



ISSN: 2277-4211

# IIM JOURNAL

## IQRA INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT JOURNAL

A REFEREED JOURNAL OF PROFESSIONALISM DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

Vol. 3

Issue No. 1

January-June 2014

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# IMPACT OF T.V. ADS ON FAST FOOD BUYING BEHAVIOUR OF CHILDREN: A CASE STUDY OF BIHAR

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\*\* Dr. Rashid Farooqi  
\*\*\* Dr. Shahbuddin Usmani

## Abstract

Advertisement affects almost every exposed, particularly with substance on children and teenagers and may cause many ill- effects. Against such a backdrop, the present study sheds light on the impact of advertising on buying behaviour, food habits and socio- psychological implications on children, particularly those exposed to TV commercials, in the Bihar region. The study reveals that children are obvious target audience for TV commercials and their food habits are influenced by advertisements.

**Keywords-** advertisement, buying behaviour, eating habits, TV commercials, child- psychology.

## Introduction

Everyday our children come under an increasing exposure to television commercials and with the growing use of animation techniques. However these advertisements are having adverse effect on children. How do children process the advertised message, what do they do with it and to what extent they are influenced by what they see and hear? All these questions have become the subject of the present study.

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The impact of advertising is devastating for children. Advertising comes in different forms such as television, print, radio and internet. Through such communicating media the products are advertised to the so-called "new segment" in the market. Advertisers used to appeal to the parents earlier but now they appeal directly to children who do not have the emotional or cognitive tools to evaluate what's being sold to them. Television is no more just a source of entertainment for children.

Some countries have decided that evidence of advertising's influence on children is strong enough to take legislative action. For example Sweden has imposed a ban on all advertising to children under 12 years old and Greece has regulated the content of children television advertising.

### **Effect of Television on Children**

At an early age children are attracted to television, the medium most capable of portraying life styles, value and social patterns to us. Indeed many of today's children cannot avoid the clutches of television programming. One investigator estimates that during the elementary school years children watch television more than any other time in their lives averaging 20-25 viewers hours per week. Because of the vast amount of time being spent in front of television set, many feel that children are drifted away from the social and academic activities. That's why marketers today are exceedingly targeting children directly with child-oriented messages, logos and characters that emphasizes on a "cool" and "fun" image (Wechsler, 1997). But now a day's advertising plays an important role in children's life. Often it is observed that children even though see a lot of advertisement but they rarely buy those items shown in the advertisement.

The influence of the media on the psychosocial development of children is profound. It is important for the parents to know their child's exposure to media and provide guidance on age-appropriate use of all media including television, radio, music, video games and internet. The objective of the study is to explore both the beneficial and harmful effects of media on children's mental and physical health and to identify how the advertising industry can

be regulated by formulating unified laws to prevent the over-exposure of children to the advertising world.

### **About Fast Food**

Human tastes and preferences keep on changing with the passage of time. This fact of consumer behaviour is evident in every sphere of consumables and fast food sector is not an exception. As the society has undergone transitions, the tastes and preferences of consumers and their eating habits have also witnessed a dramatic change. Gone are the days when eating at home and cooking was considered to be a passion. Today people are more comfortable with eating out ready-to-eat products. A lot of credit for this can be attributed to various basic changes in the basic structure of society. Some of these are:-

1. Increasing number of working women which has caused office work taking over kitchen work.
2. Nuclear families- Less number of family members, so eating out is not a problem.
3. High disposable income that has caused people to spend more and try out new things.
4. The increasing influence of western culture, which has resulted in people going for a Pizza, burger and Soft drinks. Instead of Parathas, samosa and lassi.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objective of the present study are:

- To ascertain the influence of advertisement on fast food habits of children.
- To find out the effect of advertisement on children.
- To what extent the advertisements change the buying behaviour of children?

- Do children purchase the product after watching the advertisement?

### **Hypotheses**

- 1) There is no relationship between TV advertising exposure and fast food consumption habit of children.
- 2) The food advertisements on TV are not co-related to unhealthy eating practices of children.
- 3) Children who watch TV avidly are not influenced by the food product ads shown in T.V.

### **Significance of the study**

Although there are many beneficiaries of the study but the main beneficiaries are parents, and advertising agencies. All parents want to provide good food to their children for healthy life. The results of the study will aware the parents about the influence of advertisement on the health of their children. Further, the findings of the study will also enable the ad-agencies to design effective ads to entice the children.

### **Limitation of the Study**

The study is based exclusively on Fast food eating habit of children of Bihar and its scope has been confined to the stated objectives. Due to the paucity of time, the study area has been restricted to the state of Bihar only. Thus findings of the study cannot be generalised. However efforts have been made to explore the relationship between perception of children towards fast food ads and effects of fast food ads in its different dimensions.

### **Research Methodology**

The present study is exploratory as well as descriptive in nature. The aim of the study is to measure the impact of exposure of TV commercials on eating habits of children. For the present study a sample of 250 respondents were

surveyed in the month of May- June 2014 in different parts of Bihar with the help of a schedule.

Data Source- Primary data collected through a structured schedule.

Research Approach- Survey method

Sample Unit- 8 to 14 year's school going children

Sample Size- 250 Units

Sampling Technique- purposive; convenient and judgmental

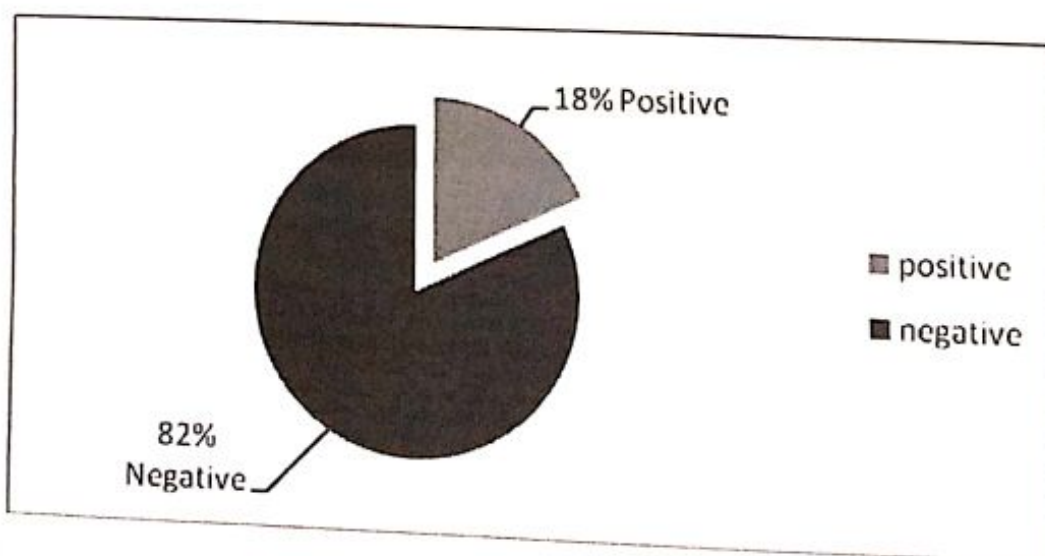
Contact Method- personal interaction.

**Area of Sampling:** Patna, Purnea, Katihar, Muzaffarpur and Darbangha.

### Findings

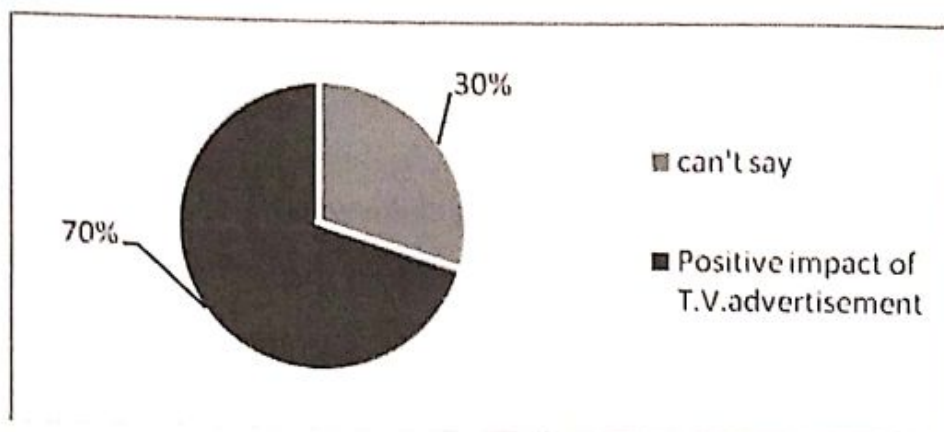
1. When parents were asked about the impact of advertisements on 'eating habits of children' 82% parents opined that it has negative impact and only 18% respondent agreed with its positive impact.

**Fig: 1 Parents opinion about the impact of advertisement on eating habits of children**



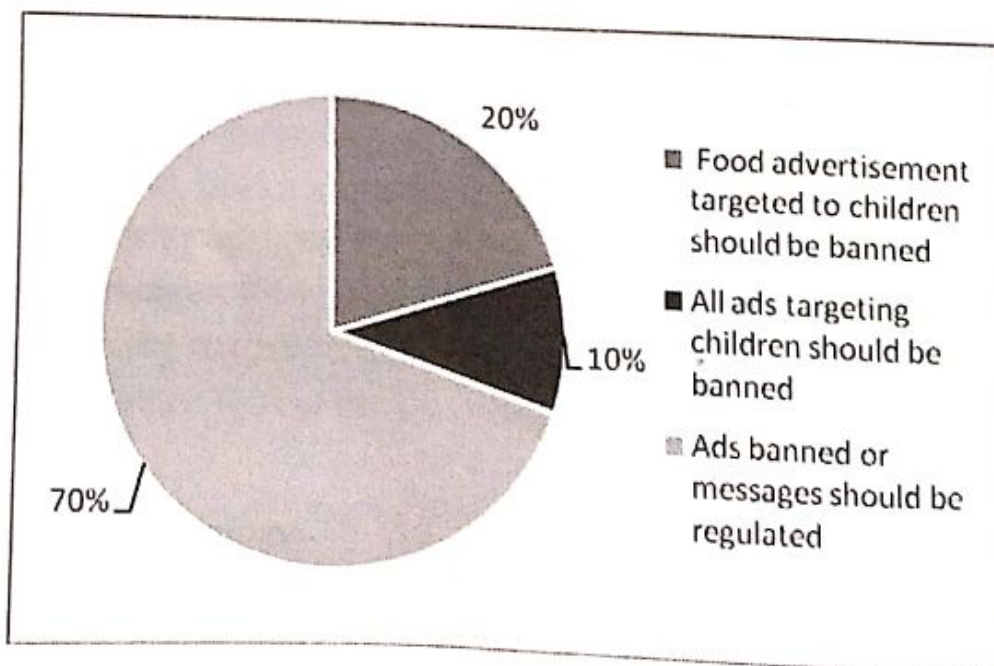
2. About 70% parents claimed that due to the exposure of T.V. commercial, their children stubbornly demand to purchase the advertised whereas remaining 30% opined that can't say about the effect of T.V commercials on their children's buying behaviour.

**Fig: 2 impact of T.V. commercials on purchase decision of children**



3. Cent-percent parents surveyed felt that indeed there is need for regulation as far as food related advertisements are concerned. Of these about 70% said that either advertisement of unhealthy products should be banned or ad messages and contents should be regulated by appropriate authorities. 10% parent advocated that all the food ads targeting children should be banned altogether and about 20% are of the opinion that use of children in food advertisements should be banned.

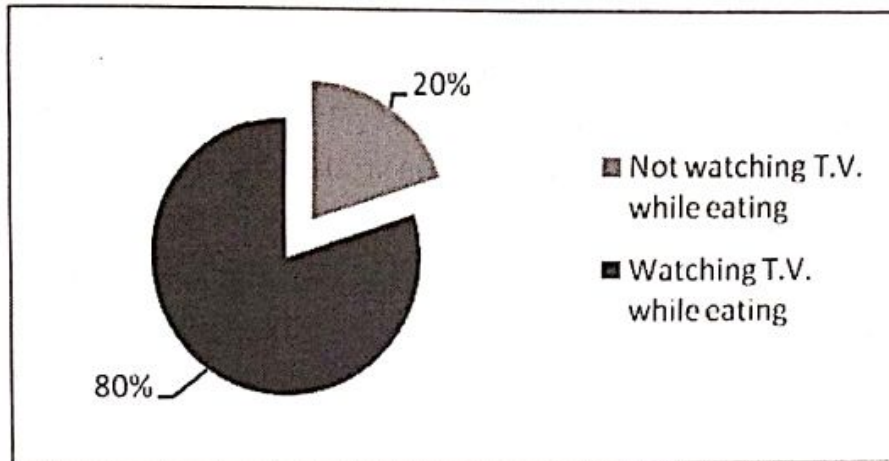
**Fig: 3 Food related ad should be banned/regulated**



4. it is found that around 80% of children watch T.V. while eating this may affect their food intake.

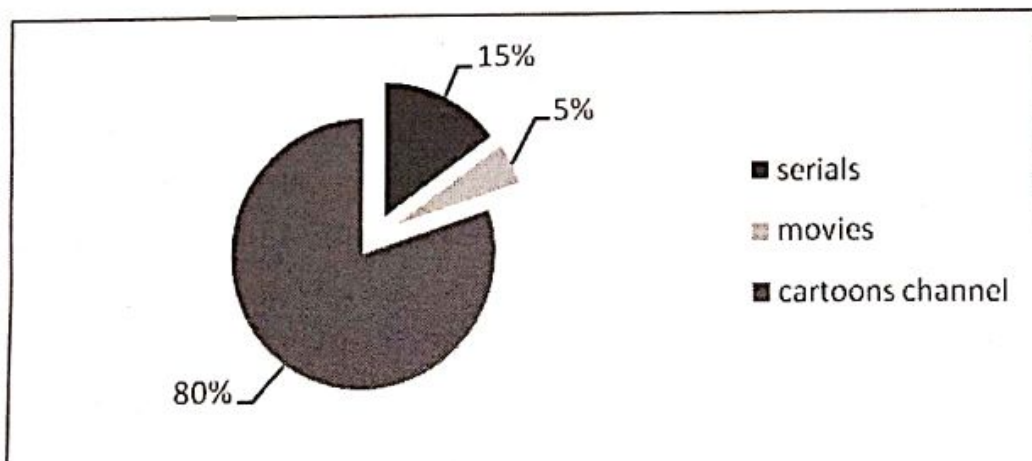


Fig: 4 Watching T.V. while eating



5. When children were asked to opine about programme they watch on T.V. it is found that around 80% of the children watch cartoons channel, 5% watch movies, 15% watch serials and among all only 5% see advertisements. Thus advertisers by inserting commercials on cartoon channels may exploit the psychology of children.

Fig: 5 T.V. programmes watched by the children



The purpose of this study is to find out the impact of fast food product advertisements of Indian television on the fast food eating habits of children. In India almost all the children view television regularly. Children's television viewing pattern reveals their exposure to the variety of T.V. programmes. Variation in advertising influence has been observed from one child to another, and from day to day for the same child.

Although parents believe that advertising, in general and television advertising in particular, adversely affects their children's eating behaviour. This study highlights the impact of such advertising in the child's eating habits. It is very difficult to say whether advertising is particularly influential at certain stages of development or not as studies have not so far adequately addressed to this issue. It is therefore, difficult to identify the most important factors which influence children's eating behaviour of fast food and which set the foundation for a pattern of eating for life long.

### **Conclusion**

Admittedly, the children who watch TV more than reasonable time (say two to three hours), are normally not much interested in playing outdoor sports. From the study it is evident that, when children are more interested in watching TV their playing hours are likely to reduce. It is also found that for children most preferred TV watching hours during weekdays is 6 PM to 8 PM, whereas on Sunday it might even consume day time. This is clear indication of getting less quality time for physical activities, causing one of the reasons of obesity and irritation among teenagers.

The regression analysis reveals that children ask for the product which they have been exposed to through TV commercials and insist their parents and relatives to purchase the same. From the coefficient analysis reveals that the fast foods like pizza, chowmin, momos, burgers, are in high demand by children and they get stubborn with their parents to buy such food stuff. Whereas it is observed that milk products and fruits are in less demand and have low consumption value.

The findings of this study also reveal that ultimately children gain weights, if they regularly consume junk foods. Increased fat in the body is not good sign because fat creates obesity and heart- diseases. Children are overweight according to their age and height because they regularly use soft drinks and eat fried chips, chaat and pakodas outside their home with their peers. In a study, Isper et al. (2001) found that most of the articles preferred by the children are chips, snack and fast foods. In fact TV commercials have popularised pizza & burger among the children. Locard et al. (1992) also

have observed that children who are watching TV more than 4 hrs/day suffer from obesity.

After watching the energy powder- milk ads they try to buy. The study is also having certain business implications. There are obvious opportunities for marketers to target the children having capacity to purchase advertised food articles. Further they may effectively target those children who have working parents and generally do not care much about eating habits of their children. But ad can perhaps be more effective, when it appeals to both children and their parents in a rational manner.

### **Recommendations**

Following are the major recommendations of the study:

- I. Policymakers need to take steps to protect children from excessive exposure to unfair and unethical advertising because children lack the capability to evaluate the tall claims in television advertising.
- II. Parents should to restrict their children's TV viewing time.
- III. Teachers and parents should guide children to decide what they should watch on TV.
- IV. Adults should look out for things their children do not understand on TV.
- V. Parents should also be conscious about the negative effects of television ads on children's health, eating- disorder and their eye sight problems.
- VI. Children should be encouraged both in their schools and at home to discuss TV programmes/ads.
- VII. Parents/ teachers should help children in deciding programmes which are relevant for their health and have some positive impact on their health.

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