

# Children and Parents' Interest in TV Advertisements : Elucidating the Persuasive Intent of Advertisements

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## Abstract

Parents' control over the amount and type of TV programs viewed by their children is a direct form of mediation. The presence of a parent as a viewing partner provides further opportunity for mediation of a program and advertising content. Parents and children may exchange comments and views regarding content showed in advertisements - children may ask questions which the parents' would answer, and issuing of instructions may take place. The present study aims to measure the extent to which the parents' interest and their co-viewing results in them teaching their children about what is real and what is artificially created in TV advertisements, which would aid them (the children) in imbibing healthy consumer values. An attempt has also been made to identify the relationship between parents' restricting children's TV-viewing with parents' level of co-viewing, educational and financial status, and the age and sex of the children in the urban and rural areas of Madhya Pradesh.

**Keywords:** children, parents, interest, co-viewing, restrict, TV advertisements, urban, rural, consumer values

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Television and parents, discretely and together, comprise two of children's most significant sources of information. One of children's most important developmental tasks is to develop "functional communication competence," or the ability to use communication resources, such as the media strategically to accomplish personal and social goals. The parent-child interaction is one of the most powerful forces on children's ability to develop such skills. The style of communication the parent employs affects the things a child pays attention to, as well as the cognitive schemes the child uses to understand the social world. As a consequence, parental styles of communication relevant to television should affect the types of messages a child pays attention to, as well as how the child will interpret and make use of the content perceived in the messages.

Television viewing, which frequently limits children's time for vital activities such as playing, reading, learning to talk, spending time with peers and family, storytelling, participating in regular exercise, and developing other necessary physical, mental and social skills, has become the major source of information and entertainment and mostly guides their thinking and living patterns. As far as children are concerned, in a matter of seconds, most of them can mimic a movie or TV character, sing an advertising jingle, or give other examples of what they have learnt from media. Most of the time, the impact is not so immediate or obvious. It occurs slowly as children see and hear advertisements or actions in movies over and over again. The protection of children from harm is linked directly to the issue of what affects are observed from viewing television. The criticisms regarding watching of television by children are linked to what they watch and for how long.

Advertising is affecting the whole world and India, a country that has inherited a rich traditional culture and values, is no exception to it. Some of the advertisements which appear on TV distress the children in India. Television advertising on food causes parental concern, and parents try to control the television viewing habits of their children. Parental control of television viewing is expected to lower the number of hours spent by a child watching TV as too much exposure to television impacts their health.

Today's children are our future and are unique in many ways from the previous generation. However, perhaps the most influencing factor on children's health are television advertisements. There are general concerns of parents that television advertising has a negative influence - intended or unintended - on children's health. As the world has turned

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into a global village, so now, through our electronic media, access to all international channels has also become easy.

## Literature Review

A vast number of children have been found to watch television in India and prefer it to reading (George, 2003). Singh (1998) in India, like Jensen (1995) in the U.S. also found that purchase requests by children are strongly stimulated by commercials or by a friend who has recently purchased a product. Retention of advertisements was high among children (for children falling in the age group of 5-15 years), but the percentage of final purchases prompted by exposure to advertisements was low at 30 percent. This was because the most reliable source for discussion, before buying products, was the family and the child also used his own intelligence and experience to solve the purchase problems. Verma and Kapoor (2004) investigated children's understanding of TV advertising in a comprehensive study in Delhi. Their findings revealed that children as young as six years could understand the purpose of TV advertisements and distinguish between a commercial and a TV program. With an increase in the age of the child, cognitive understanding of an advertisement increases, and children above the age of eight years are able to respond to TV advertisements in a mature and informed manner. Heavy viewing was positively associated with favorable attitudes towards TV advertisements and conversely, interest in advertisements declined with age. Children's exposure to TV advertisements was determined to a large extent by parents' control of their viewing. Parent-child interaction played an important role in the children's learning of positive consumer values and their parents perceiving the influence as positive on their children's buying response. Both parents and children noted the impact of TV advertisements on children's purchase requests.

There is great concern about children as viewers of advertisements primarily because young children are exposed to thousands of commercials each year in India (George, 2003) as well as in the West (Kunkel et al., 2004). Approximately, 80 percent of all advertising targeted at children falls within four product categories: toys, cereals, candies, and fast-food restaurants (Kunkel & Gantz, 1992). Young children are able to differentiate between a TV program and a commercial, but are unable to understand the intent of an advertisement until they are 8-10 years of age (Goldberg et al., 1978). According to Seiter (1993), advertising to children avoids any appeal to the rational, instead emphasizing that advertisements are for entertainment and “enjoyable for their own sake” as opposed to providing any real consumer information (p. 105). With increasing age, children's attitude towards advertisements changes from being positive to negative, and further, as children step into adolescence, they become skeptical about advertising. Moschis and Churchill (1979) and Moschis (1987) also found that older adolescents tended to - **1**) develop resistance to persuasive advertising, **2**) understand better the marketing strategies related to the pricing of the products, and **3**) generally become more sophisticated as consumers.

Celebrities and cartoon characters are commonly used by marketers as children's views of advertising appeals are largely influenced by them. The practice is largely witnessed in restaurants giving small toys as a token of remembrance to children such as McDonalds (Williams & Veeck, 1998), or associating a cartoon character with a cereal. Through mass media, children may learn about new brands and products (Goldberg, Gorn, & Gibson, 1978), how to use products and who uses them, realities, and beliefs about them (Gorn & Florsheim, 1985), and preferences for them (Gorn & Goldberg, 1977).

Children like television advertising in relation to its entertainment features – especially when the messages feature children characters, cartoons, music, celebrities, and humour – and those promoting foods. They also derive excitement from advertising messages that are presented in Pidgin language and/or humorously integrated with local languages (Gbadamosi, Hinson, Tukamushaba, & Ingunjiri, 2012). Concerns about the possible effects of food advertising have been fuelled by empirical evidence that children's exposure to advertising may indeed affect their consumption patterns (Buijzen, 2009). The use of celebrities as spokespersons is one of the ways in order to position and promote the sale and popularization of products or brands (Prakash, S., Kumar, & Prakash, G., 2012). While purchasing cosmetics, toiletries, stationery, gifts and cards, girls give importance to informational input provided by TV ads into their decision to buy. It was also found that girls had a positive attitude towards TV commercials (Kotwal, Gupta, & Devi, 2008). Due to children's inability to comprehend the difference between commercial and non-commercial speech, marketing directed at them is misleading and deceptive (Pomeranz, 2010). Children, of course, are the most awful victims of television influences. Its effects on the children are universal in nature. However, the magnitude of TV influence varies from child to child, depending on factors like age and individuality of the child, their

viewing pattern that includes duration of TV watching, types of programs, and direction provided by the parents (Latif & Abideen, 2011).

Family communication patterns depend upon parental control of consumption and media usage (Carlson & Grossbart, 1988; Chan & McNeal, 2003), parental style (Carlson & Grossbart, 1988; Carlson et al., 1992), and advertising practices (Carlson et al., 1990). Chan and McNeal (2003), in a study of Chinese parents, reported a high level of socio-oriented communication and found that nearly forty percent of the parents conformed to the consensual family type. Parents with varied family structures differed in communication patterns with respect to mediation of children's television viewing. Chinese parents mediated television viewing of children by co-viewing with them. Parental control of television viewing was very high, though they seldom discussed the commercials they saw on television with their children. It was further found that the parents who did discuss the commercials they saw on television with their children exerted less influence over children's television viewing.

## Scope of the Study

The study aimed to explore the attitude of children towards TV advertisements and endeavored to understand their buying response, particularly of food and electronic items. The study also examined the key development stages of childhood that influence children's response to television advertising. This leads us to the questions such as : At what age can children distinguish advertising from other program content? and also, do children understand the intent behind advertising ? The study also reflects the relationship between children's TV advertising exposure and their preferences for food, beverages, and electronic items with the evidence in relation to the children of Madhya Pradesh.

## Objectives of the Study

This study was conducted with a view to measure the extent to which parents' interest and their co-viewing resulted in them teaching their children about what is real and what is superficial in TV advertisements in the urban and rural segments of Madhya Pradesh.

## Hypotheses

To achieve the above-mentioned objectives, the following hypotheses were framed:-

- ❖ **H01: There is no significant difference in the TV viewing pattern of children belonging to different segments of the society including the urban and rural areas of Madhya Pradesh.**
- ❖ **H02: There is no significant difference in the opinion of parents' belonging to different segments of the society (including the urban and rural areas of Madhya Pradesh) regarding their interest in TV advertisements.**
- ❖ **H03: There is no significant difference in the opinion of parents' belonging to different segments of the society (including the urban and rural areas of Madhya Pradesh) regarding their control/restrictions on TV programs viewed by children.**
- ❖ **H04: There is no significant difference in the parents' belonging to different segments of the society (including the urban and rural areas of Madhya Pradesh) regarding their co-viewing and making the intents of TV**

| Table 1 : Distribution of the Sample                     |                   |                |               |
|--|-------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Places Selected from Different Regions of Madhya Pradesh |                   |                |               |
| Bhopal Division  |                   | Sagar Division |               |
| Urban Area   | Rural Area        | Urban Area     | Rural Area    |
| Bhopal City  | Gairatganj Tehsil | Sagar City     | Deori Kalan   |
| Sample Size :  | Sample Size :     | Sample Size :  | Sample Size : |
| 50 Children,   | 50 Children,      | 50 Children,   | 50 Children,  |
| 50 Parents   | 50 Parents        | 50 Parents     | 50 Parents    |
| Source : Primary Data                                    |                   |                |               |

advertisements clear to their children.

❖ **H05: There is no significant difference in the parents' belonging to different segments of the society (including the urban and rural areas of Madhya Pradesh) and their teachings and guidance about TV advertisements given to their children.**

## Research Methodology

The study was confined to Bhopal and Sagar regions of Madhya Pradesh; these regions are heterogeneous regions comprising of people of various socioeconomic classes. While choosing the sample, care was taken to ensure that it should reflect the general characteristics of Madhya Pradesh. The sampling technique in selecting the respondents for the study was convenient multi-stage sampling. These regions were stratified into two segments - the urban and rural segments. Two schools from each segment were selected, one run by the government and another school run by the private group in the urban and rural segment. The presence of a television set at home was one of the preconditions for the selection of the respondents. The accuracy of the sample is more important than its size. An appropriately drawn sample gives more reliable estimates on a population.

❖ **Sample Profile :** As shown in the Table 1, the sample consisted of 200 children and their parents.

**(a) Children Respondents :** They were selected on the basis of demographic segmentation like age, sex, and family income. The sample comprised of children :

- ❖ Above 5 up to 8 years of age (early to late childhood),
- ❖ Above 8 up to 11 years of age (late childhood to early adolescence ) and,
- ❖ Above 11 years up to 14 years of age (early adolescence).

Children below 5 years of age were too young and no significant information could be collected from them and hence, they were not included for the present study. The study focused on the perception of the children above 5 years up to 14 years of age.

**(i) Distribution of (Children) Respondents by Age:** Out of 100 children from each segment (urban and rural areas), 21 respondents were from the urban areas and 24 respondents were from rural areas belonging to the age group of 5 years up to 8 years ; 49 respondents from urban areas and 37 respondents from rural areas fell in the age group of above 8 years up to 11 years, and 30 respondents from urban areas and 39 respondents from rural areas belonged to the age group of above 11 years up to the 14 years .

**(ii) Distribution of (Children) Respondents by Sex:** 50 percent respondents in both the segments were girls.

**(iii) Family Income:** Household income, for the purpose of the study, includes the income of all the members of the family and from all the sources. The use of the term, low, middle, high middle, and high-income group was made to differentiate broadly between the different families to which the children belonged. The income-groups were defined on the basis of the total annual household income based on the personal income tax slabs for general tax payers for the year 2010-11. They were as follows :

|  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| Income: up to ₹ 1.6 lakhs                  | Low Income Group         |
| Income : Above ₹ 1.6 lakhs up to ₹ 5 lakhs | Middle Income Group      |
| Income : Above ₹ 5 lakhs up to ₹ 8 lakhs   | High-Middle Income Group |

Out of the 200 respondents (100 children from each segment- urban and rural areas), 42 respondents from urban and 70 respondents from rural areas belonged to the lower income group; 34 respondents from urban and 48 respondents from rural areas belonged to the middle income group; 16 respondents from urban and 2 respondents from rural areas belonged to high-middle income group, and 8 respondents from urban and none of the respondents from rural areas belonged to the high income group.

**(b) Parent Respondents:** The parents of the children considered as respondents were also surveyed.

**(i) Distribution of (Parents) Respondents with reference to their relation with the Respondent Children :** Out of the 200 respondents (100 from urban and 100 from rural areas), 47 respondents from urban and 51 respondents from rural areas were mothers; 31 respondents from urban and 32 respondents from rural areas were fathers ; 22 respondents from urban and 17 respondents from rural areas were other relatives like siblings, grandparents, and closely related uncles and aunts.

Out of the total 200 respondents (100 from urban and 100 from rural areas), 9 respondents from urban and 11 respondents from rural areas were less educated; 11 respondents from urban and 55 respondents from rural areas were educated up to the higher secondary level; 19 respondents from urban and 21 respondents from rural areas were graduates; and 61 respondents from urban and 13 respondents from rural areas were post graduates.

A total of 400 questionnaires (200 for children and 200 for parents) were circulated among the respondents. Of these, 200 (100 - children and 100 - parents) questionnaires (each) were circulated among the respondents from rural and urban areas respectively.

❖ **Questionnaire Design :** A well-designed questionnaire should find the most complete and accurate information possible to meet the research objectives. Hence, we ensured that the respondents fully understood the questions, and were not likely to refuse to answer a question, lie to the interviewer, or try to conceal their attitudes. The questionnaire was clearly laid out and was easy to read and understand. While drafting the questions, simple language was used to facilitate the respondents' understanding. The questionnaire consisted of multiple-choice statements and dichotomous questions. Respondents were explained in local (regional) language as to how and where to place a mark to indicate their opinion.

❖ **Tools Used for the Analysis :** The nature of the study is such that besides quantitative, statistical, and mathematical tools, a scaling technique was also used. The data so collected was tabulated and analyzed, and then the findings and inferences were drawn.

For the analysis of the data, SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) was used. Percentage analysis was done to analyze the demographic variables of the respondents, and to gauge the satisfaction level of viewers on each factors of ad effectiveness. The chi-square analysis ( $\chi^2$ ) was conducted between various sets of variables in order to find out the relationship and significance of association of those variables. The relationship between demographic variables (age, sex, and family income) was worked out with the children's interest in TV advertisements and their TV-viewing. Pearson's coefficient of correlation (r) was used to identify the degree of association between various sets of responses in order to ascertain whether they were positively or negatively related to each other.

| Table 2 : Children's TV Viewing Pattern |                  |                |                                  |                      |       |
|---|------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|-------|
| Children's TV Viewing                   | Never/<br>Seldom | Up to<br>2 hrs | More than 2<br>but up to 4 hours | More than<br>4 hours | Total |
| Number of Children Watching TV (Urban)  | 4                | 56             | 32                               | 8                    | 100   |
| Number of Children Watching TV (Rural)  | 16               | 71             | 11                               | 2                    | 100   |
| Source: Primary Data                    |                  |                |                                  |                      |       |

| Table 3 : Chi Square Value of Children's Age, Sex, Family Income and Their TV Viewing Pattern |                |          |                         |         |                           |         |
|---|----------------|----------|-------------------------|---------|---------------------------|---------|
| Children's TV Viewing   | Part-A         |          | Part-B                  |         | Part-C                    |         |
|   | Children's Age |          | Male/Female Respondents |         | Family Income of children |         |
|   | Urban          | Rural    | Urban                   | Rural   | Urban                     | Rural   |
|   | 0.391 NS       | 5.008 NS | 4.28 NS                 | 3.76 NS | 8.91 NS                   | 5.16 NS |
| NS: Not Significant   |                |          |                         |         |                           |         |
| Source: Primary Data  |                |          |                         |         |                           |         |



## Results and Discussion

Children's viewing pattern in urban and rural areas varied considerably from one child to another, as well as from day to day for the same child. However, an attempt was made to gather information regarding the programs favored by the respondents as well as the time spent on watching TV by the respondent children in urban and rural areas. Both these activities were used to estimate their exposure to a variety of advertisements appearing on TV. As shown in the Table 2, a majority of the respondents (96 percent and 84 percent of the respondents in urban and rural areas respectively) watched TV daily. Only a negligible number of respondents (4 percent in urban and 16 percent in rural areas) did not watch TV at all. Of those who watched TV daily, more than half of the respondents (56 percent in urban and 71 percent in rural areas) watched TV for up to 2 hours and still, a fewer number of respondents (32 percent in urban and 11 percent in rural areas) watched TV for more than 2 hours, but up to 4 hours a day. Very few respondents (8 percent and 2 percent) watched TV for more than 4 hours a day in the urban and rural areas respectively.

Children's TV viewing varies considerably with their age. An attempt was made to ascertain the children's TV viewing from various age groups of both the areas, i.e. urban and rural areas. Chi Square analysis was performed for this purpose. The Table 3 (Part-A) depicts the relationship between the age of children (of both areas) and their TV viewing pattern. As shown in the table, in both the urban and rural areas, the chi-square value is not found to be significant, hence, there were no significant differences on account of the age of the children, as they all were found to be regular TV viewers in both the urban and rural areas. However, the fact remains that most of the children in both the areas of each group spent quite a lot of time sitting in front of the TV screen watching various programs. As shown in the Table 3 (Part-B), the relationship between the sex of the children of urban and rural areas and their TV viewing pattern was not found to be significant as the chi-square value is not significant in both the areas. Both the male and female respondents appeared to be regular viewers of TV programs. However, during the survey, it was discovered that as compared to boys, girls spent less amount of time watching TV, and one of the reasons observed for the same during data collection was that girls are more sincere in their studies and also, the household activities keep them busy.

Chi-square analysis was performed in an attempt to ascertain whether family income played any significant role in children's TV viewing behavior. From the Table 3 (Part-C), it can be inferred that the family income did not affect the children's TV viewing pattern significantly in urban and rural areas. Thus, children from all income groups were found

**Table 4: Extent of Parents' Interest in TV Advertisements**

| Parents' interest in TV Advertisements | Leave the TV room | Lower the volume during ads | Switch TV channels | Watch TV ads with great interest | Total |
|--|-------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|-------|
| Number of parents (Urban)              | 10                | 27                          | 37                 | 26                               | 100   |
| Number of parents (Rural)              | 12                | 23                          | 42                 | 23                               | 100   |

Source: Primary Data

**Table 5 : The Children's Family and their Interest in TV Advertisements**

| Child's relation |              | Parents' interest in TV Advertisements |                             |                    |                                  |                  |
|------------------|--------------|--|-----------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|
|                  |              | Leave the TV room                      | Lower the volume during ads | Switch TV channels | Watch TV ads with great interest | Total            |
| Mother           | Urban        | 6(12.7%)                               | 14(29.8%)                   | 14(29.8%)          | 13(27.6%)                        | 47(100%)         |
|                  | Rural        | 7(13.7%)                               | 12(23.5%)                   | 14(27.4%)          | 18(35.2%)                        | 51(100%)         |
| Father           | Urban        | 2 (6.4%)                               | 8(25.8%)                    | 15(48.4%)          | 6 (19.4%)                        | 31(100%)         |
|                  | Rural        | 3 (9.3%)                               | 7(21.8%)                    | 20(62.5%)          | 2 (6.2%)                         | 32(100%)         |
| Other relative   | Urban        | 2 (9.1%)                               | 5(22.7%)                    | 8(36.4%)           | 7 (31.8%)                        | 22(100%)         |
|                  | Rural        | 2(11.7%)                               | 4(23.5%)                    | 8(47%)             | 3(17.6%)                         | 17(100%)         |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>Urban</b> | <b>10(10%)</b>                         | <b>27 (27%)</b>             | <b>37 (37%)</b>    | <b>26 (26%)</b>                  | <b>100(100%)</b> |
|                  | <b>Rural</b> | <b>12(12%)</b>                         | <b>23 (23%)</b>             | <b>42(42%)</b>     | <b>23(23%)</b>                   | <b>100(100%)</b> |

Source: Primary Data

| <b>Table 6 : Chi Square Value of Family Income and Extent of Parents' Interest in TV Ads</b> |                 |                      |
|--|-----------------|----------------------|
| Parents' interest in TV Advertisements   | Family's Income |                      |
|  | Urban           | Rural                |
|  | 9.90 NS         | 8.86 NS              |
| NS: Not Significant  |                 | Source: Primary Data |

| <b>Table 7 : Parental Control/Restrictions on TV program(s) watched by Children</b> |       |              |       |       |
|---|-------|--------------|-------|-------|
| Control/Restrictions on TV Programs   | Often | Occasionally | Never | Total |
| Number of Parents (Urban)   | 21    | 68           | 11    | 100   |
| Number of Parents (Rural)   | 37    | 55           | 8     | 100   |
| Source: Primary Data  |       |              |       |       |

| <b>Table 8(A) : Family Relations and Restraints on Children's TV Viewing Pattern</b> |              |                                   |                |                |                  |
|--|--------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| Child's relations  |              | Restraining children's TV viewing |                |                |                  |
|  |              | Often                             | Occasionally   | Never          | Total            |
| Mother   | Urban        | 11(23.4%)                         | 31(65.9%)      | 5(10.7%)       | 47(100%)         |
|  | Rural        | 19(37.2%)                         | 28(54.9%)      | 4(7.8%)        | 51(100%)         |
| Father   | Urban        | 7(22.5%)                          | 20(64.5%)      | 4(12.9%)       | 31(100%)         |
|  | Rural        | 14(43.7%)                         | 15(46.8%)      | 3(9.3%)        | 32(100%)         |
| Other relatives  | Urban        | 3(13.6%)                          | 17(77.2%)      | 2(9.1%)        | 22(100%)         |
|  | Rural        | 4(23.5%)                          | 12(70.5%)      | 1(5.9%)        | 17(100%)         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>Urban</b> | <b>21(21%)</b>                    | <b>68(68%)</b> | <b>11(11%)</b> | <b>100(100%)</b> |
|  | <b>Rural</b> | <b>37(37%)</b>                    | <b>55(55%)</b> | <b>8(8%)</b>   | <b>100(100%)</b> |
| Source: Primary Data   |              |                                   |                |                |                  |

to be regular TV viewers. During data collection, it was observed that children belonging to the high income group families had access to different sources of entertainment like sports clubs, computer, etc., which kept them engaged. Similarly, while collecting the primary data in rural areas, it was found that none of the children were found to be belonging to families falling in the high income group (having an annual income of above ₹ 8 lakhs) and only two children were found to be belonging to families falling in the high middle income group (having an annual income in the range of ₹ 5 to ₹ 8 lakhs). In both the areas, children belonging to the low income group families generally had their TV set as their single source of entertainment.

An attempt was made to ascertain the extent of interest parents had in TV advertisements. As shown in the Table 4, around one fourth (26 percent in urban and 23 percent in rural areas) of the parents watched the TV advertisements with great interest, while a significant number (74 percent in urban and 77 percent in rural areas) of them preferred switching the TV channels, lowering the volume of the TV while advertisements were being aired, and leaving the TV room. It was also observed that the TV advertisements which were quite popular with children were not that popular with their parents.

An effort was made to identify the significance between the children's relation and their interest in TV advertisements. The objective was to ascertain whether the parents and other relatives had a similar interest in TV advertisements or it differed. The Table 5 presents the results. It can be inferred from the Table 5 that around 27.6 percent of the surveyed mothers in urban areas and 35.2 percent of the mothers in rural areas took great interest in TV advertisements as compared to their better halves (the respondents' fathers - 19.4 percent in urban and 6.2 percent in rural areas) and other relatives (31.8 percent in urban and 17.6 percent in rural areas). Fathers (48.4 percent in urban and 62.5 percent in rural areas) were found to switch TV channels or leave the room while advertisements were being aired (6.4 percent in urban and 9.3 percent in rural areas). It was also found that fathers (25.8 percent in urban and 21.8

| <b>Table 8(B) : Chi Square Value of Parents' Interest in TV Advertisements and Restrictions Imposed on Children's TV Viewing</b> |   |                      |
|--|---|----------------------|
| Parents' Interest in TV Advertisements   | Parents' Restricting children's TV- Viewing |                      |
|  | Urban                                       | Rural                |
|  | 7.12 NS                                     | 5.73 NS              |
| NS: Not Significant  |   | Source: Primary Data |

| <b>Table 9 : Parents' Educational Level and Restrictions Imposed on Children's TV Viewing</b> |              |  |                |                |                  |
|---|--------------|--|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| Parents' Education  |              | Parents Restricting children's TV- Viewing |                |                |                  |
|   |              | Often                                      | Occasionally   | Never          | Total            |
| Low Edu.  | Urban        | 3(33.4%)                                   | 5(55.5%)       | 1(11.1%)       | 9(100%)          |
|   | Rural        | 6(54.5%)                                   | 3(27.3%)       | 2(18.2%)       | 11(100%)         |
| H. Sec.   | Urban        | 4(36.4%)                                   | 6(54.5%)       | 1(9.1%)        | 11(100%)         |
|   | Rural        | 16(29.1%)                                  | 36(65.5%)      | 3(5.4%)        | 55(100%)         |
| Graduate  | Urban        | 6(31.5%)                                   | 9(47.4%)       | 4(21.1%)       | 19(100%)         |
|   | Rural        | 9(42.8%)                                   | 10(47.6%)      | 2(9.6%)        | 21(100%)         |
| Post-grad.  | Urban        | 8(13.1%)                                   | 48(78.6%)      | 5(8.3%)        | 61(100%)         |
|   | Rural        | 6(46.1%)                                   | 6(46.1%)       | 1(7.8%)        | 13(100%)         |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>Urban</b> | <b>21(21%)</b>                             | <b>6 (68%)</b> | <b>11(11%)</b> | <b>100(100%)</b> |
|   | <b>Rural</b> | <b>3 (37%)</b>                             | <b>55(55%)</b> | <b>8(8%)</b>   | <b>100(100%)</b> |
| Source: Primary Data  |              |  |                |                |                  |

| <b>Table 10 : Parent-Child Co-viewing of TV Advertisements</b> |       |              |       |       |
|--|-------|--------------|-------|-------|
| Parent-child co-viewing  | Often | Occasionally | Never | Total |
| Number of Parents (Urban)                                      | 29    | 47           | 24    | 100   |
| Number of Parents (Rural)                                      | 37    | 54           | 9     | 100   |
| Source: Primary Data   |       |              |       |       |

percent in rural areas) generally preferred to lower the TV volume while advertisements were being aired.

An effort was made to ascertain whether the family income played any important role in determining the extent of parents' interest in TV advertisements. The chi - square analysis was performed, and the results were obtained. The Table 6 depicts that the relationship between family income and the extent of parents' interest in TV advertisements was not to be found significant at the 0.05 level of significance in both the urban and rural areas. This indicates that no relationship existed between parents' interest in TV advertisements with reference to their income groups. Thus, it was interpreted that no significant relationship existed between the two. The parents of every income group watched TV advertisements with little or more interest. During data collection, it was observed that parents from low income group and high income group families in urban areas and parents from high middle income group families in rural areas watched TV advertisements with less interest because (the reason given by the respondents) they hardly had the time to sit and watch TV advertisements. Moreover, parents belonging to the lower income group families knew that they could not afford to buy the majority of the products advertised on television. However, most of them also admitted that TV advertisements sometimes became the source of useful information/knowledge regarding offers, attributes, and benefits associated with various products.

Proceeding further, the focus was mainly to identify the level of parents' control over the amount of time spent in watching TV and types of TV programs viewed by their children. It can be inferred from the Table 7 that 68 percent parents in urban and 55percent parents in rural areas occasionally restricted their children from viewing TV programs, 21percent of the parents in urban and 37 percent of the parents in rural areas restricted their children quite often, and 11



| <b>Table 11 : Chi Square value of Parents' Co-viewing and Making the Intent of TV Ads clear to their Children and Parents' interest in TV Ads and Family Income</b> |  |                      |  |                     |
|---|--|----------------------|--|---------------------|
| <b>Parents Co-viewing and making the intents of TV Advertisements clear to the children</b>   | <b>Part-A<br/>Parents' Interest in TV Advertisements</b> |                      | <b>Part-B<br/>Family Income and Parents' Co-Viewing of TV Advertisements</b> |                     |
|   | <b>Urban</b>   | <b>Rural</b>         | <b>Urban</b>   | <b>Rural</b>        |
|   | 21.6 **  | 2.18 NS              | 6.03 NS  | 6.25 NS             |
| ** Significant at 0.01 level  |  | Source: Primary Data |  | NS: Not Significant |

| <b>Table 12 : Correlation Coefficient (r) between Parents' Co-viewing and Making the Intent of TV advertisements clear to the Children and Parents' Educational Level</b> |                                   |                      |
|---|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Parents Co-viewing and making the intents of TV Advertisements clear to the children</b>   | <b>Parents' Educational Level</b> |                      |
|   | <b>Urban</b>                      | <b>Rural</b>         |
|   | 0.134 **                          | 0.051 **             |
| ** Significant at 0.01 level  |                                   | Source: Primary Data |

| <b>Table 13 : Parents Teaching their Children About TV Advertisements</b> |              |                     |              |              |
|---|--------------|---------------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>Parents Teaching Children</b>  | <b>Often</b> | <b>Occasionally</b> | <b>Never</b> | <b>Total</b> |
| Number of Parents (Urban)   | 52           | 36                  | 12           | 100          |
| Number of Parents (Rural)   | 46           | 32                  | 22           | 100          |
| Source: Primary Data  |              |                     |              |              |

percent of the parents in urban and 8 percent of the parents in rural areas never restricted their children from watching TV programs.

As shown in the Table 8(A), other relatives (including elder siblings) were found to restrict children more as a majority of the children's relatives (90.8 percent in urban and 94 percent in rural areas) restricted the children from watching TV often and occasionally. Next in the order came the mothers, and a large number of mothers (89.3 percent in urban and 92.1 percent in rural areas) were found to restrict their children's TV viewing often and occasionally. Fathers (87 percent in urban and 90.5 percent in rural areas) did restrain their children from TV viewing often and occasionally. It was observed during the survey that the fathers were generally out of the house for work, and it was the responsibility of the mothers and other relatives (primarily, siblings) to keep an eye on the activities of the children. The chi - square analysis was performed, which was not found to be significant, i.e. the amount of restrictions the parents imposed on their children's TV viewing did not have any significant relationship with their level of interest in TV advertisements. The results are shown in the Table 8(B).

Next, an attempt was made to ascertain as to how far the educational level of the parents affected their children's TV viewing pattern. The results are presented in the Table 9. It was observed that (11.1 percent in urban and 18.2 percent parents in rural areas) parents who were not highly educated never restricted their children, 55.5 percent parents in urban areas and 27.3 percent parents in rural areas occasionally restricted their children, and 33.4 percent parents in urban areas and 54.5 percent parents in rural areas often restricted their children. Whereas, more than half (54.5 percent parents in urban and 65.5 percent parents in rural areas) of the parents educated up to the higher secondary level restricted their children occasionally. Parents educated up to the under graduate (47.4 percent in urban and 47.6 percent in rural areas) and post graduate level (78.6 percent in urban and 46.1 percent in rural) occasionally restricted their children. Thus, it is clear that educated parents imposed more restrictions on their children's TV viewing schedule as compared to their less educated counterparts.

As shown in the Table 10, it was observed that a majority of the parents (47 percent in urban and 54 percent in rural areas) reported co-viewing of TV advertisements occasionally, while a lesser number (29 percent in urban and 37 percent in rural areas) of parents resorted to it more often and some parents (24 percent in urban and 9 percent in rural areas) parents never viewed TV advertisements with their children.

| Table 14 : Chi Square Value of Parents' Interest, their Income, and Teaching Children about TV Advertisements |                             |         |  |         |
|---|-----------------------------|---------|--|---------|
| Parents teaching children about TV ads  | Part-A                      |         | Part-B   |         |
|   | Parents' interest in TV ads |         | Family income and parents co-viewing of TV ads |         |
|   | Urban                       | Rural   | Urban  | Rural   |
|   | 15.25 *                     | 25.11** | 24.15**  | 4.80 NS |
| ** Significant at 0.01 level  |                             |         | Source: Primary Data                           |         |
| *Significant at 0.05 level  |                             |         |  |         |

| <b>Table 15 : Correlation Coefficient (r) between Parents' Educational Level and their Teachings Regarding TV Advertisements</b> |                            |                      |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Parents Teaching Children about TV Advertisements  | Parents' Educational Level |                      |
|  | Urban                      | Rural                |
|  | -0.34 **                   | -0.306 **            |
| ** Significant at 0.01 level   |                            | Source: Primary Data |

As shown in the Table 11 (Part-A), in urban areas, parents' interest in TV advertisements bore a significant relationship with their co-viewing and making their intents clear to their children, as the chi - square value is 21.6, which is significant at the 0.01 level. It was noticed that in urban areas, if the parents were themselves interested in the TV advertisements, they viewed them with great interest even with their children, and explained both the pros and cons of such advertisements to them. Whereas, in the rural areas, the parents' interest in TV advertisements bore an insignificant relationship with their co-viewing and making their intents clear to the children, as the chi - square value is 2.18, which is not significant. In the rural areas, even if the parents were not interested in the TV advertisements, they did not encourage their children to view the advertisements, but they did explain the attributes of advertising which leads to children learning unhealthy messages and also resulted in lack of consumer knowledge.

An effort was made to ascertain the relationship between family income group with levels of co-viewing and explaining the intents of advertisements to the children with the help of chi - square analysis as shown in the Table 11 (Part-B). The results implied that the family income group did not have any relationship with the level of co-viewing and explaining the intents of advertisements to the children, as the chi - square value was not found to be significant (the value is 6.03 in case of urban respondents and 6.25 in case of rural respondents). Thus, all the family income groups had more or less the same level of co-viewing and explaining the intent of TV advertisements to their children.

An attempt was made to study the relationship between parents' educational level and their co-viewing of TV advertisements to make the intent of TV advertisements clear to their children. A relationship was worked out between the two with the help of correlation coefficient. The results are shown in the Table 12. It was observed that the parents' educational level, their co-viewing of TV advertisements, and making the intents of advertisements clear to their children were found to be significantly related (0.134 in case of urban respondents and 0.051 in case of rural respondents). It indicated that with an increase in the educational level of the parents, their level of co-viewing and explaining children about TV advertisements also increased.

An attempt was also made to ascertain the effort made by parents to teach their children about TV advertisements and also to ascertain how their learning as 'consumers' was taking place in various households. The results are shown in the Table 13. It is implied that parents (52 percent of the parent respondents in urban areas and 46 percent of their rural counterparts) often taught their children about the superficiality of TV advertisements. Many of the parents (36 percent in urban and 32 percent in rural areas) explained the facts occasionally, and some parents (12 percent in urban and 22 percent in rural areas) never taught their children about the make believe world created in TV advertisements.

To study the relationship between the parents' interest in TV advertisements and teaching their children about TV advertisements, the chi - square analysis was performed. The results are summarized in the Table 14 (Part-A). It was observed that parents' interest in TV advertisements was significantly related to their teaching children about them, as the chi - square value is 15.25 for respondents of urban areas (significant at the 0.05 significance level), and the value is

25.11 for respondents of rural areas (significant at the 0.01 significance level). To study the relationship between family income and parents' teaching their children about TV ads, the chi square analysis was performed, as shown in the Table 14 (Part-B). For the respondents residing in urban areas, the value of chi-square is found to be significant at the 0.01 level. This implies that there existed a significant relationship between family income and parents' teaching their children about the ostentatious nature of TV ads. Whereas for respondents residing in rural areas, the value of chi square is 4.80, and this value is not significant. Thus, it implies that the relationship between family income and parents' teaching their children about TV advertisements was not found to be significant. Hence, parents belonging to different income groups taught their children about the superficiality of TV advertisements.

In order to ascertain the relationship between parents' education and their teachings about TV ads, the correlation coefficient was calculated. The results are presented in the Table 15. As per the calculation, the correlation coefficient is found to be significant (-0.34 in case of urban respondents and -0.306 in case of rural respondents) at the 0.01 level of significance.

## Limitations of the Study

- 1) The study was confined to Bhopal and Sagar region only and as such, the findings of the study are applicable, by and large, to the urban and the rural population of Madhya Pradesh rather than to the whole of India.
- 2) We collected the data from different schools of Bhopal and Sagar Region and the collection of data was limited to certain schools only. Some private schools of urban areas were not cooperative because 'they neither wanted to disturb their students and class, nor they allowed any outsiders in their schools'. But the response of the schools from rural areas was quite spontaneous. School administrations were more cooperative in rural than they were in urban areas.
- 3) During data collection, all children were not able to express themselves freely because of the school environment. So, making them 'comfortable' was a time consuming process.
- 4) Similarly, getting an appointment from the parents was a very difficult task, especially from the parents belonging to the high and high-middle income group. Therefore, about 10-15 percent of the parents were interviewed over telephone. Moreover, it was observed that the parents were reluctant in disclosing their income.

## Conclusion

The present study has revealed that in the urban and rural areas, the children of all age groups, of both the sexes, and from all income groups were found to be regular TV viewers. Children of an impressionable age find it difficult to understand the difference between TV programs and advertisements, but as they grow up, they realize the persuasive motive and intent of advertisements. With an increase in age, the TV viewing hours of children also decrease.

The study further reveals that the amount of interest taken by the parents in the TV advertisements was also found to contribute significantly towards the interest children took in such advertisements. It was observed that in urban and rural areas, the mothers were found to be more interested than fathers in watching TV advertisements. Also, parents of all income groups watched TV advertisements as no significant difference was found between the family income and the parents' interest in viewing TV advertisements in both the areas (rural and urban areas). Parents were even found to watch TV advertisements with children and making the intent (the persuasive motive of ads) clear to them. However, in the urban areas, there existed a significant relationship between the parents' interest in TV advertisements, their co-viewing pattern (with their children), and making the intent of advertisements clear to the children, whereas in the rural areas, the relationship was not found to be significant.

As far as parents' education and their co-viewing pattern of advertisements are concerned, a significant relation between the two variables existed in both the urban and rural areas. Thus, the parents' educational level impacted their level of co-viewing of advertisements and explaining the real import of TV advertisements to their children. It was discovered that parents who are interested in TV advertisements helped in building their children's interest in a positive manner by teaching them about those advertisements. In the urban and rural areas, there existed a significant relationship between the parents' educational level and their teachings (to children) about TV advertisements. Teaching about these advertisements increased with the level of parents' education. Highly educated parents were able to distinguish between the real and the superficial world shown in TV advertisements. The study also revealed that in

urban areas, there was a significant difference in the family income and the parents' teaching about TV advertisements. Thus, parents' of higher income group often taught their children about TV advertisements, while parents belonging to the lower income group reported that they never taught their children about TV advertisements as they were busy in earning their bread and butter. In the rural areas, no significant difference was found in the family income and parents' teaching about TV advertisements.

It was also noticed that there existed a significant relationship between the parents' interest in TV advertisements and their perception of its influence on children in both the urban and rural areas. Thus, all those parents having an interest in TV advertisements perceived that the influence of advertisements on children was also more. Moreover, positive perception of mothers regarding the influence of TV advertisements on their children was found to be greater as compared to the fathers' perception. The parents who took an interest in TV advertisements also taught their children about the superficiality of advertisements, and helped in building their children's interest in a positive manner. Thus, parents were found to contribute significantly towards the interest children took in such advertisements.

## Managerial Implications

The present study has several socioeconomic, cultural, and political implications. In the country like India, when the multinational companies are trying to thrust a variety of products - food, cosmetics, electronic items, etc. even in the rural market through the advertisements, it is necessary that a sound approach - regarding what to advertise, where to advertise, how to advertise, and for whom to advertise - should be adopted. This study is thus significant to not only the policymakers or to the parents of an individual country, but also carries implications for the companies, which without any regard for the ethical dimensions of business, are thrusting and pushing their products in the market place through aggressive, attractive, and even titillating advertisements. The study seeks to stimulate thinking in all those people who are involved in marketing, selling, and framing advertisements in particular and the media agencies in general.

## Scope for Future Research

Future studies can examine the steps taken by our government to ensure a healthy growing environment for the children and studies can also examine the regulations and restrictions imposed by the government on industries, media owners, and advertisers to maintain the ethical standards.

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