

ADVERTISING TO CHILDREN: EARLIER TELEVISION AND NOW ADVERGAMES

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Abstract: Today advertising has gained immense significance because of its ever present power in the lives of children. With the increase in promotions and advertising, children have become aware of a no. of products and brands. Advertisers target children through their effective advertisements by making use of child psychology in scheming advertisements, promotion and media mix and by analyzing children's behavior, intentions, their lifestyle and hobbies at different ages. The paper makes an attempt to be aware of the use of child psychology in advertising and the effect of advertising on children. Also, this study helps us to understand different ways by which children process advertisements and the use of a variety of influencing appeals and strategies by marketers to target children. The study also provides an understanding about regulatory framework for advertising targeting children and need for parents to be media literate. This paper provides insights to researchers to conduct further research in this area.

Keywords: Advergaming, Advertising, Children, Psychology, Regulatory Framework.

INTRODUCTION

Advertising to children is perceived as one of the triumphant ways to construct a solid customer support, in an attempt to produce an enviable reflection in the wits of the young consumer and hence to make safe lifetime consumer purchasing. Today increase in promotions and advertising which are targeted to children is alarming. Children are seen as a prime market of consumers that use their pocket money to fulfill their wants and needs, as a significant market leading their parents' money spending for their needs' fulfillment, and an upcoming market for all goods and services that if cultured at present will offer a fixed rivulet of new customers when they attain market age for a particular company. It gives an understanding to the marketers about a huge segment when all these three markets are considered together and hence, this huge segment has become marketers' target. By employing the knowledge of child psychology in scheming advertisements, promotion and media mix, today's advertisements have become very effective. Colossal presence of television in the lives of children has made it a significant socializing agent. From a very small age, children start getting exposed to various advertisements in one or the other form and as their ages increase their participation in making purchase decision for products to be consumed by them and also those products which are not intended to be purchased by them, also increase. In conjunction with the increase in advertisements for children, have come some stern laws made by special regulatory bodies to protect children against advertisers' mean motives. There is a universal agreement in view of advertising to children that even if children realize the motive of sponsored

content, marketers have got to take exceptional care in advertising to them because of the amount of time children spend in viewing TV and online. Despite the fact that there can be advantages of advertising to children for the corporation, there could be negative effects of advertising on children in the long run.

Marketing and Advertising

In accordance with American Marketing Association, marketing is defined as "*an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit an organization and its stakeholders*". Promotion is one of the 4Ps of marketing and advertising is one of the four components in promotion mix which is considered as an important tool by firms directing persuasive communication to potential buyers. Its purpose is to enhance buyers' response to the products or services offered by the firm, thus increasing its profitability. Reference [1] defines advertising as "*a dissemination of any message particularly through mass media, paid by business or any other institution that wishes to increase the profitability than those targeted by these messages will behave or believe as the advertisers' desire them to behave or to believe*". Advertising is believed to have influenced and manipulated consumer's everyday lives [2]. Today, companies spend a substantial amount on advertising. As big corporations are acquainted with the importance of marketing and so, they are prepared to disburse for it. Big companies such as General Motors spent around \$4.2 billion (3% of its revenues) on advertising in 2010, while its competitor Ford

chased closely with \$3.9 billion (3% of its revenues) in ad spending. In other fiery combat, AT&T spent \$2.9 billion (2.3% of its revenues), while Verizon spent \$2.5 billion (2.2% of its revenues). Information retrieved from <http://www.businessinsider.com/corporations-ad-spending-2011-6?op=1> indicates that on an average the big US corporations spent around two percent of the revenues on advertising in 2010. <http://www.acinet.in/advertising-articles/articles/advertising-articles/advertising-statistics.html> shows that in 2006, UK Companies advertising spending crossed £19 billion. <http://www.livemint.com/2009/10/21213442/India8217s-ad-spending-grow.html> indicates that in 2009, Asia Pacific companies showed 11% increase in advertising expenditure, with India leading the way. An article on http://articles.economicstimes.indiatimes.com/2010-05-26/news/27586921_1_net-profit-promotion-hygiene-health-care says that in 2010, the big Indian FMCG players spent a huge amount on advertising. For instance, HUL spent around 5.3 billion euro in 2010. Increasingly sophisticated and classy promotions combined with technology available on Web are modifying the way companies interact with young adults. Young adults find this online media very effective and thus, are getting more attracted to it. Hence, companies are increasing their advertising budget on online media. According to new forecast by eMarketer, US online advertising spending is anticipated to rise by other 23.3% to \$39.5 billion in 2012, which increased by 23% to \$32.03 billion in 2011.

As per the information retrieved from <http://www.emarketer.com/PressRelease.aspx?R=1008788>, it is expected that in 2012, print advertising spending will reduce to \$33.8 billion from \$36 billion. Not only the developed countries like US, UK and others have high advertising budget this year but also, other developing countries such as India is expected to see a growth of 54% in advertising expenditure on online media in 2012, indicated in an article on http://rtn.asia/1174_indian-online-ad-spend-jump-54-year-iamai. Online media when fragmented into different online forms and analyzed, it is found that a big share of advertising expenses spent on online media is used for games. According to the *Today's Gamers Survey* by Newzoo and TNS, \$25.3 billion was spent by the American companies on gaming part to promote the brands, as the same indicated on <http://www.joystiq.com/2010/05/10/study-americans-spent-25-3-billion-on-games-in-2009/>.

Advertising in Different Media

A number of advertising media are being used by the advertisers such as television, internet, online games or advergimes, newspapers, direct mails and magazines. Every medium has its own plus and minus points.

Therefore, depending on the target audience, the reach, regularity, frequency and impact of each medium, the message effectiveness and cost to name a few one or a combination of two or more media is used. The blend of media employed by a company needs to be frequently scrutinized. For a long time, it was observed that television and magazines dominated the media mixes of national advertisers. Television has got an advantage over the other mediums that is it is professed as a permutation of audio and video features; it offers products with immediate soundness and eminence and tenders more opportunities for ingenious advertising [3]. Only on TV, around 40000 ads per year are being watched by children and adolescents [4]. It is reported by CARU, FTC and other regulatory bodies that violence or sexual content is shown in ads, movies, comic books, video games and online games deliberately [5]. Movies targeted at children display brand names notably [6]. Today it is over 160 magazines that are targeted at children according to Consumer's Union article on www.consumersunion.org/other/sellingkids/index.htm. In the same article, it is shown that with the evolution in technology and arrival of internet, marketers are shifting their focus towards newer ways of connecting and communicating with their target audience to have direct sales. In e-commerce around \$ 1 billion is being spent only teenagers ads.

Exercising Child Psychology in Advertising

Before endeavoring into this area, it is essential to have some consent with regards to "who meets the criteria to be called 'child'?" There is no flat age limit and there is no consistency of approach crosswise the globe. From a genetic viewpoint, a child is an individual who is not of age to have children. Children's development process is more or less constant that passes through numerous stages:

-Newborn: 0 to 28 days

-Infant: 28 days to 2 years

-Early childhood: 2 to 6 years

-Childhood / Preadolescent: 6 to 13 years.

-Puberty marks a period of transition from childhood to adulthood: Beginning at 13 years of age.

As per the worldwide accepted definition of a child given by the United Nations in Article 1 of the Convention available on www.unesco.org website "*A child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier*". In accordance with the theories available on cognitive development of children, twelve years and above is considered as a stage where a child develops a behavior of a consumer and is able to understand, analyze advertising

and its motives and also, capable of forming positive or negative attitudes [7]. Therefore, understanding about children's psychology at various stages and their expected behavior towards marketing, plays an important function in the lives of marketers and advertisers [8]. As it is known from the previous work that advertising is a very effective tool and impacts children a lot, because of which children pester their parents to purchase the advertised products [9].

Understanding Children Processing Advertisements

Insights from AIDA model (attention, interest, desire and action) are taken to understand how children process advertisements. Firstly, effective ads targeted at children try to capture children's attention, followed by creation of their interest for advertised products or brands, and then ads create a desire in children to purchase the advertised product. Hence, an ad is called to be successful only when a child understands its content and then purchases the advertised product. Advertisers make ads in such a way that ads full of lively actions, different sound effects and loud music gather children's attention [10]. Bright colors, animated characters, funny songs or tones or child as a model in the ad catch and hold children's attention [11]. Once advertisers are successful in catching children's attention in an ad, then they try to develop children's interest in ads by making use of some strategies like repetition. When ads are shown again and again, children remembers them the most This interest when changed into desire, to get advertised product, results into purchasing of that advertised product [12].

Advertising Techniques Used By Marketers

With the arrival of new technology and internet, advertisers have come up with new techniques such as:

- o Product Placement: It entails amalgamating a brand in the program content of a TV serial, music video, video games, online gaming or a movie.
- o Advergaming: These are interactive online games with a commercial message where the use of product placement is common [8].
- o Ambient Communication: It employs environment rudiments, including conveying messages that extract customer involvement. E.g., 2-D traditional and innovative print media, 3-D artifact based media and 4-D motion based interactive media.
- o Viral Marketing: This is the creating of a "buzz" when people talking about a product to one another either in person or virtually through blogs,

websites, emails etc. E.g., Viral marketing of 'Kolaveri D' song on internet.

- o Integrated Marketing Strategies: To increase the overall outcome as opposed to using each of those techniques individually, all the techniques are clubbed together to form an effective technique for increasing customers' involvement in the ad.

Repetition, Loud displays of product features, Brand Characters, Celebrity Endorsements and Premiums are some of the traditional advertising techniques still being used by the advertisers.

Advertising Appeals used by Marketers

Following appeals are used by the advertisers to attract their customers:

- Emotional: They are related to human desires such as happiness, security, care, comfort, social recognition, fear of rejection, anger, danger etc. Emotionally charged words, phrases or jingles are used to subtly imply that the product advertised could satisfy the above mentioned normal human desires.
- Rational: Hard facts, data and research material are provided in such ads.
- Humor: A humorous message is shown to the audience so that they may remember it for a longer time. Such appeals are common with children products.
- Fear: It implies that the consumer may be faced with such a situation and to avoid that situation it is best that they purchase and use the advertised brands.
- Romance: This is a common advertising appeal and advertisements suggest that using the product or service will make one more attractive and successful in romantic pursuits.
- Persuasive: Advertisers usually associate children's products with fun and happiness and many a times ignoring hard facts and data. Many fast foods limit their advertisements to their brand characters if any or largely portray the store wit fun and happiness. This generally misleads young children.
- Patriotism: This is a common appeal wherein certain advertisers revolve their advertisement around a patriotic theme to appeal to one's sense of patriotism, be it with the color theme, the wordings, the jingle of the tag lines used.

Impact of Advertising on Children

Children's advertising has both the sides; if it has advantages then it does have negative points too. From a very small age children get exposed to a number of media sources and therefore, they are aware of different brands

present in different product categories, which may lead to brand loyalty. Also, children have various options to choose from when they want to do purchasing. It is also seen that advertising brings positive changes in terms of children's behavior [7] [8], but on the other side, advertising does face criticism too such as:

- Children may develop pester power [9].
- Violence display in the advertisements [13].
- Children get misguided by ads [14].
- May lead to negative outcomes such as parent-child conflict, pessimism, obesity, and possibly materialistic attitudes [9].

Regulatory Framework

Concerns with respect to advertising targeting children have increased over the period of time with the increase in advertising. Regulatory bodies such as CARU (Children's Advertising Review Unit) established by the National Advertising Division of the Council of Better Business Bureaus and Action for Children's Television are active organizations in foreign countries, with a mission to supervise children's advertising for legitimacy and precision, to assess projected children's advertising, to promote research and to spread awareness about it [15]. Self-Regulatory Programs premeditated by these self-regulatory bodies for children advertising provides guidelines for the marketers.

Likewise in India, Advertising Standards Council of India is a self-regulatory voluntary organization of advertising industry. It ensures consumer interests' protection. It came into existence with a mission to promote responsible advertising, hence boosting the public confidence in advertising. There is a general consent with regards to advertising to children that even if children understand the purpose of promotional messages, marketers should take particular care in advertising to them because of the amount of time children spend in viewing TV and online.

CONCLUSION

Advertising does have an impact on children's minds, which is very important in terms of consumer socialization. They become easy targets of advertisers as they are not able to understand the real motives of the advertisers. Thus, it becomes parents' duty to make their children aware about advertising especially in terms of children's eating and buying habits. Other than parents' duty, its government's duty too as it is the government which develops effective laws for consumer interests' protection. Hence, it becomes important for the advertisers to make interesting ads within

the rules made by regulatory bodies. As a result marketers have come up with a number of newer communication tools to reach children effectively. Marketers have realized that today's children are very different from children years ago. With increase in access to a number of media platforms, children's knowledge about products have increased, hence they play an important role as consumers. Thus, it has become very important for marketers to be aware of how children mature as consumers and also, to know about the effects of culture, society and parents or family on their buying decisions. Hence, it has become a challenge for marketers to develop such new communication tools which can attract children's attention and can make them to buy the products by following laws made by government.

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