



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE AND MANAGEMENT

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IMPACT OF ADVERTISING ON CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO EATING HABITS

PROF. PADMPRIYA ANAND IRABATTI

SR. FACULTY OF MARKETING

DEPARTMENT OF M.B.A.

BHARATI VIDYAPEETH UNIVERSITY

A.K.I.M.S.S.

SOLAPUR

ABSTRACT

Advertisement is integral part of the industry which wants its product to be reached to the customer, and thereby converting them into consumers. Advertising is sole of everyone's' lifestyle, and the degree of impact of advertng on children is becoming devastating day by day. Advertisements showcase the 'must haves' for a kid making them a consumer even before they have reached the age of 3. on the contrary, advertisement are educating, updating and motivating the children to learn good thing as well. Thus the objectives of this research paper are to explore both the beneficial and harmful effects of media on children's food habits, and to identify how the advertising industry can be regulated by formulating unified laws to prevent the over-exposure of children to the ad world. I am also emphasizing on directing children's towards imbibing healthy food habits in them by suggesting parents to be more aware & regulating the advertisement targeted on children. This research paper also take a review on what kind of regulations are implemented in some parts of world regarding advertisements targeting children's & what kind of steps are being taken in India in this direction. Using 'On the Spot' sampling method 100 children between 5-15 yrs age group and 50 parents are interviewed with the help of interview schedule and data collected is presented in the form of pie chart. The research paper concludes that advertising severely affect the eating habits of present generation children. The role of parents and legal system plays crucial role in preventing the anti-health ads influencing the children's eating habits.

KEYWORDS

Advertisements, Children, eating habits, healthy food, role of parents.

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century we all are aware of the development of science and technology and of the progress made by mankind. Science has always given us a lot and one of the gifts of science is mass-media which includes television, radio etc.

Television is having a great impact on our minds and as a result we learn word to word utterances of the persons acting before us. This is true whether they are in serials or in advertisements. Advertisement has become a media for making a product popular in a short period of time and this is one of the important reasons for the impact of new products in the mind of children. Advertising is sole of everyone's' lifestyle. Not only adults but children are also getting influenced by these advertisements. The degree of impact of advertising on adults may be problematic but the outcome is devastating for children. Advertisers of children's television used to appeal to the parents earlier but now they appeal directly to children -- who do not have the emotional or cognitive tools to evaluate what's being sold to them. Television is no more just a source of entertainment for children. They showcase the must haves for a kid making them a consumer even before they have reached the age of 3. Small kids even below 3 years of age are found dominating the purchase decision, which is again the result of increasing influence of advertisements. Today, when parents go to market with their children the latter ask for those products which have not even reached the market.

Inclusion of children in TV advertisements is not new to the world of advertisement, but if you refer the ads 10-15 years back, children could be seen in those product ads which are directly used by them, for example, Biscuit ads, chocolate ads, Rasana Ad...etc. Today the scenario is totally different. We can see children in the insurance advertisement, vehicle advertisement and even in home appliances advertisement. The reason is quite interesting – the role of current generation children in family related matters is very active as against that of passive 10-15 years before. Children in current families invariably 1or 2 in number as against 3-5 in old days, dominate the family purchase decisions and one of the major reasons of this change is advertisement. It will not be an exaggeration if I say that advertisements are shaping the mentality and value system of children by making them demanding constantly for variety and thrill.

Thus the influence of the media on the psychosocial development of children is profound. Not only mental health, but ads are also impacting the physical health of the children. And here lies the objective of this research paper. It is found that 65% of the eating and drinking preferences of children are the result of advertisements. This includes all category of food items, right from biscuits, chocolates to pizza, fruit juice and even health drinks. On one side the advertisements are motivating the children to try health drinks like Boost, Horlicks, on the other side advertisings are also diluting their food habits by compelling them to consume Maggy, pizza, and coke drinks.

Thus the objectives of this research paper are to explore both the beneficial and harmful effects of media on children's food habits, and to identify how the advertising industry can be regulated by formulating unified laws to prevent the over-exposure of children to the ad world. I am also emphasizing on directing children's towards imbibing healthy food habits in them by suggesting parents to be more aware & regulating the advertisement targeted on children. I also have taken a review on what kind of regulations are implemented in some parts of world regarding advertisements targeting children's & what kind of steps are being taken in India in this direction.

POSITIVE EFFECTS OF ADVERTISEMENT ON KIDS

Advertising makes the kids aware of the new products available in the market. It increases their knowledge about the latest innovations, in the field of technology as well as otherwise.

Convincing ads, which center around healthy food products, can help improve the diet of a child, if they are attractive enough.

NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF ADVERTISEMENT ON KIDS

The personal preferences in clothing, toys, food and luxuries of children are altered by the advertisements, to a great extent.

Many advertisements in the present times include dangerous stunts, which can be performed only by experts. Even though the commercials broadcast the statutory warnings with the ad, the kids often try to imitate the stunts at home, with fatal results.

The flashy advertisements broadcast in television generate impulse shopping in children.

Junk foods, such as pizzas, burgers and soft drinks, are heavily promoted during children's TV viewing time. This develops a craving for fatty, sugary and fast foods in kids, thereby affecting their health adversely.

Advertisements encourage the children to persuade their parents to purchase the products shown in the commercials, whether useful or not. The little ones tend to get adamant, if they are not bought the product.

Children often tend to misinterpret the messages conveyed in commercials. They overlook the positive side and concentrate more on the negatives.

Children, after watching the glitter of commercials, often lose the ability to live a life without materialistic joy.

The kids usually get more attracted towards the costly branded products, such as jeans and accessories. They disregard the inexpensive, but useful, ones that are not shown in the commercials.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to the "India Media Market 2007" report from HeerNet Ventures, the Indian media market is expected to grow from revenues of \$9.2 billion in 2007 to \$17 billion by 2012. That converts to an estimated INR 415.4 billion in 2007 rising to INR 766 billion in 2012, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 13%. Accounting for 43% of total ad spending, newspapers are the largest advertising channel in India, followed by television, at 35% of the total, with the other media channels far behind. Online advertising currently accounts for only 3% of total spending. Internet, another important source of enriching knowledge for children which also became a medium for marketing their product as this is the major time spent area after media. The concept of online marketing was introduced & products are sponsored on frequently visited sites & some odd ways like Pop Ups. This leads the buyer (children in this case) to a new world of market & sometimes even to pornographic material at the adolescent age. Now the child is attracted to the product advertised which are designed strategically and thus become the new segment for the marketing company. Although internet marketing is still evolving in India, it is better we wake up to this future problem and take some steps in that direction.

Since we are more diverted towards looking at the negative impact, let us not forget the positive ones created on the minds of children. Social advertising is a very good example of positive advertising. The objective of social advertising is to change public attitude and behavior and stimulate positive change. The polio ad campaign coincided with the immunization of additional six million children at the polio booths across the state between November 2002 and February 2003.

According to the New Encyclopedia Britannica, "Advertising is a form of communication intended to promote the sale of a product or service to influence the public opinion to gain political support or to advance a particular cause". This survey focuses on the children in the age group of 5-15 years which is now forming the new segment for the marketing companies. Advertisement is the major source of marketing the product. So Companies spend huge amount of money to promote their product in the competitive environment. Advertising in print media grew 14.7% in 2004 compared to TV ad which has grown by 13%. During January-December 2004, ad spend in press accounted for 46% of the total advertising pie of Rs 11,800 crore followed by TV at 41%, outdoor 7%, cinema 3%, radio 2% and internet 0.5%.

A research study in UP commissioned by UNICEF found that more than 94 percent of respondents reported that they came to the polio booth after seeing the spots on television which was endorsed by celebrities like Amitabh Bachchan, Shahrukh Khan, Sachin Tendulkar & Jaya Bachchan. Around 112 cases have been reported in the year 2003 compared to 1600 cases in the year 2002. A Unicef-supported television and radio campaign won a silver medal at this year's EFFIE Awards given by the advertising industry.

Similarly advertisements of iodized salt generate the awareness among people to buy it, which avoids the prevalence of Goiter. Advertising also helps the children's health in a positive way- be it a kid of 3 yrs or a little grown up of 12 yrs. Advertising provokes children to stay clean which are advertised by soap companies like Dettol, Lifebuoy etc. Brushing twice a day was a marketing strategy for more usage of product but such advertisement always helps the children to keep their teeth clean, healthy and germ-free. Even the use of some cartoons or sometimes small ideas like "Pepsodent Germcheck- Dhishum Dhishum" encourages the child to use the product to realize the benefits shown in the advertisements. Companies such as Amul and Nestle are advertising milk products to the young generation as something cool & refreshing, e.g. Amul Kool. Advertising & Society International Marketing Conference on Marketing & Society, 8-10 April, 2007, IIMK 305 claim any milk product is always a good diet for the body of children. It is much more vitamin-rich and useful than other products like soft drinks which are actually harmful to the health.

Now we can throw some light on advertisements having negative impact on the children's health. Most aired advertisements are of the celebrity famed Soft Drinks which contain pesticides almost 27 times higher in India than the EU norms according to the findings of Delhi based NGO, Centre for Science & Environment. Intake of such products is found normal with the growing children who nowadays take it as a part of regular diet or a good partying option that is readily available to them. But after the reports by CSE about the findings of pesticides, the amount of pesticide contained has reduced but not up to the desired level till now.

Burgers & pizzas & the mouth watering fast foods pave its entries in the most number of Advertisements, which are shown mainly during the children's program. These products are mainly advertised as the complete diet food which claims to include all the required nutrients by a human body. All these junk food items are easily accessible to the school going kids having working parents who don't have time to cook. Fast food chains often target their advertising at children and teenagers or the young who more or less have the required purchasing power and who most of the times influence the purchasing behaviour of parents and who can become the target market for their products for long. For example McDonald's happy meal which always has a toy attached with it and a newly released children's movie. Children are very fond of clowns and cartoon characters which form the advertising mascot for the target audience. The early onset of diabetes is mainly due to the changing food habits. A couple of years ago, people in the age group of 20-35 years used to suffer from diabetes. But now, children aged anywhere between three months and 17 years are also developing diabetes, which is a cause for great concern. Fast food habits may lead to obesity among children. Obesity per se is not a serious health problem, but it is a prime precursor of many non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases (CVDs), gall bladder ailments, cancer, psycho-social problems, breathlessness, sleep disorders, asthma, arthritis, weak bones and reproductive hormone abnormalities. Iron deficiency can result into anemia.

Research has proved that children decide on what kind of clothes they want to wear & such demands of the child are often fulfilled by the pocket-full parents who don't have a say in such decisions. And all the child's buying decisions are influenced by the advertisement shown all over media, billboards & magazines. But also cause a threat to the parents who have budget constrain to satisfy their children's need causing emotional distress among them.

If you ask a kid, who would you like to look like? And the obvious answer would be I want to be a Barbie doll, an every girl's fantasy. But the stick thin Barbie doll image helps the kids grow in a way that they think will make them like their role models and even makes them health conscious. All the girls want to have a Barbie doll image & by doing that they hamper their physical health. Sometimes the efforts to emulate their heroes land these children in serious trouble that may be dangerous to their lives.

RESEARCH DESIGN

With the help of advertisements, companies are attracting the so called new segment in the market. i.e. children segment. My research project deals with various studies about the nature of the children, their likes & dislikes, parent's role in the decision making & the influence of advertising on the buying habits seen by the kids. The data collection was done using on the spot sampling in the form of personal interview. I used various secondary sources for gathering data related to the research report. Analysis of data has been done using quantitative methods such as Arithmetic mean. Those analysed facts & findings are presented in different forms for ease of understanding by use of pie charts and bar charts. This research report just does not concentrate on the findings but also suggests corrective measures to be taken up to minimize the after effects of the advertising world which will be always on the upsurge. This impact of advertising on children is exponential and will rapidly grow in the coming future. Therefore considering the severity of the possible problems this report aims at taking precautionary steps in the government's front, ethical front of the advertisers and of course on the parental & children's front.

DATA COLLECTION

PRIMARY DATA

Primary data is collected from the respondents with the help of interview schedule. It was mainly directed towards investigation of the various impacts the advertising has on the children's' minds & how advertisement decides their buying and eating habit. The survey had to be done at the point of purchase. So it was carried out in food malls where the brands are sold & places like McDonalds & places like schools where we could actually meet the parents.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Non Probability Sampling Technique was used & in that on the spot sampling was done. The responses were collected from 100 Children and 50 parents, who were interviewed with the interview schedule at different places of purchase. Hence a on the spot sampling technique was decided, which would enable using personal judgment to conveniently approach the parents and children and save time also.

SECONDARY DATA

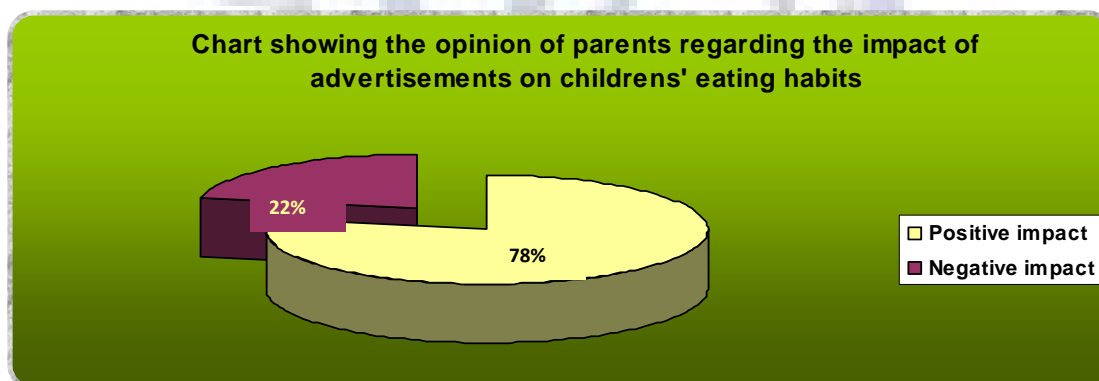
The secondary data is collected from previous research reports on the related issues. Apart from the secondary data is also collected from internet for getting the data about the various statutory rules and regulations on advertising. The data is also collected from the websites of food chains like McDonalds, Pizza hut, Dominos...etc.

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

A] PRIMARY DATA FINDINGS

1. Parents when asked about the impact of advertisements on 'Eating habits' of children, 78% parents responded that the impact is negative and only 22% responded that the impact is positive. This is mainly due to those advertisements, which motivate the children to consume healthy food like milk, Egg, and health drinks.

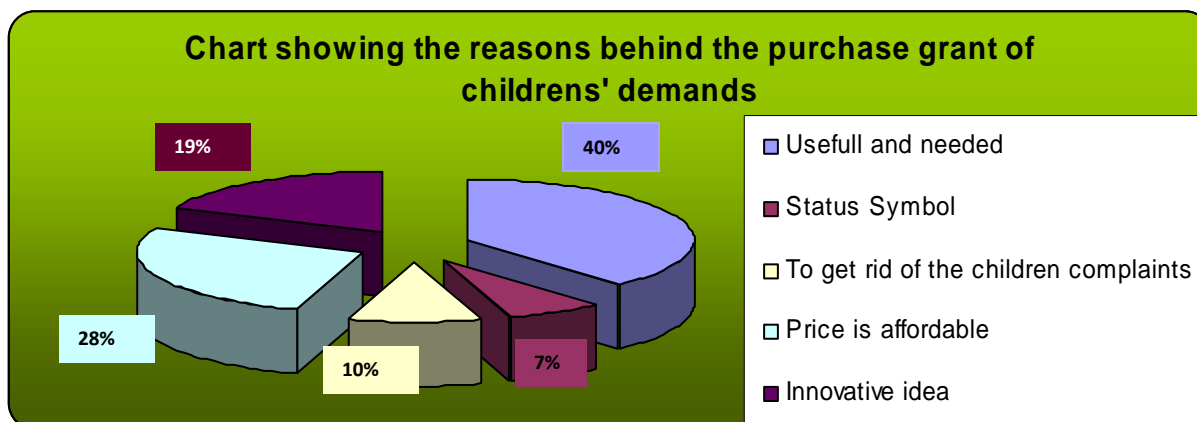
Chart-I



2. 65% parents responded that their children aggressively demand some food item and dominate the purchase decision due to its advertisement on TV

3. Parents when asked about the circumstances in which they grant the purchase demands of children initiated from advertisements, 40% responded that they allow the purchase because the product is useful and needed, 28% allow as the product is affordable, 19% allow as there is some innovative content, 7% parents allow because owning product is status symbol and 10% parents allowed the purchase for no specific reason, but just to get rid of the demand of the children and irritation causing out of it.

Chart- II



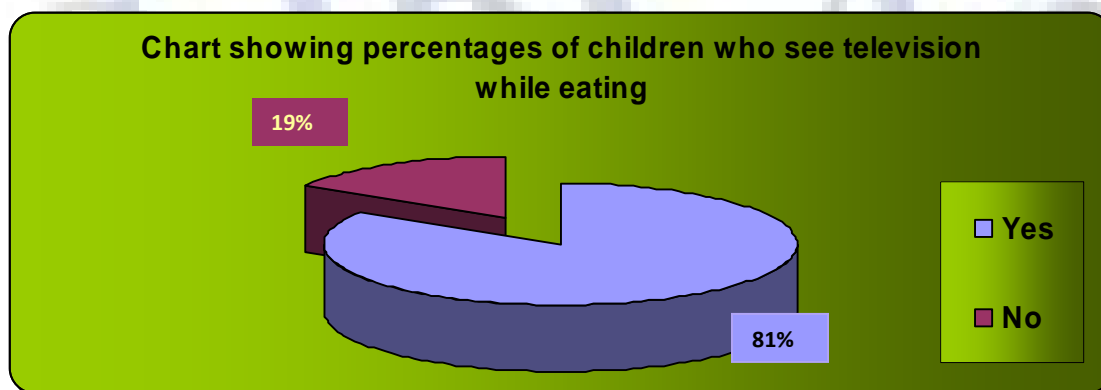
4. 92 % of the parents surveyed feel that there is need for regulation as far as food related Advertisements are concerned. Of these about 66% say that, either the advertisements of unhealthy food products should be banned or the Ad-Message should be regulated by including the warning against excess consumption. 12% parents say that all the food Ads targeting children should be totally banned and about 22% say that the use of children in food advertisements should be banned, as when children themselves advocate such products, it becomes difficult for the parents to convince their kids for not eating.

Chart-III



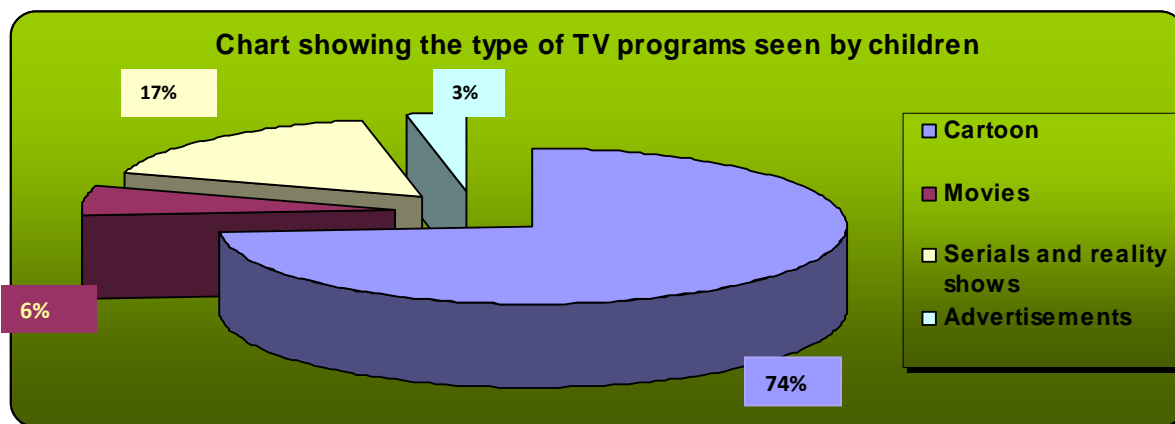
5. Around 81% of children watch TV while eating which may affect their food intake.

Chart- IV



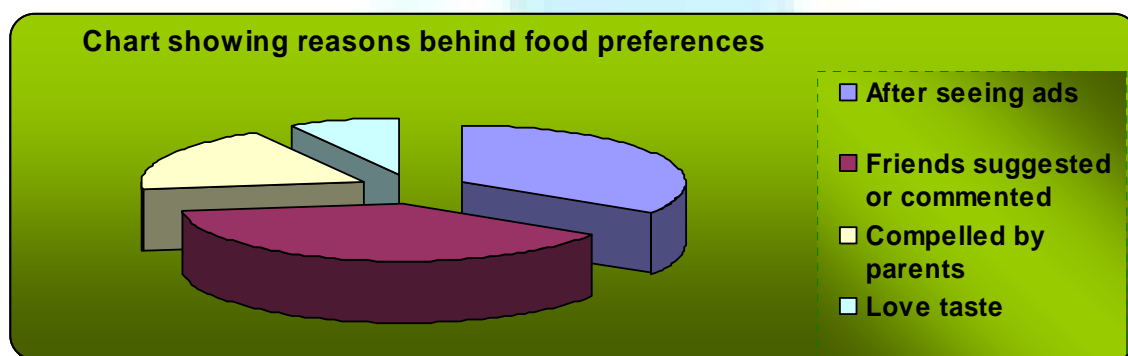
6. Children when asked about the type of program they generally watch on television Around 74% of the children watch cartoon channels, 6% watch movies, 17% watch serials and especially children reality shows, and only 3% see advertisements. The ads which are shown on cartoon Channel are invariably seen by the children and thus impact children psychology.

Chart-V



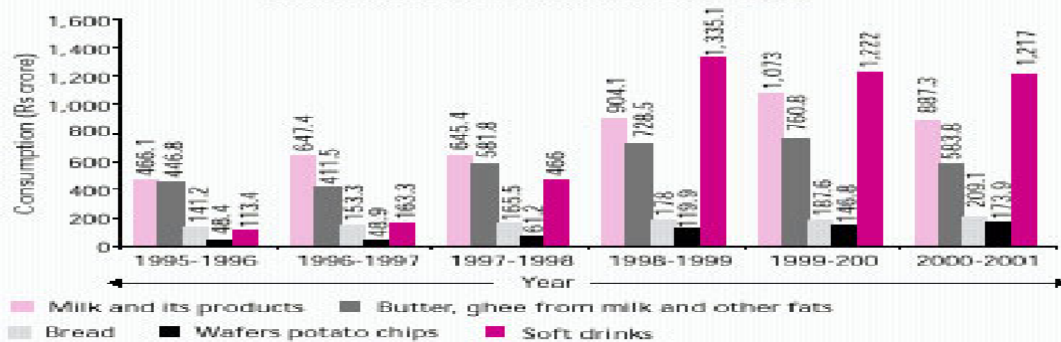
7. When investigated what really influence children to decide their eating or drinking preferences, it is found that 34% children prefer to consume any eatable, as they have seen its advertisement. 39% children prefer to eat or drink any food item, just because their friends has suggested or commented about it, most of them were again in the category who consumed that food item after seeing the advertisement. 19% children consume any food item as it is needed and parents compel to eat, and 8% children are in that category who repetitively consume some particular food product or beverage as they like its taste very much. The products like some branded chips and snacks, Maggi, flavoured biscuits, fruity...etc are in this category of food items.

Chart-VI



B) SECONDARY DATA FINDINGS:

Sales of potato chips and cold drinks have gone up three times between 1995 and 2001



Source: Parna Dasgupta 2004, Director, Confederation of Indian Food Trade & Industry (CIFTI), New Delhi.

- 1] Size of Advertising industry in India: Rs.16300 crore (ET 26/02/07)
- 2] Snack food market size: Rs.4500 crore (ET 26/02/07)
Branded snack food market size: Rs.1300 crore (ET 26/02/07)
- 3] More than 60% of commercials promote sugared cereals, candy, fatty foods and toys.
- 4] Pan Cheese Pizza contains 46.6 % of fats in 2 slices of Pizza whereas a normal body intake should be of 10-20 % calories from fat.
- 5] According to the new "India Media Market 2007" report from Heernet Ventures, the Indian media market is expected to grow from revenues of \$9.2 billion in 2007 to \$17 billion by 2012.
- 6] After the pulse polio ad campaign only 112 cases of lack of vaccination were reported in comparison to 1600 cases before the campaign.
- 7] 70% of parents agreed that the child influences them while buying products.
- 8] Only 2% of the amount goes into Research and development of the product but almost 50% goes into Advertising in India.
- 9] A leading nutritionist in AIIMS, in a Delhi survey of well-to-do schools found that about 27 per cent of school children were overweight and seven per cent obese.
- 10] Fast food consisted of 83% of the advertised product.
- 11] Increasing Sales of fast food & soft drinks over previous years.

12] ADVERTISING REGULATION IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

Advertising laws in India, or the lack of them, are in strong contrast with advertising standards in Europe or in the US where concerned parents and governments closely monitor what their children are learning and picking up from TV in the form of advertisements. In Sweden and Norway, TV advertising and sponsorship of programmes aimed at children below the age of 12 are prohibited. In Greece, the advertising of toys on television is banned between 7.00 a.m. and 10.00 p.m. In Germany and Denmark there are bans on certain forms of toys. In Austria and the Flemish part of Belgium no advertising is permitted 5 minutes before or after programmes for children. Sponsorship of children's programmes is not permitted in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden while in Germany and the Netherlands, although it is allowed, it is not used in practice. Australia does not allow advertisements during programmes for pre-school children.

SUGGESTIONS TO REGULATE THE IMPACT OF ADS ON CHILDREN EATING HABITS

1] Parent involvement and Education:

Studies show that parents play an important role in their children's social learning, but if a parent's views are not discussed explicitly with children, the medium may teach and influence by default. Parents should be educated with respect to what should be healthy food as per proper nutritional intake for their children. Parents should continuously assess their children's eating habit and its impact on their health. If child is found getting into wrong eating habit especially due to ads, it is the prime responsibility of the parents to explain them the damage out of it. Apart from these, parents should educate their children about the advantages of eating healthy food and disadvantages of unhealthy food.

2] Statutory Warning

The intake of junk food & carbonated drinks causes numerous diseases such as obesity, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases (CVDs), gall bladder ailments, cancer, psycho-social problems, breathlessness, sleep disorders, asthma, arthritis, weak bones and reproductive hormone abnormalities. So it should come with statutory warnings as in the case of cigarettes (Smoking is injurious for health and milk powder such as "Intake of this food more than twice a week is not good for health.")

3] Legal Implications:

In India, there are no specific advertising laws that relate to children and food-related advertisements in particular. A host of laws and Acts like the 'Cable TV Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995' and the 'Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles and Infant Food Act' deal with children-related advertising in a vague way. Not only are there advertisements that are targeted at children but a host of them that feature young children, even babies. In most parts of the world, there are few or no specific rules concerning food advertising to children beyond the rules which must apply to all advertising. In India, even general rules pertaining to advertising are very lax. Also, there are no regulatory bodies that monitor TV advertisements. Apart from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting that decides to intervene when it wants to, there are only voluntary groups like the 'Advertising Agencies Association of India', and the 'Advertising Standards Council of India', both of which are business organizations and can only put moral pressure on advertisers and companies to withdraw objectionable advertisements. There is urgent need for voluntary and government pressure groups to seriously take note of the situation.

The government needs to draft and implement laws that do not deal with advertising in general but are specific and relate to every aspect of advertising, especially those that target young children and pertain to food. In other parts of the world, there exist voluntary groups like the 'Adbusters' and 'Mothers groups' that watch and pressure governments to clamp down on aggressive and intrusive advertising. At present there are various laws implemented by government under various ministries.

4] Advertisement Code to be monitored by an organization which will take care of the following:

A] Before any AD is aired on television, the most sought medium by children some code of conduct should be followed. Any food ADs should be scrutinized with regards to the claims they are making & the food ingredients should meet some standards laid down by recognized organization like WHO.

B] The stipulated time limit for advertisement is followed by the companies or not. TV Channels generally do not follow any rules regarding advertising air time. Doordarshan poses a limit on advertising time which is a maximum of 7.5 minutes of advertisements in a 30 minute programme. Private TV channels are free to air as many advertisements they like.

CONCLUSION

From the analysis of primary data and secondary data it is concluded that advertising severely affect the eating habits of present generation children. The role of parents and legal system plays crucial role in preventing the anti-health ads influencing the children's eating habits. Though

advertisement is integral part of the industry which wants its product to be reached to the customer, they should not forget that its their social responsibility to take care of the future generation of the country which are been targetted tactfully to earn profits. Parents should make the kids more aware of the surrounding so that they start taking proper & logical decision. Also government's role is important here. It can do it by implementing proper food laws and harmonization of various laws into single unified law.

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