2009). In both urban and rural locale of Silchar children of various age groups watch television for 2-3 hours a day and within this time they see innumerable advertisements. Indian children watch television on an average of 18.35 hours a week and more a child is exposed to television advertisements the greater is the effect on them (Mittal, 2009). According to the uses and gratification theory people use media for various purposes in order to satisfy their needs. Children watch advertisements for visual gratification, entertainment as well as to gather information. Young children generally think that television advertising is informative, truthful and entertaining (Chan and McNeal, 2004). The present has revealed that children of both urban and rural Silchar watch advertisements for visual gratification. For some advertisements is entertainment, as they find the jingle very entertaining and cartoon characters featured in the advertisements make them more pleasurable for

children. The study also reveals that children of 8-11 years watch advertisements for seeking information also.

Children are seen watching ads for pleasure as they love humour. Most children become very keen on joke telling by the age of four or five, and commercials are an important source of humor for them (Seiter, 1995). Before four or five years old, children regard advertising as simply entertainment (Katke, 2007). Similar television viewing pattern is seen among the urban and rural children, as the rural stratum also has an access to the commercial channels. Rural areas are also undergoing a kind of 'revolution of rising expectations' (Vilani and Varghese, 2004). Preference of channels also appears to be same as majority of the children of 2-7 years prefer to watch cartoon channels. But urban children of 8-11 years are inclined to watch sports and news channels. Both urban and rural children of 2-4 years, who are egocentric in nature, watch television under parental guidance. Their preferences vary with the progression of age as they are able to distinguish their own thoughts from others. They start to watch television alone without parental involvement. Lone viewing renders children more susceptible to advertising (Pine and Nash, 2002). Rural children of pre-operational stage watch more ads as compared to any other age groups.

The AIDA model states that attention generates interest which leads to desire and then towards a desired action. They gaze at the advertisements intently. Children are drawn towards the music and jingle of the advertisement. The most important and common use of music is to establish mood or arouse emotions (Alpert, et al, 1990). A study of one thousand television commercials found that music was present in 42 per cent ads (Stewart and Furse, 1986). Children love to see their favourite cartoon characters in

the advertisements. It is found that both urban and rural children are drawn more towards an advertisement that features a child. The child in the advertisement can draw their attention even more than celebrities. Children find ads as a medium of creating desires among them. Majority of the children of the urban areas with lower parental income desire to buy things during occasions as well as whenever they see the advertisement. Children of lower middle income group wants to buy things whenever they see ads as well as when they go out for shopping with their parents. Rural children of higher income group buy while they go for shopping. Every four out of ten rural children of lower income group desire to buy every time they see the ads. In lower middle as well as middle income group children demand less for advertised products. Children want to buy the advertised products after they watch the ads as they find the ads interesting. The urban children prefer to buy things whenever they go for a shopping with their parents. It is also crucial to mention that both rural and urban children also buy non-advertised products. The child who belongs to symbolic function sub stage is playful in nature. The study also reveals that children belonging to both symbolic function sub stage as well as both intuitive thought sub stage are more inclined to buy toys. Urban as well as rural children of all the income groups prefer to buy toys. The preference of buying gadgets is seen higher among the children of higher income group of both urban as well as rural areas. Preference of buying gadgets and toys is found higher among urban children of 8-11years. In the urban areas children do not buy a product if it is not advertised on TV or the advertisement is not attractive. Some of the children do not buy a product if celebrity featured in the ad is not impressive. Children in the UK who watched more commercial television requested significantly more items (Pine, Wilson and Nash, 2007). Children are also found comparing themselves to the children or cartoons

featured in the advertisement. They associate themselves to the televised characters featured in ads as they could associate their emotions with them. When children watch television advertising and compare their own situation with this idealized world in the commercials, the discrepancy between the two worlds might cause unhappiness (Atkin, 1980; Richins, 1991). They become disappointed and sometime show revolting attitude towards parents when parents are unable to meet their demands. They begin to feel that parents do not understand their needs. It is also seen that parents also provide everything whatever the child demands. Parents are eventually the ones who will select and buy the advertised products for their children. It is no surprise, therefore, that the most successful children's products in the past decades were those that met the approval of parents (McNeal, 1999). Every two out of five children of urban elementary educated parents revolt against the parent when they deny to give them the product of their choice similarly every one out of two children of rural elementary educated children react in a similar way. On the other hand children of post-graduate as well as graduate of both urban and rural areas tend to listen to whatever parents say. Every one out of three urban children of lower income group show revolting attitude towards their parents similarly every two out of four children show revolting attitude towards their parents when they deny to give them the advertised product. But parents who belong to the higher income group both in urban as well as rural help the children to understand the ads in a better way. Children of urban elementary educated parents revolt against the parent when they deny giving them the product of their choice similarly every one out of two children of rural elementary educated children react in a similar way.

Children tend to buy a product as their friends have the same product, which is seen higher among the urban children of 8-11 years. Socialization effects of mass media

cannot match the power of the home, the neighbourhood and the school where interpersonal relationships exist (McRon, 1975). Children are more influenced by parents and playmates than by mass media in forming and expressing consumer preferences (Goldstein, 1994). Urban children of 8-11 years are found to be more brand conscious as compared to the rural counterpart. According to Achenreiner (2003), brand consciousness amongst children is on the increase. Children prefer to buy branded and standardized products, which are more, advertised on Television (Kotwal, Gupta and Devi, 2008). When children watch advertisements, they discuss amongst themselves. This discussion does lead to purchasing those brands favoured by their friends. Children from a very young age start to gain preliminary ideas regarding a brand. The consciousness about the brand of the product is seen higher among urban children of higher and middle-income group as compared to the rural strata. Children of post-graduate parents of both urban and rural areas are least competitive in nature but more conscious of their status. Family incomes have increased, children lead more solitary lives, attitudes to childhood have changed, new products have been developed and commercial pressures on children have increased (Piachaud, 2007). Slowly children are seen heading towards a materialistic culture. Marxists have criticized the way consumer activity detracts from political activity that might change the fundamental economic and social relations. Social critics on right hold advertising responsible for promoting a new hedonism by emphasizing material satisfactions in the here and now (Seiter, 1995).

The uses and gratification theory suggests the people use media for various purposes as for information, entertainment, escape and identify. Children are also seen watching advertisements for pleasure, they love to listen to the jingle, attain visual

pleasure by gazing at children featured in the advertisement, and the cartoon characters even entertain them more. Children are seen buying things for social identity, they are conscious of their status as well as possessive competitive in nature. Children of 8-11 years watch advertisements to get information about the product. Rural children are seen comparing themselves to the characters featured in the advertisement. Associating themselves to the characters of television helps them to escape their present condition. When children watch television advertising and compare their own situation with this idealized world in the commercials, the discrepancy between the two worlds might cause unhappiness (Atkin, 1980; Richins, 1991). Children are also drawn towards the popular culture. They love to watch the way celebrity endorsers promote the brands on television. The music or the jingle draws their attention. The advertisements also include some musical elements borrowed from the mainstream films which generate interest among children. Younger children feel delighted while watching television advertisements and try to remember their jingles and dialogues (Mittal,2009). They even prefer to buy the fashion accessories that they see on television. Children pay more attention to adverts than adults, particularly when they include jingles, cartoons, humour, and elements borrowed from popular culture (Aggarwal, Hooda, 2012).

Children do fall victim to peer pressure prefer the products used by their friends (Khandai, Agrawal, 2012). TV advertising has enhanced their involvement in product selection and purchase, they prefer to buy TV advertised products and it is helpful in buying the new products (Bishnoi and Sharma, 2009). Pondering over the possessions they have may turn the child materialistic in nature may cause psychological as well as physical harm. Children are seen to bear a sense of jealousy when they see the

product of their choice in their friend's hands. The study also reveals that many of the children do not react on this circumstance. The study exposes that most of the children become mentally satisfied after they buy a product but a sense of competitive possessiveness is also seen among the children of all age groups of both urban and rural landscape. Both urban and rural children of higher income group possess a feel of jealousy when they see the product of their choice in someone else's hand.

Children of all age groups of both urban and rural areas also prefer to consume junk food, which is jam-packed with high fat, salt, and sugar, which can be detrimental to child health. Majority of the urban children consume fast food as well as soft drinks. But it must be mentioned that homemade food is the second preference given by the children. And only a few of them want to consume the health drinks. In the rural area the homemade food is the first preference given by the children. But fast is also very popular among the rural children. And only a few of them want to consume the health drinks. Television pumps in lot of junk food and snack advertisements. Indian child on an average get exposed to not less than 20 attractive messages of these product. More time spent with television viewing more exposure to these messages repeat advertisements message result into placing the brand on top of the mind will result into buying the brand illustrated in the advertisements (Katke, 2007).

Most of the rural as well as urban children of 2-4 years are unable to understand the underlying functions of advertisement, they watch and believe them and 50 per cent of them are unable to distinguish between the ads and TV programmes. The children of 5-7 age groups also rely on the information disseminated through the ads and only a few of them feel that ads exaggerate the facts for promotion of the product. According to Piaget's theory children of pre-operational stage cannot manipulate and

transform information in a logical way and they are also unable to understand the cause and effect relationship. Respondents of age group 8-11 feel that ads are not reliable as Piaget believed that children of concrete operational stage have mature thought process. Kara Chan opines that older children had more consumer experience. The study reveals that the understanding capability of children increases with the progression of age. More children in a study (52 per cent) showed explicit understanding of what an advertisement is than the younger children in the Pine and Nash study (32 per cent), suggesting age-related increases in knowledge (Pine, Nash, 2002). Between four and seven, they begin to be able to distinguish advertising from programmes (Katke, 2007). The majority children have generally grasped the intention to persuade by the age of eight, while after eleven or twelve they can articulate a critical understanding of advertising (Bandyopadhyay, Kindra and Sharp, 2001). Education plays a pivotal role in helping the child to understand advertising in a logical way. Postgraduate as well as graduate parents are seen discussing the content of advertisements with their children. The study also reveals that post graduate parents of the urban areas (91.65 per cent) and of rural areas (92.85 per cent) help the children to understand the function and intentions of advertisements. A gradual decline in the parental involvement can be seen with the in both urban as well as rural areas with parents who have lower level of education. Even 83.33 per cent of the urban parents of higher income group help the child to understand the meaning and intentions of advertisements. Parental involvement is also seen in the rural parts among all income groups but is less than the urban part. But it is also seen in the present study that from a very young age children learn to convince their parents to act according to them. Children over the span of ages 2-11 years, they develop consumption motives and values as they are exposed to commercial activities; they

develop knowledge about advertising, products, brands, pricing, and shopping; and they begin to develop strategies for purchase requests and negotiation (Rathod and Parmar, 2012).

Other than promoting and selling commodities advertisements also play a crucial role towards societal and environmental development. The social service ads promote ideas related to the overall development of a nation. Advertising is not only about selling goods and products, it also disseminates social message regarding our environment and takes the major issues as conservation of wildlife, conservation resources; social messages as education for all, and providing the knowledge regarding health related issues. We live in a social environment where every individual has a role to play. There are innumerable advertisements that sell ideas to implement social messages for a better society and healthy environment. Pondering on these issues, the study tries to explore effects of social service ads on young children. The advertisements on pulse polio, proper sanitation, and conservation of resources, educating the nation, respecting the nation, blood donation, eye donation and many more create awareness and a sense of responsibility among its viewers. Often such ads feature children and the present study suggests that children pay more attention to those ads which feature children. Children tend to become more aware of the healthy habits. Such advertisements inject influential messages which may have long lasting impact on the child. But the child of pre-operational stage finds such ads difficult to understand. Children gain better understanding of society and environment in the concrete operational stage. Even children of all income groups as well as children with parents various educational qualification opine that social service ads create awareness and breed a sense of responsibility in them. Most of the children find it difficult to understand the ads on blood donation. Interaction with five hundred

children for the purpose of this study, the researcher found that children can more easily recall the commercials selling goods. They took time to recall the social service ads. In that situation aided recall proved to be effective.

Advertisements have both as well as negative effects on children. Children of both urban and rural areas are too young to understand the concepts working behind advertisements. Oates, Blades and Gunter suggest that young children may not understand the link between advertising and commercial profit (Oates, Blades and Gunter, 2002). It has been shown that children in early childhood (ages two to seven) are more vulnerable to persuasive information, because they have less experience and domain-specific knowledge that they can use while processing commercials (Roedder, 1981). They watch advertisements for pleasure which in return generates desire in them resulting to purchasing requests pushing them towards a materialistic culture. Advertisers create materialistic desires among children by selling dreams. Children feel happy when they are fulfilling their desire to buy the advertised product. For them the advertised product comes as a problem solving agent. Social critics on the left blame advertising for masking the exploitative nature of capitalist production behind the veneer of attractive, affluent and mythical lifestyles (Seiter, 1995). Often they are seen revolting against their parents. But many of them tend to listen to their parents. All correlation studies on one or more paths between advertising and parent-child conflict yielded small to moderate positive correlations (Valkenburg and Buijzen, 2003). Apart from inculcating a consumer culture the social service ads try to implement social messages for a healthy environment, a healthy individual as well as a healthy society. It is said that media cannot be swallowed whole (Seiter, 1995) as children do not follow everything shown in advertisements. It cannot be denied that

advertisements usher a consumer culture but parental guidance and their individual way to deal with the child may lower the negative impact of advertisements and amplify the positive messages disseminated through the advertisements. Parents are supposed to be involved in determining the media habits of children. It is the duty of parents to see what their children are watching on television (Rathod and Parmar, 2012). Research has revealed that in families where the television content is discussed and advertisements are questioned and criticized for their stereotypes, maneuvers and claims; children are less likely to be negatively influenced (Joshi and Bhatia, 1997). Parents are able to reduce negative consequences of exposure to ads by active mediation as discussing program content with children helps the child to evaluate the program and stimulates children to learn more from TV (Buijzen and Valkenburg, 2003, 2005). A study suggests that parents should raise their voice against the exaggeration of ads, and the exposure to vulgarity, aggression and limitless cravings, but they should also take the initiative to shape the child's attitude to words the television and its content (Joshi, Bhatia, 1997). A child's mind is 'tabula rasa'; it will take the shape the way it is shaped. Stoic epistemology emphasizes that the mind starts blank, but acquires knowledge as the outside world is impressed upon it (Bardzell, 2014).

6.2 Suggestions

Looking at the current scenario regarding the influence of television advertisements the study has come to the conclusion that advertisements are pervasive and it is hard to ignore them. Some way or other they penetrate into the lives of children resulting towards positive as well as negative changes. The present study is conducted in Silchar in Southern Assam in India. At the same time it is crucial to mention that

many towns as Silchar exist in India. A few suggestions have been put for the advertisers, policy makers, broadcasters as well as for parents to ponder over the critical issues related to advertising and its negative impact on children.

- Parents must set limits and actively involve themselves in the media habits of the child by accompanying the child, discussing the content of advertisement.
- Parents must encourage children to watch such things which will help the overall development of the child.
- Parents must engage the child in positively in interesting and creative activities other than gluing them to television or computer screens.
- Media literacy is the key term to be taken care of. Media literacy among parents may save the child from the clutches of materialistic culture and help them to understand the media in a better way.
- Being an academician, the researcher feels that media literacy among students may help them to understand things in a positive way. School curriculum may include selected topics or basic concepts of media education as what should children see, why and how should they use media judiciously.
- The way students are made computer literate from a very young age in a similar approach implementation of basic media studies in the curriculum will be effective.
- School teachers must play an active role in framing the young minds.
- As Denmark and other countries have implemented stringent norms on advertising to children, there must be some government rules in India that may help the child to lead a life without commercial pressure.

- The statutory warnings must be mentioned verbally (as it is declared in the ads of mutual funds) as small children do not pay attention to the words in a very small font size that scrolls in smaller fonts on television screen.
- Advertisers must pay attention to the nutritional value of the food items that are advertised for children.
- According to this study social service advertisements make children aware and responsible towards society and environment. But the frequency of the telecast of such ads are less as compared to the ads of commercial products as result children had to depend on aided recall when it comes to recall a social service advertisement.
- The study reveals that children of 8-11 years become aware after watching social service advertisements. At the same time children of 2-7 years find such ads difficult to be understood and for some children such ads are least interesting. It is seen that children are drawn towards cartoon channels and enjoy seeing them. Advertisers may use the cartoons for such kind of developmental ads so that it can reach to every child who sees them (as shown in exhibit number 5).

6.3 Limitations of the Study

- When it comes to children and their behaviour, observation method acts as the most accurate one to understand the reaction and behaviour of the children when they are exposed to television advertisements. The present study has a sample size of 525 and observing them in school setting was difficult for the researcher.
- The researcher gathered the information related to the study from parents of 2-7 years old as during pre testing it was found the children of this age group were

unable to give the required feedback and felt restless after responding to two or three questions. Also on ethical ground it appeared unfair to ask such questions to small children. Therefore feedback from their parent regarding their behaviour was taken.

- The study has tried to find out the materialistic desires among children but it could not discover the materialistic desires among their parents. As in Silchar children seem to more reliant on their parents as compared to television. Therefore blaming television for imbibing materialistic culture in them would be unfair.
- Moreover the study consumed enormous time as the data was collected through schedules, which appears to more time consuming as compared to questionnaire, and the evaluations are based on age group, family income, parental education as well as rural and urban setting.
- The study could have worked upon other variables as schooling pattern, family size, and sample could have been collected from different districts. As the study was time bound the researcher was unable to work upon them otherwise the study would have gone beyond control.