

Understanding Of TV Ads Amongst Urban Children

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INTRODUCTION

Television advertising is a pervasive presence in the lives of Indian children. Pathfinders (1989) in its survey on Indian children's media habits, and Mathews (2000) concluded that advertisers' and manufacturers' growing interest in the children, and concentration on child specific advertising stemmed from the fact that children now have more money at their disposal, and that they influence family choices. Unnikrishnan and Bajpai (1996) state that the motto of today's ad world is "*Catch them young*", with the purpose to instill brand loyalty at a tender age to shape lifelong preferences.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Children's understanding of TV ads begins with their ability to pick out ads from programs. Previous research indicates that by the age of 5 to 6 years, most children are able to differentiate between ads and programs (Ward, 1972; Palmer and Mc. Dowell, 1979 and Stutts et al., 1981). However, Butter et al. (1981) emphasized that recognizing commercials does not always mean that children understand the purpose behind TV ads. He found that 70 per cent of the 4 years olds and 90 per cent of the 5 year olds identified ads; but 90 per cent of the children could not clearly tell the difference between ads and programs, although segregating the two was relatively simple. Past results verify that children are able to distinguish the two, but based on simple perceptual cues ("*ads are short, programs long, etc.*") (Ward et al., 1972 and Stephens and Stutts, 1982).

Some researchers argued that children's understanding of TV ads develops at a younger age, although they cannot articulate all that they know because of limited language facility. Donohue et al. (1980) using non verbal test methods reported high levels of understanding among 2 to 3 year olds (75%). However, replications of this controversial study have not confirmed these results (Ballard and Campbell, 1983 and Macklin, 1985). Macklin's (1987) critique and replication of Donohue et al.'s (1980) study located understanding at approximately 8 years of age. Dorr (1986) suggests that a major change in children's transaction with TV occur between 6 to 9 years of age, and a minor shift occurs around adolescence. She found that by the age of 7 or 8 years, most of them know that not only ads, but even TV programs are not always reality.

After segregating commercial from non commercial content, another milestone to be crossed in comprehending TV ads is to recognize the persuasive intent in them, which is an important prerequisite to question and evaluate different ads. These abilities develop with age; as a result of intellectual growth (Young, 1990). Unnikrishnan and Bajpai (1996) found that a majority of the Indian children recognized actual intent of advertising from the time they turn 8 years old, and by the time they reach the 10 years plus age group, they develop detailed understanding, i.e. they develop skepticism and question the honesty of ads. Advertising knowledge of a more specific form, involving what tactics are used by an advertiser, why they are used, etc. emerge as a child approaches adolescence, i.e. 11-14 years of age (Paget et al., 1984; Bousch et al., 1994 and Friestad and Wright, 1994). Oates et al. (2003) contradicted earlier research by using qualitative methods, that none of the 6 years old, a minority of 8 years olds and not all of 10 year olds were able to tell about understanding of the selling or persuasive intent of advertising. Kunkel (2004) reviewed the previous studies, which clearly indicates that children do not identify the selling intent before 8 years of age. However, even at this stage, their ability is only to recognize the persuasive intent, not that ads warrant skepticism. It appears that a sophisticated understanding develops only around the age of 12 years, when the child verbalizes the financial interests of advertising (Blosser and Roberts, 1985; Leibert and Sprafkin, 1988; Kunkel and Roberts, 1991; Edling, 1999

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quoted by Kunkel et al., 2004). However, Kapoor and Verma (2005) located understanding at 6 years of age amongst Indian children.

NEED & OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

Concern about children's ability to comprehend and evaluate ads stimulated substantial research since the early 1970s in the West. In India, it has been hardly over a decade that research focus has been on children and advertising, therefore, there are still many truths to be unveiled. Amongst all the segments of the TV audience; children should deserve special attention as they are the most impressionable lot. They are most likely to believe TV ads and orient their lives accordingly. The purpose of the study is to find the ability of the urban children to understand ads. Urban children, as they are from a strata that although constitutes a minority, but comprise of a vital segment from the corporate angle.

METHODOLOGY

A sample comprising of 400 children from the different cities of Punjab covering Majha (Amritsar), Doaba (Jalandhar) and Malwa (Patiala) cultural belts were chosen as the sample for the study. The children were selected from reputed private schools catering to middle and upper socio-economic strata. The data for the study was collected in the year 2008 personally, through a convenience sampling technique, after developing a rapport with the respondents, by instituting a structured, non-disguised and pre-tested questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed with the objective to find out the level of understanding of TV ads amongst urban children. The analysis related to the above listed objective was done on the basis of the two variables, age and gender. There were 206 male and 194 female respondents. Four age categories were formulated in the range of 8 to 16 years olds (8-10 years (94), 10-12 years (96), 12-14 years (120) and 14-16 years (90)). Other important information regarding the sample is that on the basis of family type, 154 respondents were from joint and 246 respondents were from nuclear families. There were about 43 per cent children who had working mothers, while the rest of the 57 percent had homemaker mothers. The children came from families with good educational background; 63 per cent mothers were educated up to graduation or above, and 37 per cent were either some diploma holders or educated upto the 12th standard. A simple description of facts in terms of frequencies and percentages was used for the purpose of the analysis. In order to sharpen the inferences, Z test of proportions, t-test, Karl Pearson's Correlation and ANOVA have been applied.

Before going for the analysis, the data was collected through Likert scale, and ranking was assigned weights for different questions. After assigning weights to the attributes, weighted mean scores were calculated for each category of respondents i.e. total sample, male children, female children, children of age 8-10 years, 10-11 years, 12-14 years and 14-16 years. Then comparisons between weighted mean scores were made either through students' unpaired t-test or through ANOVA. The students' unpaired t-test was applied to compare the weighted mean score only of two categories, i.e. male and female, while ANOVA was applied to compare more than two categories together i.e. 4 age groups. The formulae used for these calculations are as under:

i) Students' Unpaired T-test: Students' unpaired t-test was applied to compare the mean values or weighted mean scores of two categories i.e. male and female. The formula is as under:

$$t = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{SE(\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2)}$$

$$SE = \sqrt{\frac{SD_1^2(n_1-1) + SD_2^2(n_2-1)}{n_1 + n_2 - 2}}$$

Where,

SE = standard error of mean difference ;

\bar{X}_1 = mean in male children ;

\bar{X}_2 = mean value in female children;

SD_1 = standard deviation in male children;

SD_2 = standard deviation in female children;

S = common standard deviation ;

n_1 = number of male children;

n_2 = number of female children;

ii) Analysis Of Variance (ANOVA): ANOVA was applied to compare more than two categories together i.e. 4 age groups. The process of the analysis is given here under:

Source of variation	d.f.	T.S.S.	M.S.S.	F-ratio
Categories	$n-1=a$	S1	$S1/a=x$	x/y
Error	$b-a=c$	S2	$S2/b=y$	
Total	$N-1=b$			

Where, n= No. of categories to be compared i.e. 4 age groups;

N= n x Y (n multiplied with Y);

Y = No. of respondents;

T.S.S. = Total Sum of Squares;

M.S.S. = Mean Sum of Squares (TSS/d.f.);

d.f. = Degree of Freedom;

iii) Coefficient Of Correlation: To see the relationship between two variables, Karl Pearson's Coefficient of Correlation (r-value) was worked out. This was done to see the significance of the relationship between age and proportions of children who think about various purposes behind TV ads or proportion of those who watch TV in the company of specific family members, etc. The age category was taken as the mid value of the age group as under:

Age Group Used as for Correlation

8-10 years : 9

10-12 years : 11

12-14 years : 13

14-16 years : 15

It was seen whether the percentage of respondents (not number) changes significantly with the age or not. The coefficient of correlation was computed by using the following formula:

$$r(X,Y) = \frac{\sqrt{\sum xy}}{\sqrt{\sum(x^2)(y^2)}}$$

Where, x = (X-Mean of X); and y = (Y-Mean of Y)

iv) Z-Test: In order to see whether the responses of male and female children differ significantly or not i.e. to compare two proportions of respondents' i.e. male and female. Z-test of proportions was applied as under:

$$Z = \frac{|P_1 - P_2|}{SE \text{ of } (P_1 - P_2)}$$

$$S.E \text{ of } (P_1 - P_2) = \sqrt{pq(1/n_1 + 1/n_2)}$$

$$p = (n_1 P_1 + n_2 P_2) / (n_1 + n_2)$$

$$q = 1 - p$$

Where,

P_1 = Proportion of male children; P_2 = Proportion of female children; n_1 = Total number of male children; and n_2 = Total number of female children.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

✿ **Understanding Of Differences Between Programs And Ads :** The children were asked whether they watched TV ads, to which about 76 per cent (303) responded in affirmative. In response to the query whether TV ads are different from TV programs, an overwhelming majority of 91 percent (364) children answered TV ads to be different from TV programs.

These 91 per cent respondents were further asked to point out two important differences between ads and programs (Table 1). Out of the five available options, children were told that all options were correct, but they had to select only two options that they found more appropriate in comparison to the given choices. Table 1 reveals that the majority of the children (53.02%) mentioned the most accurate option, that is 'b' (*'TV ads are mere persuasive efforts to sell, whereas TV programs are for entertainment and education'*). Secondly, as much as 42.58 per cent of the children stated option 'd' (*'TV ads give product information and talk about real things available in the market, whereas TV programs are about both, fantasy and real situations'*). Both the options 'b' and 'd' enumerate important differences between TV ads and TV programs.

Table 1 : Understanding Of Differences Between Programs And Ads	
a) TV ads are shorter; programs are of longer duration.	153(42.03)
b) TV ads are persuasive efforts to sell; programs are for entertainment and education.	193(53.02)
c) TV ads are not a part of the main show; programs have a story, a theme or a moral.	148(40.66)
d) TV ads give product information and talk about the things available in the market, programs are about both fantasy and real situations.	155(42.58)
e) TV ads are shown during the breaks, programs are in continuation.	35(9.62)
Percentages have been worked out with N = 364; and the figures in parentheses represent percentages in this table and in the tables that follow.	

The option 'a' (*'TV ads are shorter; TV programs are of longer duration'*) was mentioned by 42.03 per cent of the children, which was very close to the second highest option 'd'. The option 'c' (*'TV ads are not part of the main show; TV programs have a story, a theme and a moral'*) was reported by 40.66 per cent of the respondents. Only 9.62 per cent of the children opted for option 'e' (*'TV ads are shown during breaks; programs are in continuation'*). From the above analysis, we see encouraging number of responses to both options 'b' and 'd' (which were more appropriate in comparison to other options), indicating a good understanding of TV ads amongst children.

Gender-wise analysis (Table 2) reveals that although more boys watched TV ads (81.07%) in comparison to girls (70.10%), yet, their understanding of differences between TV ads and TV programs was lower than that of girls, as a higher percentage of girls (94.33%) claimed that they understood the difference in comparison to boys (88.35 %). Z-values at 5 per cent level of significance indicate significant differences between boys and girls with respect to

Table 2: Gender-wise Distribution Of Opinions Of Children Regarding TV Ads			
A) Particulars:	Male	Female	Z-Value
1. Watch TV ads.	167(81.07)	136(70.1)	2.56**
2. TV ads are different from TV programs.	181(88.35)	183(94.33)	2.26**
B) Understanding of differences:			
a) TV ads are shorter; programs are of longer duration.	79(43.65)	74(40.44)	0.62
b) TV ads are persuasive efforts to sell; programs are for entertainment and education.	86(47.51)	107(58.47)	2.09**
c) TV ads are not a part of the main show; programs have a story, a theme or a moral.	72(39.78)	76(41.53)	0.34
d) TV ads give product information and talk about things available in the market, programs are about both fantasy and real situation.	79(43.65)	76(41.53)	0.41
e) TV ads shown during the breaks, programs are in continuation.	16(8.84)	19(10.38)	0.5
**: Represents 5 per cent level of significance in this table and in the tables that follow.			

watching ads and differentiating TV ads from programs. As claimed by girls, they demonstrated a superior level of understanding as more girls (58.47%) than boys (47.51%) specified the most relevant difference, 'b' (*'TV ads are persuasive efforts to sell, programs are entertaining and educative'*) as a major difference between ads and programs. Z-value indicates this difference ('b') to be significant at 5 per cent level. For rest of the differences ('a', 'c', 'd' and 'e'), the opinion amongst boys and girls did not differ significantly as depicted by Z-values.

Age wise analysis (Table 3) depicts an almost similar pattern in case of watching TV ads in all the 4 age categories, but as the children grow older, they were more sure to differentiate TV ads from TV programs. This is supplemented by a positive coefficient of correlation ($r = 0.973$) at 10 per cent level of significance. As far as understanding the two major differences were concerned, children found the option 'a' (*'TV ads are shorter, programs are of longer duration'*) less relevant as their age increased. This is substantiated by a negative coefficient of correlation ($r = -0.556$) at 10 per cent level of significance. The most accurate difference, point 'b' (*'TV ads are persuasive efforts to sell; programs are for entertainment and education'*) was higher among older children in comparison to the younger ones. This difference is supplemented by a positive coefficient of correlation ($r = 0.990$) at 10 per cent level of significance. Although the option 'e' (*'TV ads are shown during breaks, while programs remain continuous'*) was not an important difference and overall, only about 10 per cent of the children opted for it, but it shows a positive correlation with the age ($r = 0.974$) at 10 per cent level of significance.

Thus, there were differences on the basis of gender and age as far as picking out points of difference between TV ads and TV programs was concerned. Girls and older children claimed and showed better skills in distinguishing TV ads from TV programs. Overall, it can be said that most of the children were well able to understand TV ads and were able to differentiate between TV ads and TV programs.

Table 3: Age-wise Distribution Of Opinions Of Children Regarding TV Ads					
A) Particulars:	Age in Years				r-value
	8-10	10-12	12-14	14-16	
1. Watch TV ads.	71(75.53)	72(75)	91(75.83)	69(76.67)	0.786
2. TV ads are different from TV programs.	76(80.85)	86(89.58)	114(95)	88(97.78)	0.973*
B) Important differences:					
a) TV ads are shorter; programs are of longer duration.	32(42.11)	36(41.86)	49(42.98)	36(40)	-0.556*
b) TV ads are persuasive efforts to sell; programs are for entertainment and education.	36(47.37)	43(50)	63(55.26)	51(57.95)	0.990**
c) TV ads are not a part of the main show; programs have a story, a theme, or a moral.	31(40.79)	35(40.7)	47(41.23)	35(39.77)	-0.532
d) TV ads give product information and talk about things available in the market, programs are about both fantasy and real situations.	32(42.11)	37(43.02)	49(42.98)	37(41.11)	-0.436
e) TV ads are shown during breaks, programs are in continuation.	7(9.21)	8(9.3)	11(9.65)	9(10)	0.974*
*: Represents 10 per cent level of significance in this table and in the tables that follow.					

❁ **Purpose Behind Showing Ads On TV:** The children were asked to specify the basic purpose/motive behind showing ads on TV. A perusal of the Table 4 shows that 43.50 per cent children pointed out that the most relevant purpose of showing TV ads is *'to persuade the viewers to purchase the product'*. This is followed by 21 per cent of the children,

Table 4: The Basic Purpose Behind Showing TV Ads	
1. To give a break in the program.	44(11.00)
2. For entertainment.	35(8.75)
3. To persuade the viewers to purchase the product.	174(43.50)
4. To provide product information.	84(21.00)
5. To inform about various premium offers available with a product.	63(15.75)
Total	400

who reported that TV ads are shown *'to provide product information'*, while 15.75 per cent mentioned that the main purpose of TV ads is *'to inform about various premium offers available with the products'*. Only about 20 per cent of the children gave vague ideas about the purpose of TV ads, as 11 per cent of the children selected the purpose is *'to give a break in the program'*, and 8.75 per cent reported that the basic purpose is *'for entertainment'*. So, about 80 per cent of children had a fair understanding of the purpose behind ads, out of which, more than 40 per cent clearly understood the persuasive intent of ads - that ads are aired to sell goods.

Gender-wise analysis in Table 5 reveals that more girls (48.45) than boys (38.83) stated that the basic purpose of showing ads on TV is *'to persuade the viewers to purchase the product'*. The difference between both the genders over this option is supplemented by a significant Z-value (1.94) at 1 per cent level. As far as other purposes are concerned, though there are differences among the responses of boys and girls, but statistically, these differences are not significant as verified by Z-values.

Table 5: Gender-Wise Distribution Of Respondents			
Purposes	Male	Female	Z-Value
1. To give a break in the program.	22(10.68)	22(11.34)	0.21
2. For entertainment.	22(10.68)	13(6.70)	1.41
3. To persuade the viewers to purchase the product.	80(38.83)	94(48.45)	1.94*
4. To provide product information.	49(23.79)	35(18.04)	1.41
5. To inform about various offers available with a product.	33(16.02)	30(15.46)	0.15
Total	206	194	

Age-wise analysis (Table 6) shows that vague ideas like *'to give a break in the program'* and *'for entertainment'* are being less believed as the children become older. This is also verified by negative coefficients of correlation (-0.900 and -0.922 respectively at 10% and 5% level of significance). The more appropriate purposes like *'to persuade the viewers to purchase the product'* and *'to provide product information'* was a preferred response for the children belonging to the older age group. This is substantiated by positive coefficients of correlation (0.922 and 0.968 respectively, both at 5% significance level). The above analysis reaffirms further that a majority of the children had a clear understanding about the TV ads that were shown on TV, as many understood the TV ads from a commercial point of view, although the level of understanding definitely improves with age. At the point of comprehending persuasive/selling intent of ads, girls certainly had an edge over the boys.

Table 6 : Age-Wise Distribution Of Respondents					
Particulars	Age (Years)				r-value
	8-10	10-12	12-14	14-16	
1. To give a break in the program.	13 (13.83)	10 (10.42)	13 (10.83)	8 (8.89)	-0.900*
2. For entertainment.	11 (11.70)	8 (8.33)	10 (8.33)	6 (6.67)	-0.922**
3. To persuade the viewers to purchase the product.	39 (41.49)	41 (42.71)	53 (44.17)	41 (45.56)	0.999**
4. To provide product information.	18 (19.15)	20 (20.83)	26 (21.67)	20 (22.22)	0.968**
5. To inform about various offers available with a product.	13 (13.83)	17 (17.71)	18 (15.00)	15 (16.67)	0.435
Total	94	96	120	90	

✿**Person(s) Accompanying Children While Watching TV :** It can be inferred from the Table 7 that most of the children (33.50%) watched TV with their *'elder siblings'* (it maybe because of this coincidence, as majority of the surveyed children (54.75%) were the youngest child, in terms of birth order in the family). This is closely followed by *'parents'* (32.5%) accompanying children while watching TV. A reasonable number of children watched TV *'alone'* (27.25%). A very small percentage of the children (4.50%) watched TV with their *'grandparents'* (though 38.5 per cent of the children belonged to joint families), and with *'others'* (2.25%) like uncles, aunts, etc.

Gender-wise analysis shows that a higher percentage of girls watched TV with their *'parents'* (49.48%) and *'grandparents'* (7.33%) as compared to boys (16.50% and 1.46% respectively). On the other hand, a greater

Table 7 : Person(s) Accompanying Children While Watching TV									
Person(s)	Total	Gender			Age-Group (years)				
		Male	Female	Z-value	8-10	10-12	12-14	14-16	r-value
Parents	130 (32.50)	34 (16.50)	96 (49.48)	7.04***	41 (43.62)	35 (36.46)	31 (25.83)	23 (25.56)	-0.953**
Grandparents	18 (4.50)	3 (1.46)	15 (7.73)	3.03***	6 (6.38)	5 (5.21)	5 (4.17)	2 (2.22)	-0.989***
Alone	109 (27.25)	79 (38.35)	30 (15.46)	5.14***	9 (9.57)	22 (22.92)	41 (34.17)	37 (41.11)	0.991***
Elder sibling	134 (33.50)	84 (40.78)	50 (25.77)	3.18***	38 (40.43)	34 (35.42)	37 (30.83)	25 (27.78)	-0.994***
Others	9 (2.25)	6 (2.91)	3 (1.55)	0.92	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	6 (5.00)	3 (3.33)	0.775
Total	400	206	194		94	96	120	90	
***: Represents 1 per cent level of significance in this table and in the tables that follow.									

percentage of boys watched TV '*alone*' (38.35%) and with '*elder siblings*' (40.78%) as compared to girls (15.46% and 25.77% respectively). The Z-values reveal statistically significant differences (at 1 per cent level) between boys and girls in all the cases, except in the case of watching TV with '*others*'. It can be seen from the age-wise analysis in Table 8 that the percentage of children who watched TV with their '*parents*' decreased from 43.62 per cent in the age group of 8-10 years to 25.56 per cent in the age group of 14-16 years; this decreasing pattern is supplemented by a negative coefficient of correlation ($r = -0.953$), which is significant at the 5 per cent level. Similarly, the percentage of children who watched TV with their '*grandparents*' and '*elder siblings*' also declines as the age increases. These findings are also supplemented by negative coefficients of correlation at 1 per cent level of significance ($r = -0.989$ and -0.994 respectively). So, watching TV in the company of '*parents*', '*grandparents*' and '*elder siblings*' established an inverse relation with the rise in age of the child. As far as watching TV '*alone*' is concerned, the percentage of children increased from 9.57 per cent in the age group of 8-10 years to 41.11 per cent in the age group of 14-16 years. This increasing pattern has been found to be statistically significant at 1 per cent level of significance, as revealed by the positive coefficient of correlation ($r = 0.991$). Watching TV with anyone else did not establish any significant correlation with the age of the children. This revealed that younger children watched TV more with their '*parents*', '*grandparents*' and '*elder siblings*', and the older ones liked to watch TV '*alone*'. Furthermore, boys watched TV either '*alone*' and/or with '*elder siblings*', while girls watched TV with their '*parents*' and '*grandparents*'. So, it can be said that girls and young children watch TV with their parents and grandparents; while boys and older children prefer to watch TV alone. Overall, most of the children watched TV in the company of '*elder siblings*' (33.50%), followed by '*parents*' (32.50%).

Table 8 : Relationship Between Understanding The Purpose Of TV Ads And Person(s) Accompanying Children While Watching TV						
Purpose of TV ads	Parents	Grandparents	Alone	Elder siblings	Others	Total
1. To give a break in the program.	7 (5.38)	2 (11.11)	31 (28.44)	4 (2.99)	0 (0.00)	44
2. For entertainment.	8 (6.16)	1 (5.56)	23 (21.10)	3 (3.73)	0 (0.00)	35
3. To persuade the viewers to purchase the product.	66 (50.77)	8 (44.44)	36 (33.03)	56 (41.79)	8 (88.89)	174
4. To provide product information.	15 (11.54)	4 (22.22)	11 (10.09)	54 (40.30)	0 (0.00)	84
5. To inform about various offers available with a product	34 (26.15)	3 (16.67)	8 (7.34)	17 (12.69)	1 (11.11)	63
Total	130	18	109	134	9	400

The perusal of the Table 8 shows that almost half of the children (49.54%) who watched TV '*alone*' felt that ads are either '*to give a break in the program*' or '*for entertainment*', whereas, only a small minority of children who watched TV with '*parents*' (11.54%), '*grandparents*' (16.67%) and '*elder siblings*' (6.72%) had such inappropriate ideas. Most of the children who watched TV with their parents, grandparents or elder siblings were of the opinion that the purpose of TV ads is '*to persuade the viewers to purchase the product*' or '*to provide product information*'. This reveals that children who watched TV in the presence of elders like parents, grandparents, uncles/aunts and elder siblings have clearer understanding of ads than children who watched TV alone.

Table 9: Frequency Of Discussion By Parents With The Children						
Respondents' Category	Often	Sometimes	Only if ask them	Never/Seldom	Mean	SD
Sex						
Male	11(5.34)	50(24.27)	80(38.83)	65(31.55)	2.03	0.57
Female	14(7.22)	60(30.93)	65(33.51)	55(28.35)	2.17	0.42
t-value= 2.78***						
Age (years)						
8-10	5(5.32)	27(28.72)	24(25.53)	38(40.43)	1.99	0.57
10-12	6(6.25)	24(25.00)	35(36.46)	31(32.29)	2.05	0.52
12-14	8(6.67)	33(27.50)	43(35.83)	36(30.00)	2.11	0.37
14-16	6(6.67)	26(28.89)	43(47.78)	15(16.67)	2.26	0.41
F-ratio= 6.58***						
Overall	25(6.25)	110(27.50)	145(36.25)	120(30.00)	2.10	0.79

✿**Frequency Of Discussion About TV Ads By Parents With Children:** The children were asked whether their parents discussed about TV ads with them. There were four options regarding the frequency of discussion, viz. '*often*', '*sometimes*', '*only if I ask them*' and '*seldom/never*', which were assigned weights 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The information in this respect is shown in the Table 9.

Most of the children (36.25%) stated that their parents discussed TV ads with them '*only if they ask them*' to do so. This is followed by '*never/seldom*' (30%) and '*sometimes*' (27.50%). Only 6.25 percent of the children said that their parents discussed TV ads with them '*often*'. Overall mean score of frequency of discussion about TV ads with the children came to be 2.10 which, by and large, points out that parents discuss about TV ads with children only if the children asked them to do so, otherwise, the parents don't take the initiative on their own.

Gender-wise analysis shows that there was a considerably higher frequency of discussion by parents of girls (mean=2.17), as compared to the parents of boys (mean=2.03). Statistically significant differences were found between male and female respondents with respect to the frequency of discussion about TV ads at 1 per cent level of significance, as indicated by t-value (2.78). So, parents discussed about TV ads more with their daughters than with their sons.

Age-wise analysis reveals a consistent rise in the mean values with the increase in age. It was as low as 1.99 in case of children in the age group of 8-10 years, and as high as 2.26 in case of children in the age group of above 14 years. These differences among children belonging to different age groups are statistically significant as revealed by F-ratio (6.58) at 1 per cent level of significance. This conveys that as the children grow older, discussion regarding TV ads by parents is on the rise. So, overall, parents indulge in discussion over TV ads more frequently with girls and older children.

FINDINGS & CONCLUSION

About 76 percent of the children watched TV ads and around 91 percent claimed that they were able to discriminate ads from programs. Majority of the children (53.02%) were able to pick the most important distinction between ads and programs - that ads have a selling intent, while programs are either to entertain or to educate. When asked to pinpoint one single motive behind ads, almost 44 per cent of the children chose that it is to persuade viewers to buy products. Girls outnumbered boys in not only correctly distinguishing ads from programs, but also in demonstrating thorough understanding of the purpose behind ads. Similarly, older children possessed better understanding of TV ads than younger children. The most relevant difference that '*ads are persuasive, but programs are entertaining and educative*' was higher among children in the age group of 14-16 years (57.95%), as compared to the 8-10 years old (47.37%), as revealed by a positive coefficient of correlation at 5 per cent level of significance. Similarly, the most accurate purpose that '*ads are to persuade the viewers to purchase the product*' was more reported by the age group of 14-16 years old (45.56%) as compared to the 8-10 years old (41.49%), substantiated by a positive coefficient of correlation at 5 per cent level of significance.

It is clear that although a large number, yet not all children in the highest age group of 14-16 years old, could clearly

enlist selling/persuasive intent of ads either in the form of difference between ads and programs, or as a purpose of ads. So, the findings of Kapoor and Verma (2005), who located understanding of ads at 6 years of age amongst Indian children, seems to be far fetched according to the current study. As far as the understanding of ads vis-à-vis age of the child is concerned, the current study supports the findings of Unnikrishnan and Bajpai (1996) that from the age of 8 years onwards, a majority of the urban Indian children are able to understand ads (the study was carried out on children of Delhi city).

Children who were supervised by elders while watching TV demonstrated better understanding than those who watched TV alone. In all, 72.75 per cent watched TV with the family members, that is, parents (32.50%), grandparents (4.50%), elder siblings (33.50%) and uncles or aunts (2.25%). In support of these conclusions, Verma and Larson (2002) found that in Indian urban middle-class families, 73 per cent of TV viewing occurred with family members. TV viewing is a family activity occurring in a context where parents' supervision and influence are likely. All these conclusions would be of value for both - advertisers and regulatory bodies - for advertising.

It was also observed that parents discussed about TV ads more with girls and older children. Majority of the parents discussed with children only when their children inquired from them. This is not a healthy sign, which ought to be checked. It is to be suggested here that parents should take their own initiative to discuss with children about TV ads so as to make them more aware about good/bad effects of the TV ads and especially, for improving the children's overall understanding about worldly affairs.

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