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A Pragmatic Study of Impact of Advertising on Social and Moral Values of Children



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Abstract

Every day, one comes across infinite advertisements for various products and this excessive intervention of media in our day to day lives cannot be side lined since it impacts all those surrounded by it. Value education and environmental education for sustainability are both spheres of education research that have manifested rapid and overlapping development in recent years. This paper aims at studying the significant impact of advertisements on social and moral values of children. The main objective of this paper is to identify and evaluate the significant difference between the opinions of respondents related to various income and occupational groups. It is found that children are behaving improperly due to obscene, fake and unethical advertisements. Researchers claim that advertising has led to violence among teenagers, obscenity has degraded the standard of women portrayal in advertisements and there are no control measures to evaluate adult entertainment eg. Sex, alcohol, tobacco products etc. while taking children as consumers in consideration. Therefore, degradation of relationships in Indian families and the misleading and untruthful content of advertisements are other points of concern illustrated by the study.

Keywords: Advertisements, Values, Children, Health, Ethics.

Introduction

An Introduction to Human Values and Impact of Advertisements on Children

Value literally means something that has a price, something precious, dear and worthwhile; hence something one is ready to suffer and sacrifice for. In other words, values are a set of rules or regulations of behaviour. It is an expression of the society of which we are a part, its mirror-image for all practical purposes and has a far reaching influence on the social, cultural and moral values of its inmates (Singh J. and Sandhu N., 2011)¹. In the words of Dewey, "the value means primarily to price, to esteem, to appraise and to estimate". It means the act of achieving something, holding it and also the act of passing judgement upon the nature and amounts of values as compared with something else. Dr. SarvepalliRadhakrishnanoncesaid: The three things—vital dynamism, intellectual efficiency and spiritual direction together constitute the proper aim of education. Moral and spiritual training is an essential part of education. What we need today is the education of the whole man—physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual. If education is to help us to meet the moral challenge of the age and play its part in the life of the community, it should be liberating and life giving. Beray and Pollay (1968)² were the first to make an attempt to understand children's role in marketing, where children constitute an important, separate market segment for the marketers. It is seen that children not only influence family purchase decision but they also insist their parents to purchase the products they desire. When children develop the ability to recognize and understand advertisements and their purpose, they start making demands. It is difficult to explain to young children the reasons, why they cannot have everything which - according to advertising - is 'for them.' Howard's new book devotes extensive space to consumer values. He stresses instrumentalism (reflected in his frequent references and examples of lengthy means-end chains), and suggests that terminal values influence a person's choice criteria for a product class, his beliefs about product classes, his attitude toward product classes, and finally his purchase of a particular product class. While children are able to differentiate between marketing and other

forms of communication from a young age, they're more vulnerable to manipulation through advertising messages and prone to accepting such messages as truthful and unbiased. Marketing tactics and advertising can lead children to adopt certain consumer behaviour which can result in negative impacts on children's physical and mental health. One such negative consequence of child- and youth-targeted marketing is obesity which is increasing rapidly in both developed and developing countries. The mission of advertisers is to reach children as prospective customers and influence their awareness, attitudes and buying behavior but they must promote children's rights, positive self-esteem, healthy lifestyles and non-violent values.

Need for Value Education and Ethics among Children

Advertisements exert utmost pressure on children's innocent minds. They believe what they see in ads. It affects their eating habits, materialism, degree of respecting elders, socializing activities etc. Therefore, there is an utmost need of value education for children because it is as important as blood is to life and it is only possible by creating a conducive atmosphere for intellectual freedom of expression and thoughts. It enables children to differentiate between what is wrong and what is right. The present education system is largely involved in preparing the younger generation in developing their cognitive domains. The prime emphasis is on science and technology. The unethical practices in advertising are rapidly increasing with a far reaching impact. Today what is being done is to educate the heads and hands and not the hearts. Authors state that the desires, thoughts and expectations are largely being set by pre-conditioning (when we assume something on the basis of prevailing notion about it) or sensations (when we get pleased through our sensory organs i.e. eyes, ears, skin, nose and mouth) (Bagaria, Gaur & Sangal (2010)¹³). Lack of value education has been an important factor in the global scenario of growing violence and terrorism, pollution and ecological imbalances. Therefore, the preconditioning levels of children need to be governed by value education in order to make them healthy, happy and responsible customers and citizens as well. This study consists of understanding the impact of advertising on social and moral values of children.

Review of Literature

In Regard to the above Study, A Brief Review of Some of the Relevant Literature is as Under

Powney et al (1995)³ opined that there are three principal ways in which schools transmit values: through the curriculum (both formal and informal); through the so-called hidden curriculum; and through the personal interaction between teachers and their pupils. N.N.Prahallada (2000)⁴ has beautifully explained the role of moral values in education. To quote him, "Indian Culture is rooted deeply in her spiritual values and unless these values find their way into the life of students, education will lose its significance and will not fulfill its function of endowing the students with a vision to life and by and with ideals

to work for, therefore, indifference to the cherished goals of democracy, socialism, humanism and secularism, it is very essential that our education system should evolve a new positive morality which could effectively be built into the school, under graduate/post graduate curriculum. Gunilla et al. (2001)⁵ identified the ability of children to differentiate between advertising and programme content. It is found that children as young as two could differentiate between advertising and programme content. However, it is pointed out that it is not until late childhood—from 8 to 12 years—those children completely understand the aim of advertising. The study also claimed learning is a continual process that depends upon family and friends. Blandina (2002)⁶ investigated that the age at which children learn to understand the aim of advertising, is linked on the one hand to the parents' attitude and level of education, and on the other to the ability of school teaching to explain and discuss advertising with children and young people. The study also suggests that when a request for a product (just advertised) is made, the connection between advertising and request is cemented in the minds of parents. Mikkelsen et al. (2004)⁷ studied that children participate and gain influence on several decision stages during family food buying and that family everyday routines, are an explaining factor of children's influence on family food decisions. Children and parents do not always agree. The pattern of decision making in families also varies with presence/absence of children. Kapoor and Verma (2005)⁸ provided a study with an increase in the age of the child, the parents' perception of the children's purchase request being influenced by TV advertisementstended to decrease. Parents' response to children's purchase request is also found to be strongly influenced by the family income. The results further implied that parent-child interaction plays an important role in the children's learning of positive consumer values and parents' perception of the influence as positive on their children's buying response. Livingstone (2006)⁹ discussed that the main reason for the emerging role of children is the use of internet. This article focuses use of internet by children and young people, asking how the internet is being used at home, as their information and communication technologies (ICTs) are increasingly widespread in the home, school, workplace and community. Masters (2006)¹⁰ suggested that for many weary parents of preschoolers, television can be a godsend and some of the programming might even be educational. But some experts say even the most positive television advertisements can carry messages that aren't good for children. The research says that discomfort does not translate into real concern for parents. Children are attentive to messages that aren't necessarily intended for them, and that they may not be equipped to process the information, even with ads on age-appropriate programs. Gulcin (2008)¹¹ explored that children's age is important to understand the TV advertisements. Their comprehension of television commercials increases with age. As children become older, their

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analysis of data, Frequency Distribution, Pie charts and Cross Tables are used.

comprehension of TV advertising increases. Young children have a low awareness of what commercials want to communicate and they can be persuaded easily than older children. Venessa Wong (2013)¹² stated that the average television-watching American child saw more than 1,000 ads for fast food last year, and there's a very good chance at least one of them was for a Happy Meal. The Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity found that the McDonald's (MCD) Happy Meal dominated fast-food TV commercials seen by children. The Happy Meal was also the most commonly advertised fast-food item on kid-oriented websites in the survey, with 25.3 million total views-far more than Subway's Kids meal (3.6 million views) in a distant second place.

Objectives, Hypothesis and Research Methodology

Objectives and Hypothesis of the Study

The present study has a broader framework of analyzing the impact of advertisements on social and moral values of children. For this purpose, the specific objectives of the study are:

1. To evaluate the impact of advertisements on social and moral values of children.
2. To draw imperatives for rectifying the advertising strategies targeted at children.

For this purpose, a null hypothesis and an alternate hypothesis are formulated as under:

Ho

There is no significant difference in the opinions of respondents of various occupational and income groups.

H₁

There is a significant difference in the opinions of respondents of various occupational and income groups.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is Punjab. The study was conducted on 120 parents whose children are of 8 to 15 years of age. The respondents include servicepersons, professionals and businesspersons having income levels of Rs. 2,00,000 to 5,00,000 and above.

Data Collection and Analysis

Researcher has used primary as well as secondary data collection methods in the study. The primary data are collected through a structured questionnaire and secondary data are collected through internet, journals and business magazines. A sample of 120 respondents is taken for the study. The sample includes respondents of different income levels such as below Rs. 2,00,000 (34 respondents), Rs. 2,00,000- 5,00,000 (62 respondents) and above Rs. 5,00,000 (24 respondents) as well as occupational groups such as Serviceperson (38 respondents), Professionals (42 respondents) and Businessperson (40 respondents). Total 5 variables are selected for analysis and are named as perception of parents. To achieve the objective of measuring the perceptions of parents regarding the impact of advertisements on social and moral values of children, five point likertscale is used. For the

Demographic Variables		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Occupation	Serviceperson	38	31.7
	Businessperson	40	35
	Professionals	42	33.3
	Total	120	100
Income	Below Rs. 2,00,000	34	28.3
	Rs. 2,00,000- Rs. 5,00,000	62	51.7
	Above Rs. 5,00,000	24	20
Total		120	100

Results and Discussions

The results elaborating the perception of parents regarding the impact of advertisements on social and moral values of children is illustrated below:

Respondents' Attitude towards Advertising Targeted at Children

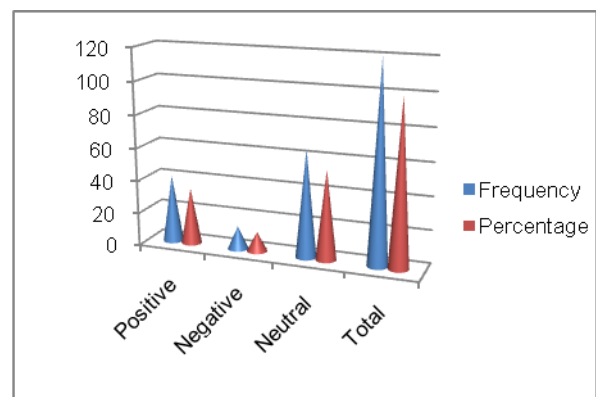
It is evident from table 1.1 and chart 1.2 that 54.1 per cent respondents have a neutral attitude towards advertising aimed at children as they consider advertisements as a necessary means of information, 34.2 per cent are of the view that they possess positive attitude towards ads and only 11.7 per cent stated that they have negative attitude regarding the advertising aimed at children because of the nagging and irresponsible behaviour shown by children after watching advertisements.

Table 1.1
Respondents' Attitude towards Advertising Targeted at Children

Attitude	Frequency	Percentage
Positive	41	34.2
Negative	14	11.7
Neutral	65	54.1
Total	120	100.0

Source: Field Survey

Chart 1.2
Respondents' Attitude towards Advertising Targeted at Children



Source: Field Survey

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Analysis of the Perception of Parents regarding the Behaviour of Children after watching Advertisements

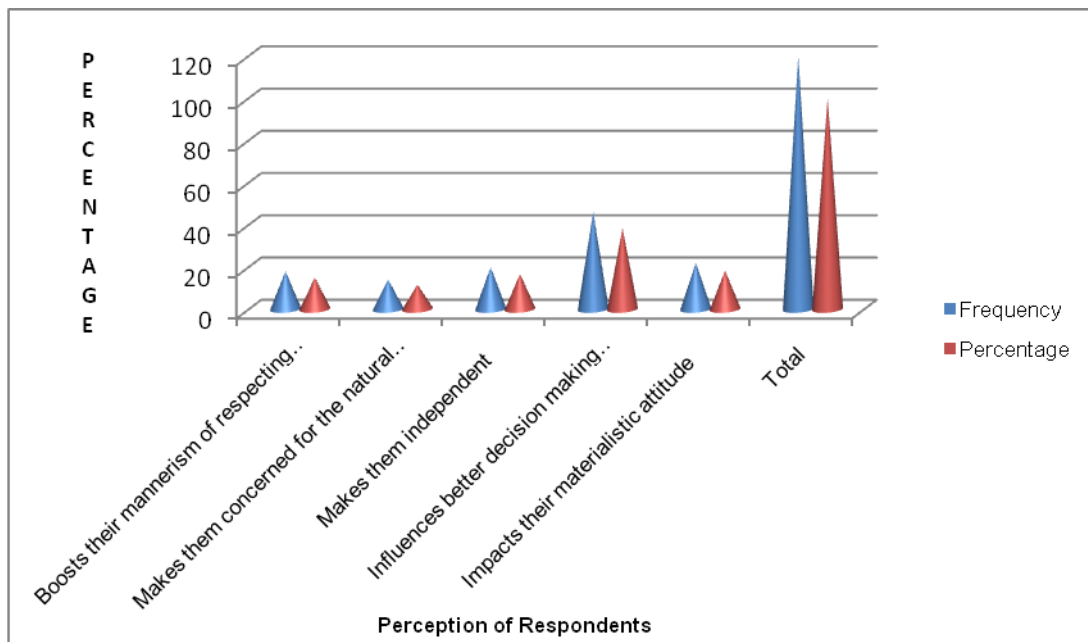
Table 2.1 and chart 2.2 reflects the independence at the time of shopping, 15 per cent respondents opined that ads boosts mannerism of respecting parents and elders, 11.6 per cent respondents are of the opinion that it makes them concerned for the natural environment, 16.7 per cent respondents stated that it makes them independent, 38.3 per cent are of the view that advertisements influence better decision making among children whereas 18.3 per cent respondents state that advertisements impact the materialistic attitude among children.

Table 2.1 Analysis of the Perception of Parents Regarding the Behaviour of Children after Watching Advertisements

Perception of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Boosts their mannerism of respecting parents and elders.	18	15.0
Makes them concerned for the natural environment	14	11.7
Makes them independent	20	16.7
Influences better decision making among children	46	38.3
Impacts their materialistic attitude	22	18.3
Total	120	100.0

Source: Field Survey

Chart 2.2 Analysis of the Perception of Parents Regarding the Behaviour of Children after Watching Advertisements



Source: Field Survey

Occupation-wise Analysis of Extent of Different Aspects of Television Advertisements

Table 3.1 depicts that out of total 120 respondents, 38 are of service class, 40 belong to business class and 42 respondents are professionals. Out of the service persons, 57.6 per cent and 73.7 per cent respondents have neutral attitude towards the impact of advertisements in boosting their mannerism of respecting parents and elders and makes them concerned for the natural environment respectively, 81.5 per cent and 71.1 per cent agree that the advertisements make them independent and influence better decision making among children and 76.3 per cent of respondents being the major part states that advertisements impacts their materialistic attitude and agrees to it.

Out of the business class, 55 per cent agree with this point that advertisements boosts their mannerism of respecting parents and elders, 60

percent possess a neutral opinion towards advertisements in making them concerned for the natural environment, 60 per cent and 65 per cent agree that the advertisements make them independent and influence better decision making among children, 77.5 per cent being the major portion agrees that advertisements impact the materialistic attitude among children.

Out of the professionals, 66.7 per cent and 52.4 per cent agree with this point that advertisements boost their mannerism of respecting parents and elders and make them concerned for the natural environment, 45.2 per cent agree that the advertisements make them independent in taking shopping decisions, 71.4 per cent agree that the advertisements influence better decision making among children and 50 per cent also agree that advertisements impacts the materialistic attitude among children.

Table 3.1 Occupation Wise Analysis of Perception of Parents Regarding the Behaviour of Children after Watching Advertisements

Occupation Perception of Respondents	Service				Business				Profession			
	Agreement Score	Neutral	Disagreement Score	Total	Agreement Score	Neutral	Disagreement Score	Total	Agreement Score	Neutral	Disagreement Score	Total
Boosts their mannerism of respecting parents and elders	0 (26.3)	22 (57.9)	06 (15.8)	38 (100)	22 (55.0)	12 (30.0)	06 (15.0)	40 (100)	28 (66.7)	08 (19.1)	06 (14.2)	42 (100)
Makes them concerned for the natural environment	10 (26.3)	28 (73.7)	0 (0)	38 (100)	10 (25.0)	24 (60.0)	6 (15.0)	40 (100)	22 (52.4)	11 (26.2)	9 (21.4)	42 (100)
Makes them independent	31 (81.5)	5 (13.2)	2 (5.3)	38 (100)	24 (60.0)	12 (30.0)	4 (10.0)	40 (100)	19 (45.2)	12 (28.6)	11 (26.2)	42 (100)
Influences better decision making among children	7 (71.1)	8 (21.1)	3 (7.8)	38 (100)	26 (65.0)	8 (20.0)	6 (15.0)	40 (100)	30 (71.4)	10 (23.8)	2 (4.7)	42 (100)
Impacts their materialistic attitude	9 (76.3)	6 (15.8)	3 (7.8)	38 (100)	31 (77.5)	9 (22.5)	0 (0)	40 (100)	21 (50.0)	17 (40.5)	4 (9.5)	42 (100)

Income-wise Analysis of Extent of Different Aspects of Television Advertisements

Table 3.2 states that out of total 120 respondents, 34 have income below Rs. 2,00,000, 62 have income between Rs. 2,00,000 to 5,00,000 and 24 respondents have income above Rs. 5,00,000. Major part from lowest income group agrees that advertisements boosts their mannerism of respecting parents and elders (55.8 percent), 44.2 per cent and 58.8 percent of respondents possess a neutral opinion towards advertisements in making them concerned for the natural environment and advertisements make them independent, 64.7 per cent agree that the advertisements influence better decision making among children and impacts the materialistic attitude among children.

Out of the middle income group, 48.4 per cent and 61.3 per cent possess a neutral opinion towards the impact of advertisements in boosting their mannerism of respecting parents and elders and

makes them concerned for the natural environment through advertisements respectively, 77.4 per cent respondents agree with the influence of advertisements in making them independent, 66.1 per cent and 77.4 percent being the major part agree that the advertisements influence better decision making among children and impacts the materialistic attitude among children.

Out of the highest income group, major part agrees that advertisements boosts their mannerism of respecting parents and elders (50 per cent) but 58.3 per cent respondents possess a neutral opinion towards advertisements in making them concerned for the natural environment, 50 per cent agree with the influence of advertisements in making them independent, 58.3 per cent and 75 per cent agree that the advertisements influence better decision making among children and impacts the materialistic attitude among children.

Table 3.2 Income-Wise Analysis of Perception of Parents regarding the Behaviour of Children after watching Advertisements

Income (Per Annum) Perception of Respondents	Below Rs. 2,00,000				Between Rs. 2,00,000 to 5,00,000				Above Rs. 5,00,000			
	Agreement Score	Neutral	Disagreement Score	Total	Agreement Score	Neutral	Disagreement Score	Total	Agreement Score	Neutral	Disagreement Score	Total
Boosts their mannerism of respecting parents and elders.	19 (55.8)	9 (26.5)	6 (17.7)	34 (100)	24 (38.7)	30 (48.4)	8 (12.9)	62 (100)	12 (50.0)	10 (41.6)	2 (8.3)	24 (100)
Makes them concerned for the natural environment	14 (41.2)	15 (44.2)	5 (14.6)	34 (100)	20 (32.2)	38 (61.3)	4 (6.5)	62 (100)	10 (41.6)	14 (58.3)	0 (0)	24 (100)
Makes them independent	20 (58.8)	12 (35.2)	2 (5.8)	34 (100)	48 (77.4)	10 (16.1)	4 (6.5)	62 (100)	12 (50.0)	12 (50.0)	0 (0)	24 (100)
Influences better decision making among children	22 (64.7)	12 (35.3)	0 (0)	34 (100)	41 (66.1)	16 (25.8)	5 (8.1)	62 (100)	14 (58.3)	8 (33.3)	2 (8.3)	24 (100)
Impacts their materialistic attitude	22 (64.7)	8 (23.5)	4 (11.8)	34 (100)	48 (77.4)	10 (16.1)	4 (6.5)	62 (100)	18 (75.0)	6 (25.0)	0 (0)	24 (100)

Conclusion and Suggestions

Present research deals with the impact of advertisements which not only show disrespect towards integrity of cultures but also promote undesirable value schemes like materialism, consumerism, independent decision making etc. Further, it can also be said that ads abuse society by negatively influencing human behavior. Their adverse consequences are persistent and can be seen in the form of degradation of women, shaping of negative sexual attitudes, consumer discontent, loss of confidence, purchase of goods against the will and better judgment of consumers and degradation of relationships in families. It is a very sensitive and critical issue in itself. The research will redefine advertising and marketing in line with the human goals. We all know that advertisements are a potent social device. The advertisers must be accountable to the society by honouring facts and not fake them. Also, the teachers must include the concept of socializing, morality and human values in educating children to do their effective pre-conditioning and make them responsible and healthy citizens as well as consumers. This can happen by including a particular subject or course of value education in schools and colleges. Also the advertisers should focus on making healthy, sound and better advertisements by triggering children's social and moral values as well as their behaviour.

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