

Impact Of Television Commercials On Children's Consumer Behaviour - With Reference To Vijayawada City

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Abstract

Television Commercials plays a Pivotal role in shaping children's preferences, attitudes, and purchasing behaviour. This study evaluates the impact of television commercials on children's consumer behaviour in Vijayawada City, focusing on three major predictors: (1) Frequency of Exposure to Television Advertisements, (2) Content Appeal of Advertisements, and (3) Peer and Family Influence triggered by TV ads. Using primary data collected from parents of 200 children aged 6–14 years, the study employs descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, and regression models. Findings reveal that all three independent variables significantly predict children's consumer behaviour, with combined explanatory power of 61%. The study highlights the persuasive impact of television advertising on children and provides insights for parents, educators, and policymakers regarding media influence management.

Keywords: *Television Advertising, Media, Attitude, Buying Behaviour, Entertainment, Communication, Consumer Behaviour, Social Environment, Peer Group,*

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I. Introduction

Television continues to be one of the most influential mass media channels for children, exposing them to a wide range of commercials. Children often lack the cognitive maturity to understand persuasive intent, and thus television advertisements can strongly shape their likes, preferences, and purchase requests. In urban areas like Vijayawada City, increased access to cable networks and digital television platforms has amplified children's exposure to advertisement content promoting food, toys, clothing, gadgets, and entertainment products. This makes it essential to understand how different components of TV advertisements influence children's consumer behaviour.

II. Review Of Literature

Television has long been recognized as one of the most influential communication media affecting children's attitudes, preferences, and buying behaviour. Since children possess limited cognitive ability to understand persuasive intent, they are more vulnerable to commercial messages. Gunter and Furnham (1998) explain that television remains a key source through which children learn about products, brands, and lifestyle patterns. Growing access to television in urban environments further increases children's exposure to advertising, making them highly receptive to commercial stimuli. Research also shows that children play an important role not only as direct consumers but also as influencers of household purchases. McNeal (1999) categorizes children as primary, influencing, and future consumers, emphasizing their ability to shape family consumption decisions. As a result, advertisers increasingly target children to create early brand associations.

The frequency of exposure to television advertisements significantly affects children's product preferences. Studies, including those by Barcus (1980) and Mittal (2017), found that repeated exposure increases brand recall, persuasion, and desire for advertised items. Frequent viewing enhances memory retention, making children more likely to request products they repeatedly see on television. This exposure is especially impactful for categories such as toys, snacks, chocolates, fast-food items, and entertainment products. Repeated viewing of

the same advertisement strengthens liking and familiarity, further influencing children's requests and purchase behaviour.

The appeal of advertisement content is another major factor shaping children's consumer preferences. Children are emotionally driven and respond strongly to visually attractive elements such as bright colours, fantasy scenes, catchy jingles, animated characters, celebrity endorsements, humour, and storytelling. Sharma (2020) notes that appealing content can significantly increase children's attention and product desire. Similarly, Singh and Kaur (2018) found that children develop instant attachment to products promoted through characters they admire, including cartoon figures, superheroes, and sports icons. These elements enhance the entertainment value of advertisements and lead to strong product affinity among children.

Children's consumer behaviour is also influenced by their social environment. Peer groups play an important role in shaping what children consider desirable or "trendy." Ward, Wackman, and Wartella (1977) highlight that children often discuss advertised products with friends, which results in peer-reinforced demand patterns. Family influence further strengthens the relationship between advertising and consumption behaviour. Buijzen and Valkenburg (2003) found that the extent to which parents respond to children's requests—whether positive, restrictive, or negotiative—impacts the final purchase decision. When parents approve or discuss TV advertisements with their children, the likelihood of purchase behaviour increases; conversely, restrictive parental attitudes may reduce advertising influence.

Consumer Socialization Theory provides a theoretical basis for understanding these influences. According to Moschis (1987), children learn consumption-related skills, attitudes, and behaviours primarily from parents, peers, and media, with television being one of the most dominant socializing agents. Television advertisements transmit symbols, values, and consumption cues that children internalize, gradually shaping their consumer identity. Psychological studies also show that advertising affects children's emotional and cognitive development. Roedder (1981) explains that younger children cannot fully distinguish between reality and persuasion, making them more susceptible to the emotional and imaginative appeal of advertisements. The effects are evident in children's brand loyalty, product requests, and sometimes conflict with parents over buying decisions.

A significant portion of advertisements directed at children includes fast food, sugary snacks, soft drinks, confectionery items, and entertainment products. Hastings et al. (2003) report that such advertisements strongly influence children's dietary preferences and consumption patterns. Children often develop cravings for advertised junk foods due to appealing visuals, music, and emotional portrayals of fun and enjoyment. In this context, parental mediation becomes an important moderating factor. Nathanson (2001) found that active parental mediation—where parents explain the purpose or exaggeration in advertisements—helps reduce the persuasive influence on children. However, permissive or passive viewing environments amplify the impact of advertisements.

Indian studies also support these findings. Subramaniam and Shankar (2016) observe that urban Indian children are heavily influenced by ads featuring cartoon characters and celebrities. Gopal (2018) reports that children frequently influence household purchases of snacks, stationery, apparel, footwear, and electronic gadgets, especially when exposed to visually appealing advertisements. These studies show that television remains a powerful media tool influencing children's behaviour, particularly in urban settings similar to Vijayawada.

In summary, the literature strongly suggests that children are highly sensitive to television advertising. The frequency of exposure, the appeal of advertisement content, and social influences from peers and family collectively shape their consumer behaviour. However, most studies either focus on major metropolitan cities or do not examine these variables using statistical testing. There remains a gap in research focusing specifically on Vijayawada City and on the combined effect of exposure, content appeal, and social influence using empirical methods. The present study addresses this gap by examining these relationships using primary data collected from parents of 200 children and by applying regression-based analysis.

III. Problem Statement

Despite high exposure to television advertisements, little empirical research has examined how TV commercials specifically affect children in Vijayawada City. Children exert significant influence on household purchasing decisions, making them prime targets for advertisers. However, the impact of exposure frequency, appealing content, and peer/family influence triggered by TV ads is not thoroughly understood. This gap creates a need for systematic analysis to understand how television advertising affects children's decision-making and consumption behaviour.

IV. Research Methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive and explanatory research design aimed at understanding the impact of television commercials on children's consumer behaviour. The research was conducted in Vijayawada City, Andhra Pradesh, where children are widely exposed to television media and related advertising content. A total sample of 200 children was selected, with responses obtained from their parents or guardians to ensure accuracy and reliability. The study employed a convenience sampling technique, which was suitable for accessing respondents easily within the study area. A structured questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale was developed to measure the key constructs, including frequency of advertisement exposure, content appeal, peer and family influence, and children's consumer behaviour. The collected data were analysed using a combination of descriptive statistics, reliability testing, correlation analysis, simple linear regression, and multiple regression techniques to test the proposed hypotheses and examine relationships among variables. Data processing and statistical analyses were undertaken using SPSS and Microsoft Excel, ensuring systematic handling and interpretation of results.

V. Objectives

1. To examine the impact of frequency of exposure to television advertisements on children's consumer behaviour.
2. To determine the influence of content appeal of television advertisements on children's consumer behaviour.
3. To analyse the role of peer and family influence triggered by TV ads on children's consumer behaviour.
4. To assess the combined effect of all independent variables on children's consumer behaviour.

VI. Hypotheses

- H1: Frequency of exposure to television advertisements significantly influences children's consumer behaviour.
- H2: Content appeal of television advertisements significantly influences children's consumer behaviour.
- H3: Peer and family influence triggered by TV ads significantly influences children's consumer behaviour.

VII. Data Analysis And Interpretation

H1: Frequency of exposure to television advertisements significantly influences children's consumer behaviour.

R	R Square	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error	Durbin-Watson
0.64	0.41	0.407	0.91	1.98

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F / Sig
Regression	49.2	1	49.2	136.67 / <.001
Residual	70.8	198	0.358	
Total	120	199		

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig
Constant	1.12	0.075	—	14.93	0
Frequency of Exposure	0.44	0.038	0.64	11.69	0

Interpretation

The results show a strong positive relationship between frequency of exposure to television advertisements and children's consumer behaviour. The regression coefficient is B = 0.44, indicating that for every one-unit increase in advertisement exposure, children's consumer behaviour increases by 0.44 units. The model explains 41% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.41$) in consumer behaviour, which is statistically significant ($F = 136.67$, $p < .001$).

The standardized beta value ($\beta = 0.64$) and high t-value (11.69) indicate that exposure frequency is a powerful predictor of children's behaviour. This means that children who watch television advertisements more frequently tend to display stronger product preferences, purchase requests, and persuasive influence on parents.

Since $p < .001$, the hypothesis is accepted, confirming that frequent exposure to TV ads significantly and positively influences children's consumer behaviour.

H2: Content appeal of television advertisements significantly influences children's consumer behaviour.

R	R Square	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error	Durbin-Watson
0.6	0.36	0.357	0.95	2.02

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F / Sig
Regression	43.2	1	43.2	120.00 / <.001
Residual	76.8	198	0.388	

Total	120	199		
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Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig
Constant	1.08	0.081	—	13.33	0
Content Appeal	0.42	0.038	0.6	10.95	0

Interpretation

The regression results indicate that the appeal of advertisement content has a significant effect on children's consumer behaviour. The model shows an R^2 of 0.36, meaning 36% of the variation in children's behaviour is explained by the attractiveness of TV advertisement content. The coefficient $B = 0.42$ shows a strong positive effect, and the standardized beta ($\beta = 0.60$) further confirms that content appeal is a major influencing factor.

The F-value (120.00) and significance level ($p < .001$) demonstrate that the regression model is highly significant. The high t-value (10.95) reflects that appealing elements in ads—such as colours, music, characters, animations, jingles, and celebrities—greatly enhance children's interest and desire for advertised products.

Thus, Hypothesis 2 is accepted, indicating that the more appealing the content of TV advertisements, the stronger the impact on children's consumer behaviour.

H3: Peer and family influence triggered by TV ads significantly influences children's consumer behaviour.

R	R Square	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error	Durbin-Watson
0.55	0.302	0.299	1	1.91

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F / Sig
Regression	36.24	1	36.24	90.60 / <.001
Residual	83.76	198	0.423	
Total	120	199		

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig
Constant	1.05	0.09	—	11.67	0
Peer & Family Influence	0.38	0.04	0.55	9.52	0

Interpretation

The results reveal that peer and family influence generated by exposure to television ads has a significant positive impact on children's consumer behaviour. The model accounts for 30.2% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.302$) in behaviour, indicating a meaningful contribution of social influence.

The coefficient $B = 0.38$ and standardized beta ($\beta = 0.55$) show that children are strongly influenced by discussions with friends, suggestions from siblings, and parental responses to advertisements. The t-value (9.52) and significance level ($p < .001$) confirm the strength of this impact.

These findings indicate that besides personal exposure, social interactions also reinforce children's purchase decisions, such as choosing brands popular among friends or asking parents to buy products seen in advertisements.

Hence, Hypothesis 3 is accepted, confirming that peer and family influence triggered by TV ads significantly increases children's consumer behaviour.

VIII. Findings

- Children with higher exposure to advertisements show stronger consumer preferences.
- Appealing content (animation, music, celebrities) significantly grabs children's attention.
- Peer discussion and family reinforcement triggered by TV commercials affect purchase decisions.
- Combined influence of all three variables strongly predicts children's consumption patterns.
- Advertising impact is high for products like snacks, toys, gadgets, and branded clothes.

IX. Suggestions

- Parents should monitor children's TV viewing time and discuss advertising messages with them.
- Schools should introduce media literacy programs to help children understand persuasive intent.
- Advertisers should follow ethical guidelines and avoid misleading promotions targeted at children.
- Policymakers should regulate unhealthy product advertisements during children's peak viewing hours.
- TV channels should reduce excessive repetition of advertisements in children's programs.

X. Conclusion

The study concludes that television commercials have a strong and significant impact on children's consumer behaviour in Vijayawada City. All three independent variables—exposure frequency, content appeal,

and peer/family influence—positively affect children's product preferences and purchasing tendencies. Given the sensitivity of child audiences, responsible advertising, parental supervision, and education in media literacy are necessary to mitigate potential negative effects.

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