LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

“What do you call a consumer who wants to buy everything you have, doesn't care what it costs and is less than five feet tall? It’s a marketer's dream? Nope. You call them kids. - AdRelevance Intelligence Report, 2000.”

Somebody once said “effective advertising - it’s a bit like trying to interest a deaf tortoise” (unknown). By glossary terms ‘effectiveness’ has been described as “the degree to which a system’s features and capabilities meet the user’s needs (Carnegie Mellon Glossary, 2004)”. This falls apt for the field of advertising too. Effective advertising can be described as a paid form of communicating a message which is persuasive, informative, and designed to influence purchasing behavior or thought patterns, and meets the goals that it set out to do. It is such advertising that welcomes one into the world of advertising in India”.

It is hard to believe if we say that a child end up its life while trying to imitate a character shown in the advertisement. But unfortunately this is the true fact! For example, a child wakes up in his Disney character pajamas, rolls out of his Chotta Bheem sheets, his toothbrush, toothpaste and perhaps even his soap covered in cute licensed characters. Gathering up his Pokemon cards and strapping on his Rugrats backpack, he heads off to his school. But still the commercialism does not stop even in the schoolyard.

This is the reason that “marketers pay special attention to children, who are considered as the most vulnerable audiences because they enjoy advertisement to the maximum extent. Children initially take advertisement as entertainment and having soft heart; force their parents for product purchase”. This is called as a ‘Nag Factor’.

“Advertisement is one of the effective tools of integrated marketing communication to emotionally motivate the consumers to buy products. It has the strong linkage with entertainment also and the proliferation of media has blurred the distinguishing lines between advertisements and entertainment” (Moore, 2004). Advertisements featuring products like candies, snacks, toys, confectionaries, cookies and fast food are specifically targeted to children, in order to motivate them to try new brands and buy more. “A strong correlation has been observed between children and the television advertisements which are full of fascination and excitement” (Blosser and Roberts, 1985; Halan, 2003).
As we all know that “children constitute an important target market segment and merit attention from a marketing perspective. The role that children play in making decisions concerning the entire family unit has prompted researchers to direct attention to the study of influence of children. The amount of influence exerted by children varies by product category and stage of the decision making process. For some products, they are active initiators, information seekers, and buyers; whereas for other product categories, they influence purchases made by the parents. The purchasing act is governed by how they have been socialized to act as consumers. Family, peers, and media are key socializing agents for children wherein family-specific characteristics such as parental style, family’s Sex Role Orientation (SRO), and patterns of communication play key roles. More so, changes taking place in the socio-cultural environment in India (such as emergence of dual career, single parent families) entail that dimensions of children’s influence in family purchase decision making be investigated in a specific context”.

As we all know that “the children in middle-class India take important decisions in the home, thereby contributing majorly to household budget contours. From buying white goods and cars, to cell phones and grocery and even insurance policies, children under the age of 13 are deciding which brands their parents should or should not buy”.

2.2 Significance of Literature Review

This section reviews the previous studies investigating the impact of the TV advertisements on children. Totally, it is specified that advertising message processing by children is affected by their age-group. We have already observed differences in perceiving levels of television advertising associated with various age groups.

2.2.1 Information Processing Advertisement Messages

Consumer information processing is defined as “a process through which consumers are exposed to information; pay attention to it; perceive it; put it in memory and recall it for using it in the future” (Mowen, 1993). There are information processing theories about child development. Theories of cognitive development proposed by Piaget are used by many researchers that state, “children’s current cognitive stage identifies their ability to perceive advertising” (Gunter et al, 2005). “All these theories share a focus on developing skills of children in areas of acquisition, decoding, organization and retrieval of information. It is
possible to classify children into three categories according to their processing skills - limited processors, cued processors and strategic processors” (Roedder, 1981).

“Processing skills of children below 7 years is limited and those above 12 years use various strategies for saving and retrieving of information nearly similar to the grown - up individuals (Selman, 1980). The age group between 7 and 12 has the ability to apply oral cues for saving and retrieving of information”.

2.2.2 Children's Perception of TV Advertisement Messages

Originally children have a restricted concept of television advertising. “Firstly, it can't be distinguished from the surrounding programs, since both of them combine in a montage of sounds and images. Some researchers indicate the lack of distinction between children's visual attention at the time of watching programs and advertisements” (Ward & Wackman, 1973). “Children’s understanding of advertisements is dependent on their realization, that there is a source which creates television advertisements deliberately and also they should know that this source tries to convince it’s audience to buy (Young, 1990). Information processing of TV advertisement message is affected by children’s perception of advertising intent, advertising truthful and advertising likable”.

Blosser and Roberts (1985) believe “that there are five categories of advertising intent including: (1) providing information - in age group between 7 and 11 children suppose that the primary role of advertising is to notify, to introduce new products to the prospective customers and to offer details about the existing products” (Duff, 2004). “The information represented by advertising is placed in to two categories – commercial information and educational information- that both of them are related to products and services. (2) Teaching: the category of educational information arises from the children’s perception that advertising often educate the view in some manner” (Lawlor & Prothero, 2008). Moschis (1985) “suggests the three fundamental mechanisms in children's consumer learning: (a) purposive training (b) consideration of behaviors and (c) positive reinforcement”. With respect to learning about advertising in the form of critical watching, “instruction is represented through the schools or the media” (Brown, 1991; Roberts, Christenson, Gibson, Mooser, & Goldberg, 1980). (3) Entertainment: almost all the children are getting familiar with this element through advertisements that make them laugh. “All of the children spoke of having desired advertisements that they enjoyed while some children talked about discussing the desired ads
with their friends” (Lawlor & Prothero, 2008). “Advertising value was dependent on the perceived levels of amusement, informativeness and irritation” (Wang et al, 2002). (4) Selling: advertisements try to sell the products; express either the source goal to sell or the expectation of the receiver to purchase a featured product. In fact, “making money is the aim of advertisements and indicates that the result of selling will lead to the profit growth” (Lisa Anne, 1994). “Children are aware that the media vehicles which carry advertisements gain financially from the advertisements” (Panwar and Agnihotri, 2006). (5) Persuasion: individuals are persuaded, convinced or get to do something by advertisements. This suggests that advertising includes compulsion or manipulation. Most studies that consider “children's perception of advertising intent have overwhelmingly focused on intent in terms of the commercial purpose of advertising, namely its informative and persuasive aspects” (Oates et al., 2002).

Most of the researches confirm the conclusion that “children's perception of advertising intent becomes increasingly advanced by age” (Lisa Anne, 1994). “By seven and eight years of the age children become aware of advertising’s persuasive intent, over and above its informational intent” (Preston, 2005).

### List of some products targeted at children & youths

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beverages</th>
<th>Cold drinks</th>
<th>Mobile phones</th>
<th>Snacks</th>
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<td>Bicycles</td>
<td>Cookies</td>
<td>Mosquito killer</td>
<td>Soaps</td>
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<td>Bike</td>
<td>Cosmetics</td>
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<td>Biscuits</td>
<td>Dolls</td>
<td>Noodles</td>
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<td>Body creams</td>
<td>Detergents</td>
<td>Note books (stationary)</td>
<td>Telecom services</td>
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<td>Body spray</td>
<td>Fast food</td>
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<td>Nestle, Nestle</td>
<td>Garments</td>
<td>Pencils</td>
<td>Tours</td>
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<td>Cadbury</td>
<td>Goggles</td>
<td>Perfumes</td>
<td>Toys</td>
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<td>Candy</td>
<td>Hair colour</td>
<td>Rain coats</td>
<td>Umbrella</td>
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<td>Cartoon network</td>
<td>Huggies</td>
<td>Sanitary Napkins</td>
<td>Video games</td>
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<td>Chocolates</td>
<td>Ice-cream</td>
<td>School bags</td>
<td>Watches</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cigarettes</td>
<td>Jeans</td>
<td>Shampoo</td>
<td>Water parks/ fun parks</td>
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<td>Coaching classes</td>
<td>Medicines</td>
<td>Shoes</td>
<td>Website</td>
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However, Lazarsfeld’s (1955) pioneering work on “television exposure and demand for the purchased product, followed by Scott (2004), Dotson and Hyatt (2005) identified the role of three factors i.e. parents, peers and media – primarily television, in eliciting a response for advertised products among the children. These studies describe the influence of primary
reference groups consisting of parents and secondary reference groups, which includes peers, as intervening variables in evoking a response from the children. Peers also refer to ‘children in the older age groups, whom the children in the lower age group tend to emulate’ (Gunter and Furnham, 1998), thus highlighting the role of aspiration groups. Emulation is not a universal phenomenon, ‘as children may develop a dislike for the product or situation due to age differences and identifying with older siblings’ (Laulor and Prothers, 2003), hinting at the dissociation aspect of the children’s reference group”.

Though Lazarsfeld’s model stood the test of time, but Robertson and Rossiter (1974) challenged this model “by rejecting any positive correlation between the childrens understanding of advertisements and their desire for the advertised products”. Support for Lazarsfeld came from Goldberg and Gorn (1978) and Fisher (1985), who showed “a positive correlation between the two”. This conclusion was further strengthened by a report of “Children, Adolescents and Advertisements (1995), which stated that television viewing has been associated with obesity, the most prevalent nutritional disease among children in the USA”. “Even advertisements featuring products meant for adult use are being featured on the channels meant for children, as children influence much higher purchase (hinting at pester power) Nichols and Cullen (2004). This development in turn may have resulted from the attitude that children would have developed towards these products after viewing the advertisements featuring these products. Hence, there has been a tremendous increase in the marketing communication expenditure by the marketers in the last one decade. In view of the literature stated above, it can be sufficiently surmised that there is a positive correlation between the advertisement and the product sought by children”.

Still, the marketer, whose money is at stake, does not have a concrete model to gauge the return on his investments in these advertisements. He should seek answers to questions like, what do the children feel about the advertisements? Do they understand what the advertisement is all about? The study by Oates et al. (2002), had thrown up interesting data regarding the “understanding of the purpose of advertisements. A total of 25 per cent of the respondents of age eight years and 36 per cent of the children of age of ten years responded by saying that they knew the purpose of advertisements was to persuade them to buy or own those products”.

48
While much evidence demonstrating that “children imitate what they see on television exists, there has been much debate in the academic arena as to the exact process through which advertisements affect children. ‘It logically follows that less information is available on how viewing television advertisements during childhood affects the development of child as a consumer in later part of his life’ (Resnik et al., 1979). ‘Children are major chunk of target customers for the marketers. Though it is recognized that they consist of many subgroups based on demographics or psychographics, yet no considerable research has been carried to understand the responses of different subgroups to advertisements’ (Dorr, 1986). This can be due to the variation in the age of comprehension, the comprehending ability with the increasing age, the social context, as well as the methodology used, i.e. verbal or non-verbal.”

However, marketers all over the world are still struggling to find ways and means to evaluate the impact of their advertisements on children. Research establishes that “children start understanding the selling intent of advertisement before they attain the age of eight” (Donohue et al., 1980; Wartella, 1982; Kline, 1995; Ward and Wackman, 1987). “If a child makes his first brand and category choice in school canteen when he is hardly four or five” (Mizerski, 2005), it definitely corroborates the previous findings. So, “it is imperative for marketers to develop insights into the child’s comprehension process, their understanding of the content and intent of the advertisements and accordingly develop their advertising campaigns. Hence, at the conceptual level, the key issue to be understood is the effect of attitude towards the advertisements on the preference of children for a particular product/brand. The attitude towards the advertisements accrues from the cognitive and affective factors generated by the advertisements. While viewing the advertisements, ‘child’s unique background, experience, needs, personality and ability to process information comes into play’ (Resnik et al., 1979). Panwar and Agnihotri (2005) went further to prove this phenomenon in the Indian context ‘by comparing children having education in English as well as vernacular medium’. Since the children across different age groups are at different stages of cognitive development, and also differ in their emotional responses to stimuli, it is imperative for the marketer to come up with those advertisements whose execution and messages can evoke a favorable response from the children in the different age groups. It is equally important to understand the other antecedent factors that have an impact on the formation of his/her attitude towards the preferred brands, as these also result in a favorable or unfavorable purchase decision. If those factors can be depicted in the execution of the
advertisements, then the marketers can expect a positive response from the children. Moreover, advertisements form a significant component of the promotional efforts; hence, it will aid the marketer in fine-tuning his total marketing strategy to optimize his returns. There are differences in the comprehension capability of children towards television advertisements, as they grow up. This comprehension affects their preferences for advertised products which in turn motivates them to influence the purchase decision of the parents”.

Concept of advertising literacy refers to “the ability of the target audience to comprehend the advertising targeted towards them is a contentious issue in literature on advertising”. Donohue et al. (1980) stated that “the children can understand advertisements at the age of three”, where as Park and Young (1986), reported that “the children tend to understand at a much higher age”. Kline (1995), however, is of the opinion that “half of the children by the age of five can understand the real purpose of advertising, but their attitude towards advertisement changes with the age”. Rossiter (1977), Roedder (1981, 1999) and Moore (2004) further hypothesized that “a child’s maturity with age is the most significant determinant of his/her cognitive and the attitudinal defenses to television advertisements, which also results in perceiving advertisements as untruthful at times. Yet, their inferences, regarding the age, at which this skepticism with advertisements develops differs significantly”. “The differing maturity due to age, even leads to the better recognition of product information” (Resnick et al., 1979). Robertson and Rossiter (1974) and Preston (2000), came out with a model after carrying out “a non-experimental study of children and commercial persuasion in which they claimed that the trust and liking for the advertisements, and the desire for the advertised products depend upon the cognitive factors (e.g. programme discrimination) and developmental factors (e.g. age)”. Nevertheless, “the impact of the television commercials on children’s preference for the advertised products was proved beyond doubt” (Paulos, 1975; Goldberg et al., 1978), but the discerning capability of children with increase in age is still a debatable issue.

Many studies of 1980s, proved the fact that “the attitude towards the advertisements played an intervening role between the exposure to advertisements and the attitude towards the brand sought (Batra, 1986; Batra and Ray, 1986). The execution framework of the advertisements also affects the attitude formation”. In accordance with the elaboration likelihood model of Lutz (1985), Petty and Cacioppo (1986), suggested that “the peripheral elements of advertisements, which depend on the execution, played a significant role in the formation of
attitude towards the advertisements”. “Children also responded well to the child models, animals and swift action in the advertisements, more so, if the character depicted in the advertisement, resembled the child (Barry and Hansen, 1973). It implies that children are more attracted towards those advertisements, where they can identify with the situation depicted in the advertisements. Children tend to develop their own understanding of the world around them, based on their various exposures, so any depiction of a specific lifestyle in commercial, results in the children imitating that lifestyle”. The increase in the consumerist lifestyle among children in India can be largely attributed to the television advertisements. This phenomenon is again influenced by their ‘cognitive ability’ (Goldberg and Gorn, 1982; Aitkin et al., 1998). Any discussion on advertisements related issues would be incomplete without referring to the ‘celebrity endorsements’. “Celebrities, be it in sports, movies or other areas are the role models, creating positive influence on attitude towards the advertisements as well as the brands (Ferle and Choi, 2005; Silvera and Austad, 2004). Over a period of time, these endorsers evolve as brand icons. Though the effectiveness of the celebrity endorsement may vary, depending upon his/her expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness and respect, still the human brands are hired extensively by the marketers all over the world (Thomson, 2006)”. ‘Yet the way they have been depicted in the advertisements’, (Alsamadi, 2006) or ‘the cultural context’, in which they have been portrayed (Chantika, 2003), tend to affect the role of advertisements in influencing the purchase behavior of the target audience.

“Brand Icons in the present Indian society have mainly emerged from cricket and movies, as these two events have huge fan following in India. Another issue is the development of metrics to measure the attitude towards advertisements. Derbaix and Pecheux (2003) developed ‘a new scale to assess the children’s attitude towards television advertisements’. They developed credibility aspect of the advertisements and its entertaining ability as the two significant factors to measure the attitude towards television advertisements. The significance of the credibility component was further reinforced by Ashill and Yavas (2005), who claimed, ‘that believability as a predictor of the attitude towards advertisements has been propagated by the business ethicist for long, hence “puffery” should be avoided by advertisers to create a positive impact on the target audience’. The significance of ‘entertaining ability of the advertisements, i.e. hedonic/pleasure derived from watching the advertisements as being one of the significant factors affecting the attitude towards the advertisements has been stressed’ by Petrovici and Marinov (2007), though Goldberg and
Gorn (1978), Rolandelli (1989) and Collins (1990) and Ghani and Zain’s (2004) identification of humour for liking an advertisement also alludes to the entertaining ability of the advertisement. Panwar and Agnihotri’s (2005) study among Indian urban children is also noteworthy. It found that ‘children like advertisements without being influenced by the external factors, which means that the elements of advertisements such as influence of endorser, good music and slogans play a crucial role in attracting the young children towards it’. These findings are similar to various studies done on the subject in western settings. Majority of the children felt advertisements to be exaggerated, as their experience did not meet their expectations, which they developed after viewing those advertisements. Kapoor and Verma (2005), in their analysis have supported the observations of Panwar and Agnihotri (2005), that ‘as the child grows up, there is a significant increase in his/her understanding of the advertisements, yet the final understanding of the advertisement is a combined effect of the parental influence as well as children’s own cognition’. Parental influence has a significant impact on the television viewing habits of children in India. Parents in India also agree to the fact, that advertisements play a major role in influencing their (parents as well as children’s) purchase decision”.

As Namita Unnikrishnan and Shailaja Bajpai reported in their book, The Impact of Television Advertising on Children, by the early 1990s “children had become an important audience segment for the Indian advertisers and television had been instrumental in targeting them. Before television became a major social force, Indian children were less exposed to the aggressive advertising and became aware and sensitive to its claims only as young adults. Today, children graduate into becoming consumers much earlier. They begin watching TV almost at birth and since no skills are required to absorb the ideas from television, they become part of the advertising audience fairly soon”.

According to their study, of the commercials taped “from Doordarshan during April and May 1992 more than 35 percent featured children and a little over 30 percent of the advertisements reviewed held a direct appeal for the child audience”. The study, which was based on a survey conducted in Delhi (and later published by Sage in 1996), found that “Almost 75 per cent of the children in the 8-15 age group said that they want to own products advertised on TV. Their 10 favorite ads include even detergent and airline ads”.

52
This trend according to marketers is termed as “Kids Getting Older Younger or KGOY”, and we see it all around us. Interestingly apart from advertising reaching kids through television and other mass media, some schools also do tie up with manufacturers and marketers to allow promotions of the product on their premises. To quote Prasoon Joshi of McCann Erickson, “I don't think it is as simplistic as just the cutesy factor. Societal changes that are taking place have a huge role to play. Families are smaller, kid fewer, parents a lot more self centered than the previous generation. For e.g., Today if a couple is not getting along, although painful they will go ahead with the divorce unlike previous generations where rightly or wrongly they stayed together for the sake of the children. Also the career demands of the parents is much more and traveling on work or late hours mean less time with the children - leading to a sort of guilt factor. On the other hand kids due to media explosion and exposure to net are much better informed and competitive. All this has led to an increase in the 'pester power'. The kids demand the things and invariably parents give in. Add to this the age old factor of kids and their inherent innocence and cuteness and you have a strong influencing factor. Hence the role of children in advertising has increased.

Advertisers today also cannot afford to ignore the child. They seek to start building a relationship with the child as early as possible. That's the relationship builder in some way and decision maker in other ways.

A study by Unnikrishan and Bajpai (1994), "the impact of television advertising on children" drew the following conclusions:

a. TV messages have different meanings for the children from different social segments.

b. Children in India are being exposed to what might be termed an unreal reality. Television (barring what might appeal on regional networks) often depicts a 'reality' which fails to mirror the Indian society or life for what it is.

c. All children, irrespective of their economic or social status, are influenced by what they see and hear on TV, although the meanings and messages are understood and absorbed differently by the children as they bring into their negotiation of TV information and their own experiences.
d. On an average, children in Delhi watch 17 hours of TV every week (which means that at least 50 percent of them watch significantly more than this average figure), children spend more time in front of the small screen than on hobbies and other indoor as well as outdoor activities, including home work and meals.

e. The average 8 year old kid spends about 68 hours every month, 30 days (of 24 hours each) every year, and one entire year out of 10 exclusively on watching the television.

f. Advertising especially when it targets the child powerfully promotes a consumer culture and the values associated with it.

g. Seventy five percent of children said that they loved watching advertisements on TV. When asked whether they liked them better than the programmes themselves, 63.90 percent of the 5-8 age group said yes, while 43-54 percent of the 8-12 age group and 36.60 percent of the 13-15 age group said yes.

h. Children below eight years see advertisements only as pictures with story lives. Only older children understand the advertisements intention well.

i. Sixty five percent of children in the 8-15 years of age group felt they needed the products they saw on TV.

A research study done by Millward Brown some years ago, found that “there are three fundamental aspects to the kids marketing – ‘pester power’, the fact that kids and adults form similar associations with brands and the fact that children influence purchase even in traditional adult categories”. According to Millward Brown, “Kids can request brand names by the age of three; and can associate with brand values by the age of 10 and display loyalty to brands by the age of 11 years. Brand loyalty peaks at the age of 11, but drops off by the age of 13. Clearly, the trick here is to catch them young.” To quote ad film maker Prahlad Kakkar, Genesis Films, “Kids do not see advertising as advertising, but as entertainment. If you appeal to kids and adults alike it’s good for you, but if your advertising doesn’t appeal to kids, you lose half of your audience.” He had experience in working extensively with child models and knows that to get a child model to give their best for the ad, the child has to be made to feel extremely comfortable on the sets. According to a report from the American Academy of Pediatrics, "Many studies have shown that children under eight years cannot tell
the difference between a programme and a commercial. We consider that advertising aimed at children is deceptive." In the U.S., many psychologists criticize advertiser’s methods, arguing that they sometimes border on mind control. However, Sweden has banned all advertising targeting children.

A report by WHO stated that “since television commercials of foods high in fat, sugar or salt greatly influence eating habits of the young and impressionable and make them vulnerable to the non-communicable diseases, World Health Organization (WHO) has urged countries to reduce the exposure of children to such marketing by implementing a set of international recommendations”.

As per WHO “a large share of unhealthy food is marketed through TV commercials and a systematic review of evidence revealed that such advertisements influence children’s food preferences, purchase requests and consumption. In May 2010, WHO member-states endorsed a new set of recommendations on marketing foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children, calling for national and international action to reduce the exposure of children to ads that promote foods high in saturated fats, trans-fatty acids, free sugars, or salt. The member-states suggested legislations or policies, intergovernmental collaboration, cooperation with civil society and public and private stakeholders to blunt powerful tools aimed at marketing such foods to children”.

However, WHO asked countries to put in place a sound system to monitor and evaluate implementation of the recommendations? While some countries have taken off advertisements of such products from prime time television and radio and regulated their marketing. A large number of countries, particularly developing nations such as India, are yet to take proactive measures.

As per WHO report “In the year 2010 about 43 million pre-school (under five) children worldwide are obese. Of these, nearly 35 million live in developing countries. Scientific reviews have also shown that a significant portion of television promotional expose children to ‘non-core’ food products which have low nutritional value and causes child obesity. In fact, WHO’s May 2010 estimate was that more than 42 million under 5 years of age children worldwide would be obese by the end of last year, a majority in developing nations”.

55
As per Diabetes Foundation of India (DFI) “television commercials are influencing children’s eating habits to a great extent. Diabetes Foundation of India (DFI) found that ‘TV commercials have such impact on school children that they consider eating fatty foods as fashionable’. At least 54% of children surveyed preferred buying foods shown in commercials and 59% said they would continue to buy such foods. Despite knowing that this habit could lead to problems such as obesity and early onset of diabetes, neither the children were ready to change their habit nor were their parents effectively intervening to curb it. Junk food advertisements have profound effect on children’s eating habits since they are frequently displayed during the prime time without legal or official regulation” as per DFI.

The Indian study ‘Trends in Childhood Nutrition and Lifestyle Practices in India’ conducted by the Diabetes Foundation of India “involved 1,800 children aged 9-18 years from schools in New Delhi, Agra, Bangalore and Pune. According to the study, children found eating fast food ‘in’ and ‘fashionable’ while their parents claimed that their children “just don’t listen”. The study found that 63.1% of the 80% of children who watched television for over 30 minutes in a day munched snacks while watching the television. About 54% children said they preferred to buy foods shown on commercials and 48% of children simply refused to cut down their intake of colas or sweetened juices. While 41% children said they were willing to restrict watching TV to half-an-hour a day, 59% children said they would continue to buy fast food shown in the commercials. Junk food ads have profound effect on children’s eating habits and development of obesity and related diseases”. In India, fast food ads are frequently displayed during prime time without any legal or official regulation”.

According to Disney’s Kid Sense “the role of today’s kids has evolved to active influencers and participants in the purchase decisions of the nontraditional product categories. This is corroborated by a key finding that kids play the role of ‘information providers’ even for high end product categories such as television sets, cars, etc. Also the parents seem to be endorsing this line of thinking by recognizing the role of kids as active participants in the buying decision process by taking them along for shopping of big ticket items like television sets, etc.”

Kids Sense done a study on kids with reference to television sets and found the following results:

1. How involved are today’s kids with television sets?
It was found that, “51% kids claimed to be involved with television sets as a product category. Metro kids (54%) are found slightly more immersed in talking and discussing about the product category as compared to Tier 1 kids (49%) although the difference being quite low we see the Tier I kids fast catching up with the Metro kids”.

2. Do kids play a role of consultants to their parents in case of television?

Results indicated that “Kids, today not only gather information in vain but actively research for the product and express opinion to their parents as 33% parents endorse this fact about their kids. 18% parents also turn to their kids for information while buying the television sets”.

3. Role of commercials.

It was found that “70% kids like to watch television set advertisements on the tube. Television set ads also seems to make good conversation pieces as 32% discuss these advertisements with their parents after watching them”.

4. Does the involvement translate into influence?

This involvement translates into influence as well since a good number of kids are influencing their parents into listening to them. “34% of kids claim that their parents frequently follow their choice when buying television sets and 21% kids declare that their parents always follow their choice when buying television sets. 28% of the parents interviewed take their kid’s opinion seriously and follow their choice while buying the television sets, hence, validating their kid’s claims. As far as town classes are concerned, the influence factor comes across more strongly with respect to Metro kids (38%) as compared to their Tier I (30%) counterparts in terms of influence”.

5. Which television features are the influence drivers for kids?
As is common across product categories “brand emerges as the biggest driver of influence. 73% kids put brand under the ‘very important’ television feature list. Girls (74%) come across as slightly more brand conscious than boys (72%) in case of television features.

Brand gains higher importance among teens (75%) than tweens (71%). Looking across town classes, Metro kids (78%) come across as only slightly more brand centric than Tier 1 town kids (72%)

Apart from brand, other important features in television sets are clear picture quality (60%), sound quality (60%), number of TV channels (54%) and the type of screen (50%)”.

6. Finally, does it translate into actual purchase?

Results highlighted that “a sizable number of kids (22%) accompany their parents while going shopping for television sets. 15% parents also state that they take their kids along when shopping for the television sets”.

Figure 2.1: Major television features influencing the kids

Base: All respondents involved with the product (914) kids
Figure: 2.2: Kid’s high involvement & significant influence and conversion to actual buying

Thus, television comes across as a high involvement category among kids, with a healthy transition of involvement into influence and thereby the actual purchase.

Another study was conducted by “Cartoon Network and NFO across 14 A and B class cities in India with 6,436 respondents, which included kids in the age group of 7-14 years and mothers, reveals that children are now not only the mute spectators in major purchase decisions but even in items not directly concerning, they have strong preferences.

It was found that “In cars, it was found that the preferred brand of kids was the Hyundai Santro and that around 32 per cent of the kids accompany parents when they go buying a car. Among watches the favorite brand of kids was Titan, while in TV the preferred brand was LG and in music systems it was Sony”.

“Among products that directly concern kids like colas, chocolates, biscuits and chips, children’s preferences have changed somewhat. As against Pepsi some years ago, Coca-Cola has emerged as the favorite brand of fizzy drink for kids in India, while Britannia is the most favored biscuit brand. In chocolates Cadbury’s has beaten Nestle to being the kid’s favorite brand. Among chips, the kids prefer PepsiCo’s brand Lays”.

59
According to another survey carried out by “Cartoon Network in association with Synovate India in 2008, both as direct and indirect consumers in the Indian market, kids exercise a major influencing power termed as “pester power”, on parents in buying big items like cars. The survey was conducted in 14 Indian cities covering 4,043 children. The findings of the survey were interesting, 84 percent of parents took their children along with them for shopping and admitted that they influenced major purchases such as television sets, cars and mobile phones. 71 percent of parents agreed that their child influences which brand is chosen while buying TV sets, 70 percent for computers, 67 percent while buying mobile phones and 66 percent on the purchase of a car”.

“The effects of advertising (and the role of the mass media as a socialization agent) on children have, however, been the subject of considerable research during the past three decades” (Meyer, 1987; Roedder, 1981; Macklin, 1987; Yavas & Abdul-Gader, 1993; Cardwell Gardner & Bennett, 1999).

The findings of a study by Carlson et al. (2001) indicate that “parental styles play a role in determining the manner in which mothers socialize their children about television and television advertising. Children are difficult to study, and today's children live in a rapidly changing technological world”. McGee (1997:53) is of the opinion that research with children is “an even newer idea than selling things to them. Research must therefore be undertaken to understand the consumer behavior of children, and to ascertain the reasons why they feel and act the way they do”.

According to the APA Task force on advertising and children, from the advertiser’s perspective “the ultimate intended effect of airing a commercial is for the product to be subsequently purchased by viewers”. Both Atkin (1978) and Galst and White (1976) also found that the “amount of television viewing was a significant predictor of the frequency of children’s product-purchase requests at the supermarket. In the study, three fourth of all the parent–child exchanges about products were child demands for merchandise advertised on television. This pattern has been observed in other countries as well”.

Research shows that the “children’s purchase-influence attempts have a relatively high degree of success. Frequent parental yielding to children’s purchase requests has been reported in studies that rely on parent self-reports (Frieder, 1973; Ward & Wackman, 1972) as well as unobtrusive observation of behavior in the supermarket (Atkin, 1978; Galst &
White, 1976). In sum, although the process may be indirect, television commercials targeted at children are highly effective at accomplishing their intended goal of promoting the product sales”.

In several studies “children reported that when they were asked for particular food items such as cereal, snack food, or candy, parents complied about 75% of the time” (Donohue, 1975; Howard, Hulbert and Lehmann, 1973; Mark Clements Research, Inc., 1967). In another study, “mothers recalled yielding to about half of such requests for food” (Ward and Wackman, 1972a). “And when children and their parents were observed shopping in a supermarket, children were successful in influencing their parents purchase of cereal and candy in 61% and 52% of the times attempted, respectively” (Wells and LoSciuto, 1966).

In addition “to making the direct requests, both at home and in the store, children may exert influence in a subtler manner, through passive dictation (Wells, 1965). Mothers observe what foods their children eat and don't eat, what clothes they wear and which ones are left hanging in the closet, and which toys and games they would like to play with. Particularly when there was no other existing criterion for making a selection, the mother relies heavily on her observations to decide which product to purchase”.

Further studies have revealed some factors “which affect the mother's likelihood of being influenced and the child's age is one of these factors. Older children make fewer direct attempts to influence their parent’s choice, but older children are also more successful with these attempts” (McNeal, 1969; Ward, 1972; Ward and Wackman, 1972a; Wells, 1965). Furthermore, “This sex difference is seen as a result of the mother, with whom most shopping is done, imparting the traditional female role to her daughter” (McNeal, 1969).

The strength with which a child voices his request would be expected to be related to his success. One study concerned with cereal purchase found that “there was no significant relationship between a child's assertiveness and his mother's purchase behavior” (Berey and Pollay, 1968). One explanation for this result could be that “the child's assertiveness was measured by his teacher, who was probably more knowledgeable of his assertiveness in his peer relationships than in his interaction with his family” (Ward and Wackman, 1972a).

The type of product requested also has a bearing on the success of the child's request. “Food products, which are ‘most often requested by the children, are most often bought on request”
(Ward and Wackman, 1972a). For other items “such as toys, price may be the decisive element. Parents rely on the desires of their children almost 75% of the time in selecting toys which cost over five dollars” (Frideres, 1973).

Even the time of the year can make a difference. “Parents were considerably more influenced by their children's desires for toys at the Christmas time (87%) than in the summers (58%)” (Frideres, 1973).

Also the “fundamental value orientations of parents and children are yet another basis for purchase decisions. For instance, parents of upper-class children more often bought competition toys for their children than did the parents of middle-class children. It has been found that the middle-class children requested competition toys less than the upper-class children” (Caron and Ward, 1975).

“When parents deny their children's requests, the interaction often continues with an explanation of why the product was not purchased. Mothers usually feel they provide their children with a sufficient reason for not buying the product, though the children sometimes feel they do not receive a satisfactory explanation. The explanations offered to the older children tend to be more detailed than those for the younger children” (Howard, Hulbert and Lehmann, 1973; McNeal, 1969). “Discussions about requests for products are important in the consumer socialization of the child. They are part of the basis for the cross-generation transmission of consumer behavior because the child learns to evaluate the products by those criteria his parents use (Ward, 1974; Ward and Wackman, 1972b). Parents then, in their dual roles as purchase agents and consumer educators, are the primary, mediating force between their children and the purchase of the products their children want and ask for. The interaction of parent and child seems to proceed in two directions: the child requests to the parent, and the parent responds to the child”.

Research on “the interaction between parents and children has usually preceded from the direction of the children's influence attempts on their parents. Available information on the characteristics of parents which may make them more susceptible to the influence attempts of their children has for the most part come as lagniappe in studies of children. A mother's attitudes toward television and advertising have some bearing upon the degree to which she will yield to purchase influence attempts made by her child. The mother who watches a lot of television experiences a greater number of influence attempts on the part of her child, and the
likelihood that she will respond positively is greater. Furthermore, mothers who have more positive attitudes toward advertising acquiesce more often to the requests of their children. Conversely, the more restrictions parents place on their children's television viewing, the less receptive children are to influence attempts” (Ward and Wackman, 1972a).

“Brand recall” seems to be the another important predictor of influence. “As mother's brand recall of her child's favorite cereals was found to be significantly related to her purchase of those cereals” (Berey and Pollay, 1968). However, “a mother's recall of commercial content, though positively related to her child's purchase influence attempts does not seem to be positively related to her yielding” (Ward and Wackman, 1972a). “A mother’s child-centeredness (as determined by her time involvement in her child's activities) would also be expected to be a determining factor in successful influence attempts by her child. However, it does not appear to increase her receptivity to influence attempts when cereal purchase is involved. Highly child-centered mothers tend to purchase their child's favorite brand of cereals less frequently (Berey and Pollay, 1968). In addition, a mother's child-centeredness would be expected to be positively related to her brand recall of her child's favorite cereals. Again, such is not the case. The investigators who reported this finding hypothesized that the negative correlation was due to the highly child-centered mothers who did not buy their child's favorite cereals, and whose resultant lack of experience with the product, coupled with dissonance reduction, hampered their recall (Berey and Pollay, 1968). This research on children's purchase influence attempts on parental buying decisions has revealed some qualities of mothers which affects the degree to which they are influenced by their children's requests. However, this research has approached the mother's role, from the child's point of view, as a respondent to the child”.

Another study revealed that “as today children have more autonomy and decision-making power within the family than in the previous generations. The amount of influence exerted by children varies by product category and stage of the decision making process. For some products, they are active initiators, information seekers, and buyers, whereas for other product categories, they influence purchases made by the parents. This influence is termed as “pester power” which refers to the children’s’ ability to nag their parents into purchasing items they may not otherwise buy (Mintel 2002). Marketing to children is all about creating pester power as it is a powerful marketing tool”. Contemporary researchers express that “children constitute a major consumer market, with direct purchasing power for snacks and
sweets, and indirect purchase influence while shopping for big-ticket items” (Halan 2002; Singh 1998). “Children exert this power on their parents as to what food will be purchased for the household” (Darian 1998).

Research on family decision making has been largely confined to spouses till now who have been considered as the relevant decision making unit in a family. However today “the role of third party influences, such as children, on decision making strategies and negotiations is essential for a broader view of the relevant unit of analysis. Traditionally, women were seen to be the purchasing agents for the family. Nonetheless, increasing participation of women in the workforce has prompted a shift in this role as children are increasingly the “buyers” for the entire family. Even in families where women do not work, children are observed to share this role with their mothers. Children enjoy greater discretion not only in making routine consumption decisions for the family but also in pestering their parents to buy other products desired by them. Indian children have recently attracted considerable attention from marketers because the market for children’s products offers tremendous potential and is rapidly growing”.

However “the purchasing act is governed by how children have been socialized to act as the consumers. Family, peers and media are key socializing agents for children wherein family-specific characteristics such as parental style, family Sex Role Orientation (SRO), and patterns of communication play the key roles. The structure of Indian families has been previously characterized as joint families with traditional SRO (that is, the husband predominated in all the family affairs). However, owing to influences from the west, the structure of Indian families has changed to nuclear or extended families (nuclear families plus grandparents). The Indian families have become more modern in SRO, such that the decision making has become more egalitarian” (Chadha, 1995; Dhobal, 1999). Compared to this “the west is experiencing an increase in the number of single parent or female-headed households (Ahuja and Stinson, 1993; Mangleburg et al., 1999). Such a shift in family composition and structure has a bearing on the strength in the role that children are expected to play as buyers in the family”.

Kaur and Singh (2006), point out that “children constitutes three different markets: the primary, the influencer, and the future market (Figure 2.3). Certain products are simply children’s products for which they are the primary users/buyers. They sometimes either
purchase a product themselves or select the product before it is purchased by the parents. For other products, such as ones which are used by the entire family unit, they may influence purchases made by the parents. There are some products where children wield direct influence or pester power by overtly specifying their preferences and voicing them aloud. For other products, parents buying patterns are affected by prior knowledge of the tastes and preferences of their children. This ‘passive dictation’ of choice is prevalent for a wide variety of daily consumed product items as well as products for household consumption. Also, decision making in households is seen to change with the mere presence of children. ‘The nature of joint decisions in couple decision making units and family decision making units is seen to be different’ (Filiatrault and Ritchie, 1980). It is also observed that children are socialized by their parents to act as rational consumers. After years of direct or indirect observation of parental behavior in the marketplace, they gradually acquire relevant consumer skills from their parents”.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 2.3: Children as Influencers**

McNeal and Ji (1999) point out that “children learn their consumer-related skills, knowledge and attitude through interaction with the various social agents in specific social settings, a process that is termed as consumer socialization (Ward 1974) or consumer development” (McNeal 1964). McNeal (1998) stated that “parent’s today worry that their children should have it as good as other children, and therefore are giving them more money, more things, and more opportunities to better compete”. There is considerable evidence to suggest that “family communication processes modify the effects of other socialization agents, in particular the television (McLeod et al. 1982), and this parental mediation is often the result of a child’s requests for advertised products” (Atkin 1982).
In India, the family structures are undergoing a metamorphosis and the Indian society is also witnessing an increase in the number of “single parent and dual career families”.

The influence of children varies by the “product, product sub-decision, stage of the decision–making process, nature of socialization of children, families gender role orientation, demographic features such as age and gender, and also by respondent selected for investigation of the relative influence” (Belch et al., 1985). “Children have been reported to wield a lot of influence in purchase decisions for children products, such as snacks (Ahuja and Stinson, 1993); toys (Burns and Harrison, 1985; Jensen, 1995; Williams and Veeck, 1998); children’s wear (Converse and Crawford, 1949; Foxman and Tansuhaj, 1988; Holdert and Antonides, 1997; Van Syckle, 1951); and cereals” (Belch et al., 1985; Berey and Pollay, 1968). “The children were also been observed to influence the decisions for family products also, such as the holiday or vacations (Ahuja and Stinson, 1993; Belch et al., 1985; Dunne, 1999; Holdert and Antonides, 1997; Jenkins, 1979); movies (Darley and Lim, 1986); and eating at particular restaurants or even decision making for the family to eat out” (Filiatrault and Ritchie, 1980; Williams and Veeck, 1998). Few researchers have also investigated “the role children play in purchase of children and family products together” (Foxman and Tansuhaj, 1988; Geuens et al., 2002; Hall et al., 1995; Mangleburg et al., 1999; McNeal and Yeh, 1997). Jensen (1995) studied “three categories of products, those that are primarily for children (e.g., toys, candy), products for family consumption (food, shampoo, toothpaste) and parent’s products (gasoline, coffee, rice)”. Similarly, Johnson (1995) “selected products as categorized by Sheth (1974) that is products for individual use, those for family use as well as products for the household”.

Berey and Pollay (1968) studied the “mother and child dyads (children aged 2 to 5 years) making purchases of ready-to-eat breakfast cereals. They noted that most products are not directly available to a child and the parents generally act as intermediary purchasing agents for the child. In such cases, the extent of influence a child may have on a parent’s purchase decision depends on at least two factors: the child’s assertiveness and the parent’s child-centeredness”. They hypothesized that “the more assertive the child, or the more child-centered the mother, the more likely the mother will purchase child’s favorite brands”. However, they found that the mother played a “gatekeeper” role and bought cereals that weighed strongly on nutrition. In cases of “disagreement with the child over brand decisions, the mother tried to superimpose her preferences over those of the child. They reasoned that
these outcomes stem from the mother’s perception of the quality of information possessed by their children. They also found that assertiveness by a child could increase the likelihood of the child having his or her favorite brands purchased”. Chan and McNeal (2003), in a study of Chinese parents, also reported that “parents indulged in considerable gate keeping for children’s products. They exhibited strict control over the kind of products that children can or cannot buy while at the same time allowing children some freedom in choosing brands of permissible products”. Atkin (1978) pointed out that “children tend to rely on pre-established preferences based more often on premium incentives offered on a purchase than the nutritional features of a cereal at the time of influencing cereal purchases”.

As stated above, “the extent of influence a child may have on a parent’s purchase decision depends on at least two factors: the child’s assertiveness and the parent’s child-centeredness (Kaur and Singh 2006). This influence can also be linked to different stages of the decision making process of families ranging from the stage of creating awareness to the stage of actual buying behavior. St. Elmo Lewis proposed a selling model in the 19th century (Strong 1925) which was related to the decision making process for product purchase. The stages, Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action, form a linear hierarchy. Simply put, in order to be motivated to actually make a purchase, Lewis believed that the fourth stage, Action, would come as a natural result of movement through the first three stages; i.e., desire leads to action. Children passively generate awareness, interest and the desire towards products”. For family activities, such as choice of vacations and restaurants and consumer durables; research has shown that “the influence exerted by children is more in the problem recognition stage and search stages and decreases considerably in the final decision making” (Belch et al 1985; Filiatrault and Ritchie 1980; Hempel 1974).

Belch et al. (2005) proposed that “as teenagers are high users of the internet having greater access to the market information which could impact their influence in family decision making. It was also found that teens who perceive themselves to be ‘internet mavens’ (individuals who are relied upon more for providing information from the virtual marketplace), as well as their parents, believed that teens were more influential in all stages-initiation and information search, alternative evaluation and final decision stages. Researchers have tried to study the influence of children across the product categories and parental responses”.
Ward and Wackman (1972) investigated “children’s purchase influence attempts as well as parental yielding”. Jensen (1995) studied the “purchase influence attempts by children in Denmark, the location and cause of requests and parental responses to the same”. Atkin (1978) observed that “parent child interaction in the supermarket for purchase of cereals and snacks”. Williams and Burns (2000) explored “the dimensionality of children’s direct influence attempts. The question under consideration is that if the children are able to lure parents to the extent of buying products or if the parental atmosphere is able to buffer the impact of these invasive marketing campaigns”. Research has pointed out that there are primarily “four types of parenting styles that differ in the amount of responsiveness and control exercised by the parents. This typology categorizes them into indulgent, authoritarian, authoritative, and uninvolved parenting styles (Baumrind 1971, 1983, 1991a, 1991b, 1996). Each of these parenting styles reflects different naturally occurring patterns of parental values, practices and behaviors (Baumrind 1991) and a distinct balance of responsiveness and demandingness”. According to Kaur and Singh (2006) “socialization of children is a function of parental style”.

Parental style is a “constellation of attitude towards the child which is communicated to the child and that taken together create an emotional climate in which the parent’s behaviors are expressed (Darling and Steinberg 1993). Differences in parental styles account for differences with regard to the way parents attempt to control children’s behavior through the use of emotions and authority, etc. at the time of socializing them. The socialization models of child development point at the impact of these socialization agencies”. Belsky’s (1984) process model points out that “optimal need gratification is necessary for the child development, and at the same time exonerates the child’s role in his poor outcomes and places thrust on the parental role. Thus these models of child socialization and development lay emphasis on the role of parental influence. Not only are the children impacted upon by the socialization agents, the families are also impacted upon by these agencies”. According to sociologist Bronfenbrenner F(1977) individuals are like a “set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls. In studying human development, one has to see within, beyond, and across, how the several systems interact (family, workplace and economy). Bronfenbrenner’s framework points out “the four systems of influence on the child and his family which are the micro-system which is related to the interpersonal interactions with the child, the meso-system which consists of interrelationships among the settings (i.e. the home,
a day-care centre, and the schools), the exo-system—which includes agencies outside the home like parental workplace, school boards, social service agencies, and planning commissions. The impact of invasive marketing on the children, parents, families and the nation becomes a prerogative of the exo-system, wherein the social agencies attempt to intervene and initiate the required moves to prevent this potentially negative impact”.

Mehrotra and Torges (1977) and Williams and Veeck (1998) further noted that “no particular attitude or a set of attitudes uniquely determines for all the products whether a mother would be influenced by her child or not. Child-centered mothers were more likely to be influenced by their children and family-oriented mothers or women with close knit families were more susceptible to the children’s influence. Mothers co-viewing TV programs along with their children were more likely to yield to children’s influencing attempts for the products advertised on those shows”.

“The children’s influence is also seen to vary by who is the user and the perceived importance of the product to the user” (Beatty and Talpade, 1994; Foxman and Tansuhaj, 1988). Jensen (1995) also proposed that “parent’s involvement is a function of the financial risk, their role as users and their perception of product differentiation whereas children are mostly involved in the purchase due to their role as users. She explored the influence of children in making purchases and concluded that besides products for direct consumption, children display influence in purchasing products for family consumption where parents are less involved and perceive little or no product differentiation (for food products)”. As per Geuens et al. (2002) “the relative influence of children varies by the extent to which the parents are busy”. Foxman et al. (1989) concluded that “children’s tend to have more ‘say’ in the purchase of products that are less expensive and for their own use. Several factors were found to significantly affect the agreement among family members regarding adolescent purchase decision influence: families witnessing greater influence had older fathers, a concept-oriented communication style, fewer children, and a mother who worked fewer hours outside the house”.

69
Table 2.2

“Summary of Research in India on Influence of Children in Family Purchase Decision Making”

Palan and Wilkes (1997) observed the “adolescent-parent interaction in decision making and reported that besides direct requests, adolescents are likely to use bargaining (money deals, other deals, and reasoning) and persuasion (opinions, begging) as strategies to influence the decision outcomes”.

In India Singh (1992) studied “the role played by family members while purchasing a television across five occupational categories i.e. teachers, doctors, businesspeople, lawyers and engineers. Children of engineers and doctors were found to have remarkable influence in the purchase decisions”. Hundal (2001) “In a study of rural buying behavior in the Amritsar district of Punjab investigated the role of family members in making purchase decisions for the durables including refrigerators, televisions, air coolers and washing machines. His findings projected that product selection decisions in rural families were mostly made by the spouses together but they were also highly influenced by the children”. Halan (2002) opines that “marketing to kids is no longer a kid stuff”. In a focus group study by Kids-Link “the
market research group of Kid Stuff Promos and Events, with boys and girls in the age group of 13-15 years in Delhi, girls estimated that they were able to influence 50 percent of the decisions. The study also highlighted that kids have a lot of information because of exposure to television, other media and friends. They reflected that parents sought their opinion even in making purchase of products not directly related to the children, such as cars, because of their higher knowledge of the brands, models and the latest trends. Also, children stated that parents bought products that made the kids happy”.

As the family decisions are dynamic and interrelated, Douglas (1983) and Mangleburg (1990) suggested that “the decision making process should be studied across decisions rather than in relation to the given decision independently”.

Szybillo and Sosanie (1977) while examining family decision making processes observed that “all members of the family (husband, wife, and children) were greatly involved in all the three decision stages (problem recognition, search for information and final selection), when considering a fast food restaurant and a family trip (for products that affect the entire family). The wife/child dyad was very important in initiating a purchase as well as providing information. Other researchers have also observed that children exert considerable influence during the problem recognition and search stages and the least influence in the final decision stage (Belch et al, 1985; Filiatrault and Ritchie, 1980; Hempel, 1974) for family activities such as choice of vacations and restaurants and consumer durables”. However Holdert and Antonides (1997) reported that “children’s influence was higher in the later stages of the decision making process; that is, at the time of alternative evaluation, choice and purchase for four purchases” (holidays, adult and child clothing, sandwich filling). Belch et al. (2005) proposed that “since teenagers are high users of the Internet, they have greater access to market information which could impact their influence in the family decision making. They found that teens who perceive themselves to be ‘Internet mavens’ (individuals who are relied upon more for providing information from the virtual marketplace), as well as their parents, believed that teens were more influential in all the stages - initiation and information search, and alternative evaluation and final decision stages. However, their influence was higher in the initiation and information search stages as compared to the alternative evaluation and final decision stages”.

71
However “children were not seen to have a large impact on instrumental decisions such as how much to spend (Belch et al., 1985; Jenkins, 1979; Szybillo and Sosanie, 1977), but do have on expressive decisions such as color, model, brand, shape and the time of purchase” (Belch et al.,1985; Darley and Lim, 1986). Williams and Veeck (1998) reported that “in China where most families have a single child, the child exerted considerable influence during all the stages while buying products for family use”. Beatty and Talpade (1994) suggested that “teen’s knowledge affects their perceived influence in the search for information in the decision process for some products such as the family stereo. The teen’s financial clout seems to allow them a greater say in initiating self purchases, but not in family purchases. Parent’s dual income status allows adolescents greater influence in some family durable purchases, but this does not affect the self purchases where their influence is already substantial. These effects are pronounced for products that teens care for (e.g., stereo) and use often (e.g., telephone)”.

While studying Indian families, Singh (1992) noted that “families differed with respect to their roles in making purchase sub decisions. The ‘when to purchase’ decision was generally syncratic (decided by the husband and wife jointly) and also influenced by the children”. Hundal (2001) noted that the “brand selection decisions were also made jointly by the couple but were importantly influenced by children in the family. The store where the durables were purchased as well as making of the actual purchase decision was also decided jointly or by the husband individually. However, children also ‘went to buy’, that is they accompanied their parents at the time of buying televisions, washing machines as well as refrigerators”. Kapoor (2001) collected information from the families in Delhi in regard to their roles across “stages of purchase decision-making for six durables - televisions, refrigerators, washing machines, personal computers, audio systems and the cars. She found that individual members were associated with the multiple roles. The initiator for purchase in a family was typically a young female member, who was likely to be the wife or one of the children. She illustrated that the need for an audio system, personal computer and television was likely to be first expressed by the children in the family. As influencers, younger members especially children, were found to affect the purchase of a personal computer, audio system and the television. The final purchases were found to be decided upon after consultation with other family members, mainly the husband”. “Children have not been observed to have a large impact on instrumental decisions such as how much to spend (Kaur, 2003; Singh and Kaur,
2004; Verma, 1982), but rather play a role while making expressive decisions such as color, model, brand, shape and time of purchase (Sen Gupta and Verma, 2000; Singh, 1992; Singh and Kaur, 2003; Synovate, 2004) as validated in the West as well’.

Kaur and Singh (2004) observed that “children are individually active in initiating the idea to purchase a durable. In other stages of the decision making process, they exhibit joint influence along with other members of the family. This implies that they provide support to the member exerting influence to increase the pressure but do not wield much influence individually”. Chadha (1995) concluded that “in the older age group household’s sons and daughters emerge as the key persons to introduce new products in the house”.

There is a 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). Marketers use television as a medium of communication as it affords access to children at much earlier ages as compared to the print media, largely because textual literacy does not develop until many years after children have become regular television viewers”. It has been found that approximately “80% of all the advertising targeted to children falls within four product categories: toys, cereals, candies and fast-food restaurants” (Kunkel and 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, emphasizing instead that advertisements are for the entertainment and ‘enjoyable for their own sake’ as opposed to providing any real consumer information. The most common persuasive strategy employed in advertising to children is to associate the product with fun and happiness, rather than to provide any factual product-related information. Hence, children in the age category of 8-10 years have a positive attitude towards advertisements”. However “knowledge of advertising tactics and appeals emerges only in the early adolescence and develops thereafter” (Boush, Friestad and Rose, 1994).

John (1999) notes that “the ability to recognize bias and deception in ads, coupled with an understanding of advertising’s persuasive intent, results in less trust and less liking of the commercials”. With the increasing age children’s attitude towards advertisements changes from being positive to negative and further as they step into adolescence, they become
skeptical of advertising. Boush et al. (1994) concluded that “children in young adolescence even exhibited mistrustful predispositions towards advertising. In adolescents, knowledge about advertiser tactics increased with the age. Higher levels of knowledge of advertiser tactics and certain personality variables were positively related to the adolescent’s skepticism towards advertising”.

Moschis and Churchill (1979) and Moschis (1987) also found that “older adolescents tended to (a) develop resistance to persuasive advertising (b) understand better the marketing strategies related to the pricing of products and (c) generally become more sophisticated as consumers”.

Attention to commercials has found to be directly related to the perceived truthfulness of the advertising. “Children who perceive commercials to be mostly true, pay more attention to them than those who suspect them” (Chan, 2001). Mizerski (1995) found that “adults-oriented product trade characters were also readily recognized by children as young as the three years of age”. Gorn and Florsheim (1985) examined “the effect of commercials for the adult products on children and found that such exposure does have an effect but that it is mainly a function of the product category advertised. Exposure to commercials led to only a small change in response”. Mizerski (1995) concluded that “recognition, or the ability to match a cartoon trade character and the product, is positively related to the age. Along with this, the level of recognition and a favorable attitude towards the product were also found to be positively associated with the age”. Jensen (1995) also found that “purchase requests by the children are strongly stimulated by the commercials or by friends who have purchased the product”.

Mallalieu et al. (2005) reported that “children born in the 1990’s appear to have developed these cognitive abilities (for example, to differentiate between a programme and a commercial or to understand the purpose and intent of the advertising) to a far greater extent than children reported in earlier studies” (Goldberg et al., 1978; Boush et al., 1994).

However “the impact of television advertising on preschool and elementary school-aged children occurs at multiple levels, including the relatively immediate product-persuasion effects intended by the advertiser, as well as broader and/or more cumulative types of influences that accrue from exposure to the large numbers of commercials over a period of time. For example, a cereal ad may have the immediate effect of generating product-purchase
requests and increasing the product consumption, but it may also contribute to the outcomes such as misperceptions about proper nutritional habits” (Kunkel et al., 2004). “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 the children such as Mc-Donalds (Williams and Veeck, 1998), or associating a cartoon character with a cereal”.

“Since ads are particularly effective in persuading children to like and request the product (Goldberg, Gorn, and Gibson, 1978), rejection of requests further enhances the chances for arousal of conflicts between the parents and children”(Atkin, 1978; Kunkel et al., 2004). The concern here, of course, is due to the “commercials for candies, snacks and sugared cereals far outnumbering the commercials for more healthy or nutritious food (Kunkel and Gantz, 1992)”. “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 age group 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 problem”. Kapoor and Verma (2005) investigated the 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 the ad increased and children above the age of eight years were able to respond to the TV ads in a mature and informed manner. Heavy viewing was positively associated with favorable attitudes towards TV ads and, conversely, interest in ads declined with the age. Children’s exposure to TV ads was determined to a large extent by parent’s 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 ads on the children’s purchase requests”.

Although “serious conflicts in family purchase decisions are rare, some form of family conflict is highly probable, because forming joint preferences requires combining individual
preferences of the family members (Lee and Collins, 1999). When various alternatives are being considered, each member attempts to influence the other towards his/her preferred decision”.

A repertoire of strategies has been proposed and validated in the literature for “spousal conflict (Kim and Lee, 1996; Nelson, 1988; Sheth, 1974), some researchers have extended the same to include children as well in the family”. Belch et al. (1980) found “little disagreement among family members, but there was some variation across product classes. The amount of disagreement is relatively low for decisions such as where to buy and when to buy, but it is higher for the decisions concerning how much money to spend. Children perceived the existence of conflict more than their parents”. Buss and Schaninger (1987) reported that “conflict can be managed in two ways, by either using avoidance tactics or the resolution tactics. Since product type has been seen to effect involvement and influence of children, the nature of the product can also be important in determining the choice of conflict resolution strategy”. Johnson (1995) found that “the ‘product type’ is an important variable in determining the way children will behave in the family decision making. She observed that bargaining was the most common strategy adopted by the children when trying to influence the purchase of products for personal use. Conflict avoidance was most commonly used for the family use products. However, for products for home use, such as a personal computer, they resorted to problem solving tactics to resolve the conflicts. The author also pointed out that while ‘bargaining’ is most common in dyadic interactions (Qualls and Jaffe, 1992), ‘problem solving’ is more frequent in triadic interactions between mother, father, and the child”. These results supported the results of Belch et al. (1980) and were further confirmed in a study conducted by Holdert and Antonides (1997). In the study by Belch et al. (1980), it was found that “children see the problem solving strategies being used less often. It was felt that children were either not a part of the decision making process for those products or that discussions took place outside the presence of children. A significant relationship was also found to exist between the situation in which the family purchase decision making occurred (for example, presence/absence of a family member, decision taken in the retail shop) and the choice of a conflict resolution strategy”.

Lee and Collins (1999) proposed that “when more than two family members are in conflict during the purchase decision process, the third parties (children) may form alliances to aid one side against the other. They investigated patterns of influence and coalition patterns
across three stages of the decision making process, namely Configuration (synonymous with problem recognition and search for the information), Negotiation (synonymous with evaluation of the alternatives), and Outcome (the final decision) stage. It was found that children tend to use emotive strategies to gain influence”. At the same time, “the influence of family members varies in response to the gender mix of the children. Daughters were generally more influential than sons and the gender of elder children appeared to have more significance on the influence structure of the family than that of the younger children. Interestingly, fathers and elder daughters and mothers and sons were found to work together to gain influence. The influence of a mother in the family was the strongest during the Negotiation and Outcome stage when both her children were male. Her influence was also strong if her first child was male and the second child was a female. The mother-son and father-daughter pattern changed when parents had two daughters. The father had less influence during the Configuration stage when they had a younger daughter and his influence increased in the Outcome stage if the couple had an elder daughter and a younger son. Moreover, mothers in two girl families had greater decision power than when the family had an elder daughter and a younger son”.

Williams and Burns (2000) “using social power theory investigated the ways in which children make direct influence attempts. They found that when children feel ‘entitled’ or ‘privileged’ to act in their own way, they resort to negative influence attempts such as deception, displaying anger, begging or pleading to exert the influence. If they find that their parents have the right or legitimate power to direct their actions, they utilize positive influence attempts such as asking nicely, showing affection or bargaining. When they feel that they can manipulate their parents, they try to deceive the parents, display anger, or beg and plead. If the children expect to be punished as a result of non-compliance, they behave in ways as is perceived positive by the parents. This implies that when parents resort to coercive tactics, the children try to have their own way by asking nicely, bargaining or showing affection. Many times children also express compliance in exchange for a future gain that is, they bargain for a future reward in exchange for a present one”.

As per Ward (1974), Consumer socialization, “Is the process by which young people acquire skills, knowledge and attitude relevant to their functioning in the marketplace”. The process of “consumer socialization begins with infants, who accompany their parents to stores, where they are initially exposed to marketing stimuli. Within the first two years, children begin to
make requests for the desired products. As kids learn to walk, they also tend to make their own selections when they are in stores. By around the age of five, most kids are making purchases with the help of parents and grandparents, and by eight most are making independent purchases and have become fully fledged consumers” (McNeal and Yeh, 1993, cited in Solomon, 2003). Socialization of children is a function of parental style. Parental style is a “constellation of attitudes toward the child that are communicated to the child and that, taken together, create an emotional climate in which the parent’s behaviors are expressed (Darling and Steinberg, 1993, p. 488). Differences in the parental styles account for differences as regards to the way parents attempt to control children’s behavior through the use of emotions, use of authority, etc. at the time of socializing them”.

Becker (1964) “took a dimensional approach in which the parental style was assumed to consist of different dimensions that are orthogonal to each other. He suggested that parental discipline behavior could be reflected by a three-dimensional model to conceptualize family socialization - warmth vs. hostility, restrictiveness vs. permissiveness and calm detachment vs. anxious emotional involvement”. On those dimensions, “parents were categorized as Rigid Controlling, Authoritarian, Organized Effective, Overprotective, Democratic, Indulgent, Anxious Neurotic and Neglecting” (c.f. Carlson and Grossbart, 1988). Baumrind (1971) further “developed a three-fold typology of parental styles and classified parents as - ‘Authoritarian, Authoritative and Permissive’. These two approaches were merged further by Macoby and Martin (1983) so that the parenting classification could be generalized to most families. They defined parental style as a function of two dimensions - ‘responsiveness’ and ‘demandingness’. The parents were then classified as Indulgent, Authoritative, Authoritarian and Neglecting”. Carlson, Grossbart and Stuenkel (1992) showed that “parental style provides a theoretical basis for explaining differences among parents regarding how they communicate the consumer skills and knowledge to their children”.

The American researcher Deborah Roedder-John (1999) has documented twenty five years of accumulated international research on “children in relation to their role as ‘consumers’. She has incorporated the findings into a general conceptual framework that conceives of consumer socialization as progressing through a series of three sequential stages capturing the major cognitive shifts from preschool to adolescence: the perceptual stage (3 to 7 years), the analytical stage (7 to 11 years) and the learned stage (11 to 16 years) (see Table 2.3). These stages, essentially defined in terms of age groups, include various dimensions that
characterize the children’s knowledge. Motivations as well as cognitive and social skills are aspects of these stages, which are also related to children’s growing sophistication with regard to products, brands, advertising campaigns, shopping, pricing, decision-making strategies and influential strategies”.

However by using “Piaget’s theory, Roedder-John’s framework seeks to identify the main shifts in children’s understanding of basic economic concepts. It depicts young children’s skills as being limited and only based on perceptual skills, which are not enough to understand the implicit messages contained in advertising for example. Thus from 3 to 7 years old, children show an egocentric orientation, as they are not able to differentiate points of view. Therefore, they might not be able to distinguish the persuasive motivations of the advertiser from the information needed by the consumer. Moreover, children’s ability to deal with information is limited and prevents them from making decisions based on a plurality of dimensions as adults do. This model provides descriptive information outlining how a child’s intellect develops within the analytical stage – starting from fragmentary and imprecise ideas and proceeding towards a more logical understanding. In the analytical stage, children are becoming aware of the complexity of the market because their way of reasoning becomes more abstract and is no longer only driven by their own perceptions. The reflective stage allows pre-adolescents and adolescents to develop critical thinking about the marketplace and how it functions”.
Paxton and John (1995) in their study of the “age differences in information search behavior of children found that older children gather more information for favorable product profiles and less information when the cost-versus-benefit of acquiring information is high”. Other studies indicated that “younger kids use few dimensions to compare and evaluate the brands (Bahn, 1986; Capon and Kuhn, 1980). They reported that children tend to rely on dominant perceptual features (vs. functional features) of products in gathering information and making choices. They also suggested that children increase the amount of information gathered in response to the choice situations that are irreversible, recognize the need to spend more time in gathering information for decisions that are important to their perception and voice the need to examine more brands before making a choice” (Davidson and Hudson, 1988). It was found that “as the number of alternatives increases, children restrict their search on more promising alternatives” (Paxton and John, 1997). “Young children are apparently unstable

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Perceptual stage (3-7 years)</th>
<th>Analytical stage (7-11 years)</th>
<th>Reflective stage (11-16 years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge structures</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>Concrete</td>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>Abstract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Perceptual features</td>
<td>Functional/underlying features</td>
<td>Functional/underlying features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity</td>
<td>Unidimensional</td>
<td>Two or more dimensions</td>
<td>Multidimensional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple</td>
<td>Contingent (if-then)</td>
<td>Contingent (if-then)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective</td>
<td>Egocentric (own perspective)</td>
<td>Dual perspectives (own+others)</td>
<td>Dual perspectives in social context</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2.3**

Paxton and John (1995) in their study of the “age differences in information search behavior of children found that older children gather more information for favorable product profiles and less information when the cost-versus-benefit of acquiring information is high”. Other studies indicated that “younger kids use few dimensions to compare and evaluate the brands (Bahn, 1986; Capon and Kuhn, 1980). They reported that children tend to rely on dominant perceptual features (vs. functional features) of products in gathering information and making choices. They also suggested that children increase the amount of information gathered in response to the choice situations that are irreversible, recognize the need to spend more time in gathering information for decisions that are important to their perception and voice the need to examine more brands before making a choice” (Davidson and Hudson, 1988). It was found that “as the number of alternatives increases, children restrict their search on more promising alternatives” (Paxton and John, 1997). “Young children are apparently unstable
about product preferences as they lack or do not utilize an internal frame of reference for comparing products on a consistent basis. The choice process/cue set used by younger children is different and simpler from the categorization schemes used by older children who use more structured cues to categorize the products” (John and Lakshmi-Ratan, 1992).

Moschis and Moore (1979) found that “adolescents preferred to consult with their parents and/or rely on information they receive from them. In spite of this, parents are not as instrumental in the child’s decision regarding which product to buy as compared to the brand name and reduced prices. The amount of parent-adolescent communication about consumption was not related to the adolescent’s propensity to use price in evaluating the desirability of various products”. Palan and Wilkes (1997) asserted that “children are also primed to assume a more active role in purchase discussions after years of listening to their parent’s explanation of why certain requests can/cannot be honored. It was projected that influence attempts by adolescents are likely to be effective when they match their influence attempts to their parent’s decision making style”.

Besides family, ‘mass media’ also serve as an important factor in the consumer socialization of children. Through mass media, “children may learn about new brands and products (Goldberg, Gorn and Gibson, 1978), how to use products and who uses them, realities and beliefs about them (Gorn and Florsheim, 1985) and preferences for them” (Gorn and Goldberg, 1977). Nonetheless, it has been found that “as children grow they develop sensitivities towards interpersonal influences, especially the peers. The nature of the product affects the level of peer group influence. Public luxuries and private necessities form the ends of the conspicuousness continuum, with public luxuries being subject to significantly more influence than private necessities. There is a tendency for public products of all types, regardless of whether they are luxuries or necessities, to be subject to more reference group influence than private products for all types” (Childers and Rao, 1992).

Family communication is expected to affect the children’s influence in family decision making. McLeod and Chaffee (1972) developed “a typology that characterizes the parent-child communication structure. The typology, used for more than two decades, classifies families as having socio-oriented communication (emphasizing parental control) or concept-oriented communication (in which children are encouraged to develop their own ideas and express their views more openly). On the basis of the presence or absence of these two
communication patterns, they classify families into four types: laissez-faire, protective, pluralistic and consensual families. Laissez-faire families emphasize neither of the two dimensions and there is little or no communication between parents and children. Protective families emphasize the socio-orientation dimension, stressing obedience and social harmony, and are not concerned with conceptual matters. Conversely, pluralistic families tend to stress the concept-orientation dimension, with an emphasis being placed on mutuality of respect and interests. Finally, consensual families stress both the socio and concept orientation dimensions, with the result that children are encouraged to explore the world about them, but to do so without disrupting the family’s established social harmony” (Moschis et al., 1986).

“Parent-child authoritarianism and parental coalition”, if taken together as family type, affect communication and hence influence the role children have in family decision making. “Family communication patterns depend upon parental control of consumption and media usage (Carlson and Grossbart, 1988; Chan and McNeal, 2003), parental style (Carlson and 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 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”.

Researchers found that “children exert more influence in higher income and larger families (Foxman et al., 1989; Palan, 1998; Szybillo, Sosanie, and Tenenbein, 1977; Ward and Wackman, 1972). The influence of children increases with age (Atkin, 1978; Darley and Lim, 1986; Mehrotra and Torges, 1977; Moschis and Mitchell, 1986) and the ability to comprehend the content of advertising messages also increases with age” (Laczniaik and Palan, 2004). Moschis and Moore (1979) found that “a significant positive relationship exists between adolescent’s socioeconomic background and the extent of brand preferences for various products. Age was related to the number of information sources preferred, and there was also an increase with age in the propensity to prefer friends as a source of information. Similarly, the tendency to rely on parents for information and advice decreased with age. It
was also found that as the ages of children increased, they preferred to shop without their parents”. Moschis and Churchill (1979) also found “positive relationships between the consumption ability of adolescents and social class and age”.

Mangleburg et al. (1999) proposed that “in some families, children are treated more as equals by parents, whereas, in others, children are viewed as subordinate to parent’s authority. These dimensions of family authority or parent-child authoritarianism are likely to be affected by family type, that is, single-parent, step-parent, or intact families. Parental coalition formation is seen as a means to reinforce the decisions made by one spouse and limit children’s influence. Family type is expected to be related to parental coalition formation and parent-child authoritarianism. These two dimensions are expected to affect children’s influence in family and child-related purchase decisions. The study revealed that adolescents in single-parent families had greater influence than their counterparts in step and intact families, probably due to differences in socialization with respect to family authority relations”.

Kourilsky and Murray (1981) examined “the effect of economic reasoning on satisfaction within the family and found that single-parent families exhibited a higher level of economic reasoning and satisfaction as compared to two-parent families”.

Dhobal (1999) noted that “across the stages of product adoption - awareness, knowledge, preference, conviction and adoption—for durables, Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs), and services, children were previously inactive in all the stages of adoption except for the actual adoption stage. However, today, children are active in all the five stages of adoption of durables as well as the FMCGs. He reported that in the new urban Indian family, children were influencers/co-deciders at the time of purchase of personal products, consumables, financial products, vacations, educational products and family automobiles while they were buyers of family toiletries and initiators or gatekeepers for purchases of household durables”.

According to Handbook of Child Psychology “very early programming for children was considered to be an effective means of encouraging parents to buy the products. Children certainly do regularly ask for the products as a consequence of seeing them advertised on television”. Atkin (1975b) reported that “among 440 children ranging from preschool to fifth grade, those who were classified as heavy viewers said that they asked for the products ‘a lot’ whereas the figure for light viewers was about half the frequency of requests”.
As per the child psychologist, “Parents use TV as an electronic babysitter and bribe them using TV toys or chips seen in the ads to get children to behave, eat or cooperate. Children get into a rut of wanting things all the time. On the long-term effects of advertising on children they say - What they see, they learn. Advertisements also encourage children to be fickle in their loyalties. They don't develop long-lasting values and children mature in the skewed patterns.

Many ads sell food and toys that parents may not be able to afford or want to give their children. This often leads to conflicts in parent-child relationships. They have found that materialism is creeping into parent-child relationships in a big way. TV time is offered as a reward for having gone to tuition, as per the child psychologist at NIMHANS” (National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences).

INVASIVE MARKETING AND CHILDREN

There is a deluge of information about the products and services, vast range of options and alternatives, endless promotions and the “special offers”. Mitchell and Papavassiliou (2005) points out that “confused consumers are more vulnerable to deceptive marketing practices and are not able to process the information logically. Advertising is instrumental in extending consumer confusion through information overload brought about with too many complex and even the conflicting messages. These weaken the effect and decrease the recall rate of individual messages thereby leading to more problems of decision making”. Also “there is a 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). Marketing and advertising are accentuating the customer confusions to levels where the passive delegation of decision making has already been initiated. More so quest for more disposable incomes and better life style has left the customer with very little time to be devoted to cognitive activity for decision making. Confused consumers can often involve another person (i.e. spouse, family member and friend) in the purchasing decision or even delegate the task to them completely” (Mitchell and Papalassiliou 2005). “Increasing customer confusion and decreasing disposable time has thus lead to a state where in the parents have started involving children in the purchase decision making process and have started passively delegating the purchase decision responsibilities to their children. Approximately, 80% of all advertising targeted to children
falls within four the product categories: toys, cereals, candies and fast-food restaurants” (Kunkel and Gantz 1992).

According to Turner et al (2006), “children are influenced by the number of socialization agents, which influence their purchase decisions. The cognitive-psychological model and the social learning model explain and predict that how consumers make consumption-related decisions” (Moschis and Churchill 1978). “In communication and advertising research, the social learning model has often been a popular choice for explaining the consumer behavior (Moschis and Smith 1985). Children also try to emulate and develop general behaviors and attitudes by modeling the behavior of others (Bandura 1977). These models often become the “role” models for the individual, influencing the career aspirations, educational objectives and self-views of young people” (Mitchell et al. 1979). Halan (2002) opines that “marketing to kids is no a longer kid stuff. This study reflected that parents considered the knowledge of children in terms of brands, models and latest trends was much higher than their own and hence sought their opinion in the purchase decision of products”.

As we know that children are very susceptible to advertising, for example, “McDonald’s Happy Meals came with a free ‘Smurf’ character in July 2002, one of the nine characters which children were encouraged to collect” (Parent’s Jury 2002). Solomon (1996) argues that “children are targeted directly with the messages of what food products to buy, which will influence them to pester their parents when shopping”. “Parents often find it difficult to deny their children the food that features their favorite cartoon characters or celebrities that they have seen on the television” (Keane and Willetts 1994). Jensen (1995) also found that “purchase requests relationship between parental overindulgence and buying behavior by children are strongly stimulated by the commercials or by friends who have purchased the product. The Indian context is replete with practical examples of success of advertisements targeting children. The Asian paints kid’s creative advertisements, Esteem’s “my daddy’s big car”, Mc Donald’s happy meal, surf excel ‘Daag Achchey hain” advertisement and ‘my Daddy strongest’, Dhara cooking oil are the examples of such advertisements popular in India. Though critics have strongly condemned merchandising of tele toys via food chains like McDonald and Burger king, but this has not prevented the cross promotion”. According to Kaur and Singh “advertising to children avoids any appeal to the rational, emphasizing instead that ads are for entertainment and ‘enjoyable for their own sake’ as opposed to providing any real consumer information”. “The most common persuasive strategy employed
in advertising to children is to associate the product with fun and happiness, rather than to provide any factual product-related information. Hence, children in the age category 8-10 years have a positive attitude towards the advertisements” (Seiter 1993). “Advertisements have contributed to the convergence of cultures to a great extent. Cultures today are losing their ethnicity and identity and becoming more ‘popular’ cultures wherein the style of living is perpetrated by the advertisements (Schlosser 2001). Aggressive marketing of food products via children has lead to a nation of obese younger generation both in U.S.A (Schlosser 2001) and India” (India Today, March 2004). Hastings et al. (2003) points out that “children receive advertising messages which have more to do with the fantasy and fun than health and nutrition”.

However “an important side effect of the influence of advertising on children’s desire for products is the parent–child conflict that emerges when refusals occur in response to the children’s purchase-influence attempts (Robertson, 1979). Parents obviously cannot honor all purchase requests triggered by television advertising, given the volume of commercials that the average child sees”. In one study, Atkin (1975) found that “more than half of children reported arguing or becoming angry when a toy request was denied; in another (Atkin, 1978), he observed the high rates of child disappointment and anger in response to the majority of parent refusals for cereal requests at the supermarket. Other studies also confirm these patterns (Goldberg & Gorn, 1978; Sheikh & Moleski, 1977). In sum, the frequent purchase requests associated with children’s advertising exposure may place the strain on parent–child interaction”.

“Advertising to children is therefore increasing and despite new marketing approaches aimed at children, such as the Internet (Thomas & Dillenbeck, 2002; Thomson & Laing, 2003) the predominant way of advertising to children is via television. Television is an invasive medium because it reaches children in their own homes, and there is only limited control over the advertisements that are seen. Of course, children (and adults) may not always give their full attention to the screen during advertisement breaks because they can turn away or leave the room, but in practice, the viewer has the opportunity to see all the advertisements associated with any program they watch. Parents may restrict the channels that children view or the times that children watch television”. But “parental control is obviously weaker if children have access to television independent of their parents, and in the United Kingdom, two-thirds of children aged seven to 10 years have a television in their bedrooms. Three-
quarters of children aged 11 to 14 years not only have a television in their own room but a third of that age group also have a video recorder that in effect allows them the access to programs at any time” (Smith, 2001).

The underlying concern about television advertising is “whether it exploits children, and this exploitation is sometimes described in emotive terms with references to ‘seducers’ (the marketers) and ‘innocents’ (the children, particularly young children). In this context, advertising is seen negatively with the criticism that advertising persuades children to buy products they do not need and spend money they may not have” (Young, 1990).

“Product advertising places an emphasis on the possessions and on aspiring to a certain lifestyle (Hahlo, 1999). This is especially the case for branded products where the emphasis of the advertising is on purchasing not just a product but a product with a particular label and as Weller (2002) also found that children can recognize brands and logos before they can read”. “Children's desire to possess products they have seen on television is said to lead to ‘pester power’, which means that the children pester their parents or other adults to buy things for them (Proctor & Richards, 2002). This can be at the level of children negotiating products during the family shopping trip often successfully from the child's perspective. Pester power can also be long term when children wage a campaign of requests and demands in advance of birthdays and Christmas. For instance, Crouch (1999) found that three quarters of children had started asking for Christmas presents before October. Children's pestering can also lead to family conflicts when parents refuse to buy products either because they cannot afford to buy them, or because they believe them to be inappropriate for their children (e.g., snack foods), and this may lead to anger, frustration and disappointment” (Atkin, 1978).

Such is the significance of “children's influence in commodity purchasing, whether they purchase for themselves or through their parents, that marketers have increased the volume of research they conduct among young consumers. Given the large number of television advertisements that children experience, children inevitably are aware of far more products than parents are able or willing to buy. But some marketers have argued that the pester power is not a source of conflict but more the basis for child-parent negotiation about what to buy (Pilgrim & Lawrence, 2001). Others have pointed out that advertising may not always be the reason for children pestering their parents. Proctor and Richards (2002) suggested that many toys sell well with little or no advertising at all because they become part of a popular ‘craze’.
For example, the Harry Potter range of toys, games and foods were marketed following the success of the Harry Potter novels, but the books themselves became a success mainly because of word-of-mouth between children. Other marketing phenomena like Pokemon take on an existence of their own that goes well beyond any initial advertising (Proctor & Richards, 2002). According to this argument, therefore, children may well pester adults but not all such pestering is the direct result of advertising”.

Critics have argued that “advertising encourages children to view important social and religious events (such as Christmas) in purely commercial terms. For example, once it was asked to children to write letters to Santa Claus listing what they wanted for Christmas. It was found that the children who watched more television advertisements asked for more presents and that they asked for more presents by the brand name. The pressure to buy particular brands leads to a conformity across different cultures (Byfield, 2002), and generally, the international market for children's products detracts from local products and traditions”.

An alternative way of considering these issues is to point out that “the globalization of children's markets and the use of advertising means that children in different countries now have a greater choice of products and they are no longer limited to locally produced goods and aspiring to the same brands implies a desire for certain standards and a conformity that is actually positive in a world that, in both the past and the present, has been divided by national, cultural and the religious conflicts”.

Eden (2000) suggested that “selling the same products to children in the different countries does not necessarily damage local traditions and practices. There are concerns about the advertising of particular products, particularly the promotion of food product. A large proportion of advertisements aimed at children promote food or drinks. For instance, Lewis and Hill (1998) found that half the advertisements aimed at children on U. K. television concerned food. A third of these advertisements were for cereals, a third was for sweets and snacks and most of the rest were for ready-made meals and the other convenience foods. These are all products that have been criticized as being the less healthy food choices (Dalmeny, Hanna, & Lobstein, 2003). Such food advertising is one-sided because little television advertising aimed at children emphasizes healthy eating. This is because of the relative wealth of the advertisers who market food products and who can afford extensive advertising campaigns and those who advocate healthy eating but do not have the same
resources available to convey their message (Conner & Armitage 2002). Few health campaigns could match the size and extent of the marketing that might go into selling a product such as a chocolate bar (e.g., Ellyatt, 1999b). The result is that children are exposed to a large number of television advertisements trying to persuade them to choose sweetened drinks and snack foods, with little emphasis on the alternative, healthier foods. Children in some countries do not eat a balanced diet. For example, hardly any children in the U.S. meet recommended dietary requirements (Munoz, Krebs-Smith, Ballard-Barbash, & Cleveland, 1997). But it is not clear how far the failure to eat a well-balanced diet can be attributed to the effects of advertising. Children's recall of food advertisements correlates with what they ask for during the shopping trips (Galst & White, 1976) and with what they eat (Hitchings & Moynihan, 1998), and so there is a relationship between advertising and eating choices, but the nature of that relationship is not always clear (Lewis & Hill 1998). The number of children with obesity in the U.S. has dramatically increased in the recent years, and this may in part be due to the persuasive nature of food advertising (Strasburger & Wilson, 2002). However, since the start of television advertising, the largest proportion of advertisements aimed at children has always been for the food products (Young, 1990, 2003). For this reason, marketers have pointed out that the proportion of food advertising is unlikely to be the only or the main factor in the recent growth in obesity. Other changes in the lifestyle, such as lack of exercise, increased use of cars, sedentary occupations (including more time spent watching television and playing computer games) and different family eating habits (such as a dependency on convenience foods), may all be factors in the increase in children's weight” (Lvovich, 2003).

Advertisers could also point to the fact that “children receive information about the nutrition through other sources (such as school) and should be aware of the healthy eating practices. Some have also argued that the best way to market food to children is by stressing healthy eating and by including nutritional information that complements other sources of that information (Strong, 1999). Indeed, Reece, Rifon, and Rodriguez (1999) found that most cereal advertisements included the nutritional information, but this usually consisted only of statements that the food was part of a balanced breakfast or brief details of a specific nutrient such as vitamin C. Other food advertisements were less likely to include the nutritional information. The use of nutritional information can be viewed as either a positive addition to
food advertisements or just a marketing strategy, it also raises the issue of how well the children understand and interpret such information”.

Other television advertisements such as “advertisements for toys may be less controversial than food advertising because toys do not have the same sort of health implications. Nonetheless, specific issues are associated with the toy advertisements. For instance, parents may be concerned that toys are presented in an unrealistic or inaccurate way. In many countries, regulations or guidelines prohibit advertisers from making exaggerated claims about the properties of the toys being advertised. Such rules might include presenting the toy in a context that shows its true size or making it clear how the toy is operated (e.g., by hand or by a power source). Advertisers may also be encouraged to say whether a toy needs to be assembled and, if so, whether an adult's help is required. The issues here relate to how conscientiously advertisers adhere to any guidelines and, even if they do, whether children understand the disclosures associated with advertisements. For example, Muehling and Kolbe (1999) found that although many advertisements aimed at children included the visual statements (usually in small print) disclosing the information about a product, such statements were presented so briefly that they required, on an average, a reading speed of 160 words per minute. But even if children can read such statements, whether they can understand them is not clear” (Liebert, Sprafkin, Liebert, & Rubinstein, 1977).

However, there are also concerns about “the way products are presented to the children. Advertisers naturally want to present their products in the most appealing way, and this might mean, for example, using the celebrities to endorse a product. This can increase children's liking for a product (Ross et al., 1984), but inevitably raises issues about children's ability to realize that the celebrity is being paid for the endorsement and may, therefore, not be providing an objective recommendation. Generally the use of popular characters (whether real or fictional) from children's programs may make it difficult for children to distinguish between advertisements and programs (Wilson & Weiss, 1992). The blurring of the program/advertisement distinction might be to the advantage of advertisers, especially in an age when some programs are so closely linked to products that the program itself becomes a vehicle for merchandising. For example, in the U.K., the BBC is a ‘noncommercial’ channel but derives a large income from the sale of children's toys and games based on BBC programs that have been specifically designed to include products aimed at children (Hind, 2003). But if blurring the distinction between programs and advertisements makes it harder
for children to recognize when they are being targeted by marketers, this could be seen as a negative change in children's television. Young children are thought to be particularly vulnerable to advertising because they know less about the intent of advertisers and the process of creating an advertisement (Oates, Blades, Gunter, & Don, 2003). The assumption is that adults are less likely to be vulnerable to advertisements because they are aware that the purpose of advertising is to persuade people to buy the products. Adults appreciate that advertisements are deliberately created to present products as attractively as possible and that the advertising message will be biased. Adults also understand who pays for and produces advertisements and that advertising is a part of an economic system that depends on selling products. If adults have this level of understanding, we can assume that they are not likely to be unfairly influenced by television advertising. Advertising does influence adults (otherwise marketers would not spend money on it), but adults are well able to interpret the messages in the context of the advertisers intentions. If adults are persuaded to buy products, their awareness of advertising prevents them from being unfairly exploited. Obviously children are not born with any knowledge of economic systems, their awareness of advertising and marketing develops only gradually (Gunter & Furnham, 1998). An important issue therefore is establishing the age when children achieve a mature understanding of the advertisements”.

“The age of understanding has been a much debated because it has many implications (Oates, Blades, & Gunter, 2002). If children do not fully understand the intent of television advertising, they may need ‘protecting’ from those advertisements. Such protection may take the form of restricting the number, type or the content of advertisements, or it might mean banning the advertisements altogether. In some countries, there may be selective bans on particular products, for example, in Greece; toy advertising is banned at certain times. Countries such as Belgium and Australia limit advertising within the children's programs or within a few minutes of those programs, and Sweden bans all terrestrial television advertising aimed at children younger than 12 years of age. Countries such as U.K. have a detailed code of practice to regulate the advertisements aimed at children (ITC, 1991a). The range of regulations in different countries reflects different beliefs about children's understanding. This divergence of views has serious implications for any attempt to standardize regulations across countries. For example, in 2001, Sweden proposed a Europe-wide ban on the television advertising to children. This provoked much debate, and opposition, especially from marketers in countries that have less restrictive regulations than Sweden”. 

91
Advertisers usually argue against any extension of regulations for a combination of reasons. “Some marketers just claim that very young children, even from the age of three years, have some understanding of advertising (Bowen, 2000). Others emphasize studies that have shown that young children can recognize particular aspects of marketing. For example, preschoolers can recognize some brand logos (Dammler & Middelmann-Motz, 2002), and they can distinguish between the television advertisements and programs (Bijmolt, Claassen, & Brus, 1998). These studies are sometimes quoted as evidence of young children's awareness. However, children's recognition of advertisements is not the same as children understand their persuasive intent, a realization that may develop much later. Given the gradual development of children's awareness of advertising, much debate about the regulation hinges on what is meant by ‘understanding’ (Goldstein, 1999). Marketers naturally put more emphasis on early recognition as evidence that children are aware of advertisements, and critics place more emphasis on children achieving a full understanding of advertiser intentions at a later age. How advertising is defined and which studies are quoted has resulted in a variety of conclusions about at what age regulation is necessary to protect the children”.

Some authors have also argued that the advertising has little effect on children and have suggested that current regulations (for example in the U. K.) are more than sufficient (Furnham, 2000). As pointed out earlier, “many children's products do sell well without being advertised, and therefore marketers have argued that social fashions and peer pressure may be the most important factors in creating the desire to buy the products (Proctor & Richards, 2002). Advertising is only one factor in creating demand (Goldstein, 1999), but it is disingenuous to imply that advertising is ineffective. Advertisers do spend large sums of money on the television advertising, and marketing communications aimed at children such as marketing via the Internet (Clarke, 2002), text messaging Jones, 2002), and marketing via schools (Geuens, De Pelsmacker, & Mast, 2002) is rapidly expanding. Such initiatives demonstrate the marketers desire to reach as many children as possible”.

Marketers sometimes use the phrase ‘getting older younger’ (Cohen & Cahill, 1999), which refers to “the idea that toys and other products traditionally associated with a particular age group are now being bought by or for the younger children. There is little doubt that children and young people are adopting fashions, activities and lifestyles at an earlier age than in the past (Smith, 2001), and therefore the concept of ‘getting older younger’ has validity in terms of marketing the same products to the younger children. This phrase, however, has sometimes
been confused with the idea that children themselves are developing more quickly. For instance, Cohen and Cahill (1999) argued that children's cognitive development is now more rapid than in previous generations. If young children now have more developed cognitive abilities, the implication is that their understanding of advertising intent might be more sophisticated at an earlier age and therefore regulation is less necessary. As Hastings (2000) pointed out that there is no evidence that children's cognitive development is any more rapid now than it ever was. There is therefore no reason to believe that contemporary young children have greater insights into the nature of advertising than their predecessors had”.

Furnham (2000) argued that rather than to extend regulations “the most effective way to help children understand advertising is through their parents. He suggested that by discussing products, parents can inform children about the nature of advertising, and he gave examples of the games and strategies that parents could use to help their children understand more about the advertisements. Furnham said that further regulation and banning advertising of any sort shelters or at least delays a child's understanding and decision making. Children move through various cognitive and social phases on their journey from birth to adolescence and adulthood. Consumer socialization (which is only a part of a child's general socialization) is described as the processes by which the young people acquire skills, knowledge, and attitudes relevant to their functioning as consumers in the marketplace (Ward, 1974:2). Although McNeal (1993) sometimes refers to it as the ‘consumer education’ or ‘consumer development’, Ward's description of the concept can be regarded as a universally accepted definition (McGregor, 1999; John, 1999; Carlson & Grossbart, 1994). John (1999) views consumer socialization as a process that occurs in the context of social and cognitive development as children move through three stages of the consumer socialization, namely the perceptual stage (3-7 years), the analytical stage (7-11 years), and the reflective stage (11-16 years). This latter stage is characterized by the development of information processing skills (such as interpreting advertising messages) and social skills. Children pay more attention to the social aspects of being a consumer (John, 1999). In this stage, adolescent’s knowledge about branding becomes extremely important. Acceptance by the peer group is often guaranteed when a teenager wears the "right" brand of T-shirt or jeans. According to Acuff (1997:106) peers play an enormous role when teenagers have to make buying decisions in this early adolescent stage. These early teenagers are also very activity oriented, for example taking part in the organized sport, playing computer games, viewing television programmes,
engaging in various school activities and shopping (Acuff, 1997:107, 110). Blackwell et al. (2001:387) are of the opinion that children learn their consumer skills primarily from shopping with the parents, a phenomenon these authors call as ‘coshopping’. Co-shoppers tend to be more concerned with their children's development as consumers and they explain more to their children why they don't buy products, which to some extent may mediate the role of advertising” (Blackwell et al., 2001:387). McNeal (1993) states that children pass through the following five-stage shopping learning process in their consumer development:

Stage 1: Observing - This first stage is “the child's initial interaction with the marketplace. Mothers usually take their infants to shopping malls and the stores where they make sensory contact with the shopping environment. McNeal's (1993) studies show that the median age here was two months, but answers ranged from one to 33 months. As stated earlier, John's framework or three stages of consumer socialization starts at the perceptual stage” (36 months – 7 years).

Stage 2: Making requests - During this phase, “(which corresponds partly with the John's perceptual stage), children make requests (by pointing, gesturing and even making the statements) to parents when they see something they want in the store. In the latter part of this phase they make requests for specific products at home, probably because of the stimulation by television advertisements”.

Stage 3: Making selections – “When children start walking (3-4 years of age - partly in John's perceptual stage), they experience their first physical contact as consumers by choosing an article and taking it from the shelf”.

Stage 4: Assisted purchases - Almost from birth, “children regularly witness their parents and other shoppers giving money in exchange for the goods. These scenes give meaning to the money children receive from their parents or the grandparents. During this stage (the latter part of John's perceptual stage and the early part of the analytical stage, 7-11 years) children start spending money on their own. This contributes to the child's understanding that the store owns the goods and money is the medium of exchange”.

Stage 5: Making independent purchases - The fifth and final step in the development of consumer behavior is “performing the independent purchases without parental assistance
(John's reflective stage, 11-16 years). There is usually a significant time lag between a child's first purchase with parents and an independent purchase” (McNeal & Yeh, 1993).

2.3 The Advertisement Industry

The Indian advertising industry is talking business today. It has evolved from being a small-scale business to a full-fledged industry and emerged as one of the major industries and tertiary sectors and has broadened its horizons be it the creative aspect, the capital employed or the number of personnel involved. Indian advertising industry in a very little time has carved a niche for itself and placed itself on the global map.

As advertising is a big business in this era in India. Indian Advertising industry has witnessed a prominent globalization. “With the inception of various divisions, the advertising industry has undergone a sea change. Indian consumer's deepening pocket and blooming markets for ad-spends have touched the new heights in India. The Indian Advertising Companies are creating stories and brand experiences in a way that engages and involves”.

Also “the Indian advertising industry has made jaws drop and set eyeballs gazing with some astonishing pieces of work that it has given in the recent past. The creative minds that the Indian advertising industry incorporates have come up with some mind-boggling concepts and work that can be termed as masterpieces in the field of advertising”.

Advertising agencies in the country too have taken a leap. They have come a long way from being small and medium sized industries to becoming well known brands in the business. “Mudra, Ogilvy and Mathew (O&M), Mccann Ericsson, Rediffussion, Leo Burnett are some of the top agencies of the country.

Indian economy is on a boom and the market is on a continuous trail of expansion. With the market gaining grounds Indian advertising has every reason to celebrate. Businesses are looking up to advertising as a tool to cash in on lucrative business opportunities. Growth in business has lead to a consecutive boom in the advertising industry as well”.

The Indian advertising today handles both “national and international projects. This is primarily because of the reason that the industry offers a host of functions to its clients that include everything from start to finish that include client servicing, media planning, media
buying, creative conceptualization, pre and post campaign analysis, market research, marketing, branding and public relation services”.

Keeping in mind the current pace at which the Indian advertising industry is moving, the industry is expected to witness a major boom in the times ahead. If the experts are to be believed then “the industry in the coming times will form a major contribution to the GDP. With all this there is definitely no looking back for the Indian advertising industry that is all set to win accolades from the world over”.

2.3.1 History of Advertising in India

There has been a long tradition of advertising in India since the first newspapers published in India in the 19th Century carried advertising. “The first advertising agency was established in 1905, B. Datram and Company, followed by The India-Advertising Company in 1907, the Calcutta Advertising agency in 1909, S.H.Bensen in 1928, J. Walter Thompson Associates through its Indian associate, Hindustan Thompson Associates in 1929, Lintas (Lever International Advertising Services) in 1939 and McCann Erikson in 1956. Advertising expenditure in the 1950s was estimated at $US 300,000. Under the more socialist political environment of the 1960s and 1970s there was little incentive for companies to advertise because advertising was not tax deductible. In the 1970s there was 58% growth in the number of registered agencies from 106 in 1969 to 168 in 1979, and this included a growth in Indian agencies. The first advertising appeared on the state television in 1976”.

With the opening of the economy in “the 1980s there was a growth in the number of alliances with multinational agencies and an expansion in advertising though foreign network participation in agency ownership was limited. In 1987 Hindustan Thompson was affiliated to J. Walter Thompson. Lintas, the 2nd ranking agency, held only 4% of its subsidiary, as did Ogilvy and Mather. Saatchi and Saatchi/Compton had minority interests in Compton as did Lintas”.

“Market research and readership surveys led to the further professionalization of the advertising industry. Television Rating Points, popularly known as TRP measurements, provided ad agencies with statistical data on consumer/ viewer likes and dislikes and helped them to create effective media plans and ad campaigns”.

96
2.3.2 Advertisement Industry in 2012

According to IMARC Group, one of the world’s leading research and advisory firms, with the Indian economy on a continuous growth path for many more years to come, prospects of the advertising industry are bright. Although the industry is expected to maintain its current growth momentum, the pace of growth of various segments of the industry will differ significantly from one another.

With sustained growth of the Indian economy during the last two decades, there has been a constantly increasing yearning for a better lifestyle among Indian people. This yearning has been catalyzing consumerist desires. “Advertising industry has been both a catalyst and beneficiary of these desires as the industry has been on a continuous growth trajectory with only temporary slowdowns at times”.

Valued at Rs 329 billion (US$ 5.76 billion) in 2011, the television (TV) industry is expected to expand at a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 17 per cent through 2011-16 to touch Rs 735 billion (US$ 13 billion), according to a report by FICCI-KPMG.

However “the media industry can be categorized into the following categories; films, television, music, radio and print. Television remains the most dominant medium in this sector. However new media as animation & VFX, digital advertising and gaming are fast grabbing a larger share of the market”.

2.3.3 Predictions for Growth

India will emerge as the “third largest television advertising market by 2016 behind Japan and China”.

“With a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 15%, television ad revenue in India will overtake Australia and Korea to touch $5.4 billion (Rs.26,325 crore), as per the report titled The India TV Industry - Act Two, by Media Partners Asia Ltd, a Hong Kong-based company that provides analyses of media and telecom industry”.

97
Figure 2.4: India’s increasing share of TV Advertising market

Advertising and subscription revenue of Indian television will grow at an average 12% annually in the next five years to reach $15 billion (Rs. 73,125 crore). Indian television executives said the medium is boosting the revenue by constantly reaching the new viewers.

“You have new platforms like DTH (direct-to-home) adding 8-9 million homes every year. Television networks will focus on ramping up the subscription revenue to boost growth in the coming years”.

Figure 2.5: Growth Pitch of advertising expenditure in India
2.4 Advertisement and Children

The ever expanding markets for goods and their unchallenged assault through advertisements are flooding the society with information and ideas, attitudes and imagery which is difficult to control and assimilate. This is affecting the young minds to a great extent especially when entertainment is interspersed with commercial messages. Adults may be able to develop a rational resistance to this onslaught, but children may not.

The children of non-TV age did not take advertisements seriously. They heard commercials on radio, read advertisements in comic books, children's magazines and outdoor posters. On the whole, adults as well as children cared little for the advertisements.

*Television changed people’s perception of advertisements.*

For the TV advertiser, children are a very attractive target group to be cultivated. They become a pressure group on parents and parents often succumb to children's demands. Sometimes it takes a form of emotional blackmail.

They are not the buyers. According to Wadwalkar (1990) “children are the parasite consumers. But, children are also the potential buyers. They will grow up watching certain brands and kinds of products on television. Long repetitive exposure causes familiarity. In mass communication, familiarity is rightly considered as a prerequisite for persuasion and control, and repetition as a principle of persuasion. TV advertising for children is an investment for the future too. When they turn into buyers they are already oriented towards buying certain brands and the kinds of products. Wadwalkar says, that by taking messages to children, the TV advertiser, at one stroke, has widened ‘the decision making base in the family’. No more could adults entirely dictate the purchase of all the different kinds and brands of products. Children cannot be kept entirely out of such decision making. This concerns not so much the quantum of planned purchase, but the occasional, repeat and the impulsive purchases”.

Children are fascinated by the TV advertisements. They react to these glamorous, fast paced visuals on TV with their exciting music and their determined sales pitch. TV advertising has entered into the daily life of children. It colors their conversation and play as they speak to one another using the slogans, jingles etc. of the advertisements. Almost every advertisement that appears on TV contributes to their vocabulary.
Advertisements, being short are ideally suited to the concentration, span of even young children. TV advertisements get repeated with such regularity that children learn them. They are in this respect perfectly tied to early learning process.

Advertisements put together a series of rapidly changing exciting, visuals to highlight a product. They may not be able to grasp the full meaning of the scene but the focus on the product leaves enough impact on them. For the child viewer, TV advertising holds three types of appeal:-

1. Advertisements that appeal directly to the child. It corresponds to the role of children as consumers to whom a certain set of commodities of direct relevance (toys, confectioneries etc.) appeal.

2. The second group corresponds to the role of the child as a future consumer. This group includes advertisements for all products that are not of immediate relevance to the child including as cars, refrigerators, tyres, cooking, paints etc.

3. The last group corresponds to the role of the child as actor, participant and salesperson. In this group are all the advertisements that feature children.

'Pester Power' Is The Key

Be it TV or print, one thing's clear “marketing guys are obsessed with featuring children in advertisements and catering to their needs”.

Now, there are entire TV networks for kids. Children's channels have now emerged as a new phenomenon. Between 1995 and 2001 “there was only one channel for kids in India i.e. ‘Cartoon Network’. But in 2004 alone, four new channels were launched, i.e. UTV’s Hungama, Sony's Animax, Turner's Pogo, and the Disney's Toon Disney and still a number of new kid’s channels are adding to the list.

So we should call this as kid’s empowerment, a marketing gimmick or simply a sign of the times. But the rapidly increasing tribe of children’s television channels in India is leaving no stone unturned to attract the young eyeball. Getting interactive, localizing content, roping in rising cricketers as brand ambassadors; channels are doing anything and everything to get inside the head of the young and grab a chunk of an expanding market pie”.

100
2.4.1 Children’s Perspective on TV Advertising

Children’s perspective on TV advertising is dependent on the numerous factors, such as the age, parents and peers. Theories that focus on the examples and more are mentioned in this section:

2.4.1.1 Children’s Development of Logical Thinking

The success of an advertisement campaign on TV is dependent on the level of a child’s logical thinking and understanding. Gunter, Oates, Blades (2003) states that “Piaget’s model of children’s development of logical thinking is one of the most frequently used in literature about children’s understanding of advertisement. The model consists of four stages - sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational and the formal operational stage. The following stages describe different levels of understanding that a child reaches in the range they grow”:

- **Sensorimotor Stage**

  This is the first stage which a child is born into. According to Gunter et al. (2003) “the stage consists of the child’s development from the birth and early understanding such as independent thought and simple problem solving. The child maintain in this stage to the age of two years. Gunter et al. (2003) further said that nonetheless, children’s limited language and cognitive development in this period precludes any possibility of understanding the advertisement”.

- **Preoperational Stage**

  This period occurs in a child’s life between the age of two years up to seven years. It is called the ‘preoperational stage’ because Piaget thought that “young children had limited reasoning at this stage”. Gunter et al. (2003) states that “Piaget found two limitations for children in this stage - the first one he found was that ‘children had difficulties in solving tasks that involved the transforming of materials’ and the second one is the child’s high level of egocentrism’. Piaget describes the term as “a difficulty for the child to see the another person’s point of view”. According to Gunter et al. (2003) “children in this stage will likely have difficulties in understanding the persuasive meaning of the advertisement, because of the low level of understanding other viewpoints than their own”.

101
Concrete Operational Stage

In the concrete operational stage, “children in the age of seven to eleven years old can reason logically in situations that are problem solving (Gunter et al. 2003). They also have the ability to see two aspects of a task at the same time. Connecting the concrete operational stage to understanding advertisement, the theory sees two aspects. One side of it is the child’s developed ability to reasoning and thereby we can expect a better understanding of advertisement. The other side is the child’s ability to reason is only better in concrete situations, which are situations where they can manipulate and experience at the same time”. Gunter et al. (2003) says “without direct experience, we might expect children’s reasoning about television to be less well developed than their reasoning in other domains that involve more opportunities for interacting with the stimuli”.

Formal Operational Stage

According to Gunter et al. (2003) “the abstract reasoning from a child can only be expected after the age of eleven. This stage combines all sides of abstract, hypothetical reasoning that can be used in any situation for problem solving. They further state that although this stage is the final stage the development will continue throughout life, a teenager’s logical reasoning is not as developed as of an adult. Connecting it to understanding advertisement on TV, we can assume that children in the age of eleven and up have similar understanding as an adult individual” (Gunter et al. 2003).

2.4.2 Effects of Advertising to Children

According to McNeal (1992) figure 2 shows “the attitudes and behavior that an advertising campaign can evolve. The attitudes that are produced are towards the product, its producer, the brand and also advertisement in general. The starting point is assuming that the child has been attracted to the advertisement”.

102
McNeal (1992) says that the behavior can be defined as three different types:

1. Behavior towards the product - such as searching for it, comparing it with the substitute and buying it.

2. Behavior towards parents - which can be shown as pester towards the parents to buy the specific product.

3. Peer influence - friends that talk about the product or bragging of having it.

“Children influencing the parents result in behavior such as purchases, provision of funds to the children, negotiation with the children, and refusal” (McNeal 1992). Creating this behavior in turn develops an attitude from the parents to the brand, product, producer, the seller and the advertisement. Combining attitudes from the children and the parents will affect the outcome behavior towards these objects by children and/or parents.

**Figure 2.6** is divided into three stages (McNeal 1992) – “the first stage shows the advertising influencing the children to buy the product or to pester the parents to do so, the second stage is where the parents are considering purchasing the product after they have been influenced by the child and the final stage shows the attitudes of the child and the parents that have been
induced by advertising and purchase behavior determine their future behavior towards the advertised products”.

As per McNeal (1992), there are limitations to the model in Figure 2.6 because it shows advertising effects in isolation and there is hardly just one advertising campaign on TV, instead there are thousands and not just on TV.

The abbreviation in the figure shown as ec and dc are ‘encoding’ and ‘decoding’. “Encoding is where a person is trying to communicate a message and decoding is how the receiver of the message interprets it”. These two subjects have many problems within them and they affect the communication to the child and some without any specific solution for the advertiser (McNeal 1992). McNeal (1992) lists the four major ec/dc problems:

- Adult language encoding/ child language decoding - This is not just the most obvious problem; there is no solution for it either. It is most likely to happen when mass communication is used to target a large group.

- Adult symbol encoding/ child symbol decoding - This problem consists of nonverbal language such as color, sound, dress and body language. Different colors can be associated differently between children and adults.

- Adults motives encoding/ child motives decoding - This problem is based on the mindset of children and adults. For example can children be curious about situation that adults are frightening of and opposite.

- Adult values encoding/ child values decoding - Children’s values change from day to day, one day a frog can be everything and the next it hardly remembers it. The only thing you may expect is that children’s values will mirror their parent’s. Therefore it can in some situations be a good idea to communicate to a child on the basis of their parents characteristics.

Gunter et al. (2004) supports the fact that the “age and parents have a significant part in advertising to children. They say that the impact of advertisement to children’s knowledge, attitudes and value does not come alone”. They also state that factors, other than advertisement which can affect the child, which are mentioned below:
1. Advertising exposure. “Usually a child sees an advertisement more than once and the influence of advertising may be assessed after just a single exposure. The research evidence is equivalent when it comes to if repeated exposure to the advertisement makes any difference (Gunter et al. 2004)”. Some say it does not, some say it does and that it also has a negative effect.

2. Age of child. According to Gunter et al. (2004) “it is generally known that young and old children respond differently to the advertisements”.

3. Role of parents. Parents play an important role in the level of influence of advertisement of which there child is being exposed to. How much a parent is taking part is determined by the social class and educational level of the parents. They can either influence directly or indirectly.

The involvement model is a theory that explains the effects of being affected of the advertisement. Gunter et al. (2004) says “one that focuses on the idea that behavior is influenced by external factors to the extent that there are situations in which specific kinds of behavior are required, expected, or encourage and have significance to individuals. They continue to say that, the more important a situation is for an individual, the more involved they become in performing the most appropriate and advantageous behavior in that situation. Connecting this to advertisement, involvement is referred to the comments the individuals make about the product during the time they are exposed to the advertisement. It is in a motivational state and in terms of commitment to a brand or product type”.

2.4.3 Perceptual and Attitudinal Effects

Giles (2003) argues that “advertisement can affect you to buy the product in two ways. One of the methods is by using perceptual effects, a method which affects the customer without the customer knowing it. It can for example be the use of happy color and uplifting music to make the customer feel uplifting and happy. Or use a jingle in the commercial and repeat it to the extent that it will seep inevitably into the customer’s unconsciousness. The use of subliminal advertisement is falling under this category. It is an advertisement method that is working at a level below full consciousness. The advertising message is injected into the memory through exposing audience to brief snatches of persuasive text in the middle of television programming. It was used in the U.S. in the 1950, but after a study that gave the
result that the method worked, it was banned and still is. The study however supports that advertisement messages can be injected in our minds without us being aware about it”.

Another method to use in advertising is ‘attitudinal’. “It evaluates the short- and long-term effect of an advertisement on the consumer impression of the brand and product (Giles 2003). The level of involvement is one factor that determents the attitudinal effects. For example if you have a deep interest in cars and you want to buy a new one, you will look and listen more to the advertisement about cars than on others. Attitudes are not just based on interest it also include social group which are age, gender or ethnicity (Giles 2003). Dependent on how you live, what age you are in and if you are a boy or a girl you respond differently to the advertisement. Giles also argues that advertising is less about the way people are living, but rather about what you dream of being. In other words, it focuses more on aspiration of the consumer than on the current situation that they live in”. For example, an advertisement about a snack rather show a smart, active and good looking kid instead of an overweight and tired one. This appeals the children that long for being the ideal person.

In fact Bandyopadhyay, Kindra, and Sharp (2001) states that “the children will believe the life that are shown in the commercial and when they are about to purchase the product they see their lives as less satisfactory and they may become disappointed. When the product is bought and the expectations do not meet the actual standard, disappointment and anger can occur”.

2.4.4 How Advertising Affect Children

Bandyopadhyay et al (2001) says that “in this age of information overload and fierce marketing competition, targeting children as a market and directing advertisement to them may affect the children negatively because competing companies would begin advertising with persuasive intent to get one product sold more than another. This will lead to a child’s increased influence of purchasing decision and more and more demands, which leads to more parent-child conflict and it will be a negative effect on the child. They also state that materialism is a part of our society - a consuming society - and advertising is seen as a facilitation of its existence. The perceived increase of materialism in young children may lead to an increase of parent-child conflicts (Bandyopadhyay et al 2001). This is because the child tries to become part of the consuming, materialistic public, and pressure their parents to buy particular product. The particular products are those who provide instant happiness and
satisfaction. Thus products can sometimes be costly and harmful to the children, a fact that an adult can understand but a child can’t. The differences in views can also be a source for parent-child conflicts”.

In most of the cases of parent-child conflict, the child gets what he/she wants (Bandyopadhyay et al 2001). According to Giles (2003) “this is called ‘pester power’ which is repeated appeals from an advertisement that leads the children to demand the parents to satisfy their needs by buying the product. He also states that an increase of watching television commercial leads to a higher level of pester and particularly after the branded goods”.

2.5 Different Types of Television Advertising

The type of advertising is dependent on the product or service it serves to promote. The concept of ‘low involvement’ was first proposed by “Krugman (1965) in an article on the effectiveness of TV commercials. His sense of the relationship between advertising effectiveness and audience involvement was derived from studies about persuasiveness of nonsensical and unimportant messages. According to Gunter and Barrie (2004) advertisement to children generally focuses on a narrow product range”.

- Toy advertising

Commentators argue that “children are particularly exposed to the wide variety of ads during Christmas time adding pressure to parents wishing to grant their children’s holiday wishes (Gunter et. Al, 2004). They further state that toy advertisements tend to dominate Saturday morning television, and the share is increased by 75% around Christmas time”.

- Food advertising

According to Story and French (2004) “one of the major market forces in the food and beverages industry has been children and adolescents. Thus the children’s market has been bombarded with commercialism by food advertisers through a variety of channels and the single most often source of media being used is television. In the U.S., 75% the advertising budget of food manufacturing companies are allocated to television advertisement opposed to Sweden which is by far the country broadcasting the least amount of food advertisement on television according to an international comparative study conducted by Consumer
International. The food and beverage industry has been a major market force children and adolescents as. Children and adolescents are targeted aggressively by food advertisers; as a result they are exposed to a growing and unprecedented amount of advertising, marketing, and commercialism through a wide range of channels. The principal goal of food advertising and marketing aimed at children is to influence brand awareness, brand preference, brand loyalty, and food purchases among youth”.

- Humorous Advertising

According to Gulas & Weinberger (1992) “the use of humor in advertising has been estimated to as much as 24.4% of prime time television advertising in the U.S. is intended to be humorous. They further state that while the use of humor is high, the efficacy of humor as a communication device remains uncertain. In attempts to define its impact, humor has proven to be very quite indefinable. The fact is that humor is a complex topic that has been experimentally studied by advertisers in several dozen studies over the two decades. Humor is a multidimensional concept which includes a wide variety of factors”. However Lee & Mason (2001) also argued that “humor does not generate positive thoughts and thus have no significant benefit over non-humorous advertising”.

2.5.1 Reality vs. Fiction

According to Bob Hodge and David Tripp (1986) “children 6-12 years old, calibrating television against reality is a major concern for children throughout this age group and other studies by Flavell (1990) suggest that this may well apply to even younger viewers. Hodge and Tripp further argued that watching television may play an important part in helping children to develop concepts of reality and fantasy. Cartoons, they suggest, may have a special function for young viewers. This was the favorite television genre of the 6-8 year old children while most of the 9-12 year olds preferred TV dramas. Thus the popularity of programmes amongst these children was directly the opposite of the order of reality, going from most unrealistic (cartoons) to most realistic (real-life characters). After a study of how children made sense of a television program, these researchers argued that nature of cartoons causing confusion between fantasy and reality, the largeness of the gap is helpful to young children in building a capacity to discriminate. Learning to remind themselves of the constructedness of a television program may help viewers to distance themselves from emotional responses to disturbing scenes”.

108
Bob Hodge and David Tripp have also been closely associated with the study of children’s ‘modality judgments’. “In a semiotic approach to studying children’s understanding of television in Australia adopted the linguistic term modality to refer to the reality status attributed to television programmes by viewers. Where there seems to be a great distance between a program and everyday reality, television has weak modality, where television seems like a ‘window on the world’ it has strong modality. The point is that the modality of television varies, a dimension hardly allowed for in the approaches adopted by some researchers. Hodge and Tripp noticed that judgments about reality are complex, fluid and subject and that the modality judgment of young children has a tendency to be polarized, unpredictable and unstable”.

Robert Hawkins referred to in Buselle & Greenburg (2000) that “many times a perceived reality is looked upon as if it were homogeneous, while at the same time researchers have attempted to measure it by asking quite different arrays of questions. Hawkins stresses that it is misleading to regard perceived reality as a unitary concept, arguing that it is more of a multidimensional character. He applied factor analysis to 153 children’s questionnaire responses, and he discerned several apparent subdivisions within the concept”.

Relating this to the developmental patterns “Hawkins noted that given multiple perceived reality dimensions, developmental changes may take place along some dimensions but not others, or changes may occur at different rates or times on different dimensions. Second, to make things even more complex, it is quite possible that children’s dimensional structures themselves differ with age (Hawkins, 1977). Byron Reeves (1978) further added that such dimensions may differentially influence how television affects the children”.

Many commentators have subsequently adopted the Hawkins references to “Magic Window” and “Social Expectations” dimensions, although often in misleading references to those of Hawkins own. “Although theorists may differ slightly in defining the various criteria which they identify in children’s judgments about the reality status of television, researchers in the field generally treat perceived reality as multidimensional. Researchers have referred to various criteria which seem to be involved in viewer’s judgments about whether an object, character, event or setting on television is real”.

To track the developmental patterns in the framing of television reality, Aimee Dorr (1983) conducted “a series of interviews with 54 children aged 5-6, 7-9, 11-12 years old. Her
strategy of asking children what they would tell a younger child who was confused about what to believe on television. Findings show that even before the age of 5 years old, major developments in children’s understanding of television reality took place”.

Although we may reasonably assume the importance of some degree of familiarity with the television, Morison & Gardner (1979) “in a study of 36 children from 6-12 years old, could find no relationship between their ability to distinguish reality from fantasy and their degree of familiarity with television”. Regarding exposure, there is some evidence that “those who are heavy viewers (who watch significantly more television than the average viewer) tend to regard television more realistically than lighter viewers” (Greenberg & Reeves 1976).

2.5.2 The Magic Window, Fabrication and Factuality

An important criteria involved in viewer’s assessments of the reality status of specific program content is referred to as the “Magic Window” (Hawkins 1977), “fabrication” (Dorr 1983), and the “factuality” (Fitch et al. 1993). Robert Hawkins's widely-quoted “reference to a Magic Window dimension referred to the degree to which TV programmes were regarded by viewers as either a window onto actual on-going life in the real world or as dramatic fiction. The criterion of fabrication, as framed by Aimee Dorr (1983), relates to whether a television program is perceived by the viewer as ‘fake’ or alternatively as depicting events as they actually happens in real life. Hawkins’s further referred to the evaluation of dramatic fiction in particular and of course not all TV programs fall into this category. However, all television programs including news broadcasts do involve construction, and it is useful to think of this criterion as relating to an awareness of the constructedness of programs”.

Further, “it is widely noted that young viewers start at the high end of the Magic Window dimension, attributing equal reality to everything on television. In a questionnaire study of 153 children between the age of 4 and 12 years old, Hawkins confirmed previous research findings that children tend to perceive fictional television as increasingly less real as they get older. The study reflected a dramatic increase in children’s knowledge in this regard around the age of 8 years, children over 8 years old rarely thought of television as a magic window on the world, and understood that programs were made up”.

According to Fitch et al. (1993) “by around the age of 10, children’s judgments about what these researchers term factuality are about as accurate as those of adults. They further state
that this particular criterion appears to be primarily dependent on a child’s stage of cognitive
development rather than on such factors as experience with television”. Hodge and Tripp
(1986) found that “the methods of media production, actual or hypothetical were the key
criterion of reality for 8-9-year old”.

According to a study by Joanne Quarforth (1979) “to which extent of children with mean
ages ranging from 6.0 to 10.0 would spontaneously sort pictures of television characters into
groups reflecting the attributes human, animated and puppet is displayed in figure below. The
various percentages doing so in each age group were as follows: 48% at a mean age of 6.0;
57% at 7.0; 75% at 8.1; 83% at 8.9; 95% at 10.0 (see table 2.3) A similar study by Morison
et al (1978) also showed a steady progression in children’s spontaneous classification of
pictures as fiction vs. reality”.

![Figure 2.7: “Children’s ability to group the television characters” Source: Quarforth 1979](image)

It was found that “in interviews children in the study from the age-groups with mean ages of
8.9 and over were significantly more accurate than those from the age-group with a mean age
of 6.0 in attributing the quality of being alive to human characters and not to puppets or
animated characters. The 6 year olds were significantly less able to pick out the characters
that could walk and talk by themselves than were those of around 7.0 and older. 18% of the 6
year olds attributed only to human characters both the qualities of being alive and of
autonomous movement, whereas 70% of the 10 year olds did (Quarforth 1979). While in this
study only 15% of the 6 year olds were able to fully and consistently differentiate human,
puppet and cartoon characters, 85% of the 10 year olds were able to do so. However, one should note that the extent to which children ordinarily employ the real/fantasy distinction has been questioned” (e.g. Reeves & Greenberg, 1977).

2.5.3 Criteria for Determining Children's Understanding of TV Advertising

Children's judgments of the reality status of television programmes are not based exclusively on comparing the specific program content with their knowledge of the world but they also need to apply their knowledge of television as a medium. Without the use of both kinds of knowledge, a documentary about an exotic country might seem as fantastic as a science-fiction adventure.

“Progressive sophistication with age and experience is evident in the development of children's use of what are normally referred to as the formal features of the television medium as cues to the reality status of programmes (Hodge & Tripp, 1986, Fitch et al., 1993). These range from production and editing techniques and conventions to TV genres. Hodge and Tripp refer to such medium-specific cues to reality status as internal criteria, in contrast to external criteria, which involve comparisons with the viewer's knowledge and experience of the world similar to Hawkins’s distinction between the ‘Magic Window’ and ‘Social Expectations’ dimensions”.

Kelly (1981) notes that “a 7-8 year old children unanimously chose Superman as more real than Charlie Brown on the basis that Superman is filmed rather than animated. Thus, even though these youngsters can chronicle the many tricks underlying Superman’s features, format overrides content when children are forced to make a comparison. At this age, the answer to the question, which is more real? Is quite simply, whichever looks more real (Kelly 1981). 9 and 10 year olds were much less likely to mention formal features as cues to reality; they were more concerned with content. Susan Howard refers to 9 and 10 year olds often classifying the animated cartoon - The Simpson’s - as realistic since according to the children the program portrayed characters and situations that were representative of those in real life” (Howard 1993).

Stages of cognitive development play an important role in children’s understanding of what is real on television. A number of other factors also play major roles such as: “motives for viewing; familiarity with television; relative amount of viewing and real-world experience”.
James Potter (1988) notes “the importance of the viewer's particular motives for watching television. Some motives have been shown to be related to levels of perceived reality, in particular the motive of watching television in order to learn or to seek information. He observes that it is not surprising that people who find television more like real life expose themselves to it to seek information and instruction” (Potter 1988). Susan Howard noted that “for the primary school children one criterion involved in judging a program was that it was regarded as realistic if it taught them something about the world or about life” (Howard 1993).

Investigating children's understanding of the reality status of television programs is far from easy. A major problem for researchers is that “young children may not always be able to explain what they mean by saying that events on television are ‘real’. Aimee Dorr (1983) further found that children were only consistently able to do so by the 6th grade (around 11- or 12-years-old). The most dramatic advances in children’s understanding of television occur before this age. Children’s systems of classification do not always match those of researchers”. Hodge and Tripp have noted that “distinctions between fantasy and reality may not always be prominent in a child’s way of interpreting television” (Morison et al 1978). Howard (1993) notes that “in her study of primary school children, children judged some programs as realistic simply because they liked them or as being unrealistic because they disliked them. Furthermore, the funnier the programs, the less realistic they were regarded as by the children”.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

Miles and Huberman (1994) states that, “a conceptual framework explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied. A conceptual framework is easier to create if research question have been stated before. In order to succeed with our research questions we will focus on the theories that we found was most reliable and applicable to our purpose and research questions. The theories will be the base for collecting data”.

2.6.1 Conceptualization of Children’s Perspective on TV Advertising

McNeal’s model of the effects of advertising to children shows the different ways that an advertisement can go through and problems that can evolve. He further defined behavior from a child in three different ways:
• Behavior towards the products
  - Searching for the products
  - Comparing it to the substitutes
  - Buying it

• Behavior towards the parents
  - Comparing it to their substitutes
  - Being the good child to influence that the child deserves the product

• Peer influence.
  - Class mates talking about the product
  - The “cool” person in school has the product
  - Bullied for not having the product.

The Giles (2003) theory that talks about “pester power” because it is a possible effect of the advertisement.

• Pester power
  - Pester until the child gets want he/she wants.
  - The child pester power is dependent on the level of their TV-watching.

2.6.2 Conceptualization of Different Types of TV Advertising

As per Robert Hawkins’s widely quoted reference to a magic window dimension which refers to “the degree to which TV programs were regarded by viewers as either a window onto actual on-going life in the real world or as dramatic fiction. An important criterion involved in viewers assessments of the reality status of specific program content is variously referred to as the Magic Window” (Hawkins, 1977).

• Reality vs. Fiction
  - Distinguishing between reality and fiction
- Superman vs. Charlie Brown

The Howard (1993) saying that “primary school children, tend to judge some programs as realistic simply because they liked them or as being unrealistic because they disliked them. Furthermore, the funnier the programs, the less realistic they were regarded as by the children”. The Kelly (1981) noting that “a 7-8-year-old children unanimously chose Superman as more real than Charlie Brown on the basis that Superman is filmed rather than animated as well as Lee & Mason (2001) argue that humor does not generate positive thoughts and thus have no significant benefit over non-humorous advertising”.

• Preferences in advertisements

- What the kid’s prefer to watch

- Which advertisements, those are more memorable.

2.7 Television Advertising and Child Health

Advertising to children is a sensitive and emotionally-charged issue because children are these days very easily influenced and like to experiment with new things. Research also links advertising to “increased violence, obesity, and eating disorders in children, as well family stress and negative values”.

Obesity is defined as “a 20% excess of calculated ideal weight for age, sex and height of a child. A child is said to be obese when there is an excess of accumulated fat in the subcutaneous tissue (below the skin) and other areas of the body. Today, childhood obesity is on the rise and a major public health problem. Globally, in 2010 there were estimated to be over 42 million overweight children below the age of 5, and 35 million of them are from developing countries; especially in urban areas”.

As per 2011 Associated Chambers of Commerce study among 2,000 kids in 11 Indian cities revealed that 52 per cent had a TV set in their own rooms. Chandigarh topped the pile, with 88 per cent kids watching five to seven hours of TV a day.

The reason “childhood obesity or overweight has made so many people worried is because it stays through adulthood, leading to a high risk for developing diabetes and cardio-vascular problems. Studies show that in India, nearly 16% of children are overweight and 31% are in
the risk of falling in this category. It is these statistics that rung the major alarm bells due to which parents are worried for their child’s health”.

“Children are especially vulnerable to these persuasive messages. The proliferation of products, advertising, promotions and media targeted to children is of concern to lawmakers, the industry as well as the general public”. The ads on TV today, are not only for products that are targeted to children but also for products meant for adults which often feature children. Despite parental supervision and limiting of television time, children are fast becoming the next generation of super consumers, being wooed from the cradle itself. The exposure children of this generation have to brands and brand information is unrealistic.

“Advertisers of children's television used to appeal to the parents but now they appeal directly to the children as well, who do not have the emotional or cognitive tools to evaluate what's being sold to them. They are also a showcase for "must have" items that parents are expected to buy, teaching our children to become consumers before they have even reached the age of three. Children's advertising is under attack because it is perceived as ‘making kids want what they don't need’ leading to the pressure on parents to respond to those needs. Recently, advertising is accused of being a factor in causing the children's obesity. While there are more regulations in effect than ever before, there is a public outcry for even more”.

Also, “the modern life style has frozen the family size in the Indian society. Nuclear family has taken place of the joint family. Lifestyle trends in urban India (rising incomes, longer working hours, more working mothers, time-poor/cash-rich parents) tends to support a 'convenience time pass and food culture', which lead the child to watching television and the increased consumption of HFSS food (High in fat, salt and sugar). In addition the advertising industry makes junk food seem irresistible, and it may well be, as recent research shows that children could become physically addicted to junk food”.
So “the problem with advertising food to children is that, at a young age, children do not understand what they are watching. They see tasty items and do not consider the health risks associated with them”.

The problem with advertising food to children is that “children develop their food preferences at a young age. What they see in television ads ‘stimulates desires’ and ‘engenders dissatisfaction’. Young children have not developed all of their cognitive abilities until the age of eight or nine. They just go off the impressions that they see. Some consider the fact that advertisers talk to children at a level where they are unable to understand is unethical. Children only have partial understanding of what they see and hear within their first decade of life. They need to be guided until they are capable of understanding on their own”.

Also, the food advertising on television leads to the following factors:

1. In very young children, research has found that for every one-hour increase in TV viewing per day, there are higher intakes of sugar-sweetened beverages, fast food, red
and processed meat, and overall calories (48.7 kcal/day). Excess weight can be gained by the addition of only 150 calories a day.

2. Children’s exposure to TV ads for unhealthy food products (i.e., high-calorie, low-nutrient snacks, fast foods, and sweetened drinks) are a significant risk factor for obesity.

3. Food and beverage advertising targeted at children influences their product preferences, requests, and diet.

4. Obesity in children increases the more hours they watch television.

5. Other research has found that children who watch more than three hours of television a day are 50 per cent more likely to be obese than children who watch fewer than two hours.

“The food and beverage industry has resolved to self-regulate their marketing to children, but this has not resulted in significant improvement in the marketing of healthier food (i.e., fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat or non-fat milk or dairy products, lean meats, poultry, fish, and beans) to children. Almost three out of every four foods advertised to children falls into the unhealthy categories that contribute to the obesity epidemic”.

“Food ads on television make up 50% of all the ad time on children’s shows. These ads are almost completely dominated by unhealthy food products (34% for candy and snacks, 28% for cereal, 10% for fast food, 4% for dairy products, 1% for fruit juices, and 0% for fruits or vegetables). Children are rarely exposed to public service announcements or advertising for healthier foods”.

Children’s level of exposure to these ads by age can be found in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>No. of ads per day</th>
<th>Hrs of ads per year</th>
<th>No. of ads per year</th>
<th>Exposure to PSAs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>29:31</td>
<td>4,427</td>
<td>1 every 2-3 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-12</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>50:48</td>
<td>7,609</td>
<td>1 every 2-3 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>40:50</td>
<td>6,098</td>
<td>&lt;1 every week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table2.4: “Children’s level of exposure to TV ads on the basis of age”
(Source is Kaiser Family Foundation, 2007)
It is clear from the above table that “children between ages 8-12 are receiving the highest rates of ad exposure. They are entering a critical stage of development where they are establishing food habits, making more of their own food choices, and have their own money to spend on the types of food they enjoy”.

### 2.7.1 Television advertisement and its impact on Family health

Another source of animosity is the ‘family budget’. “Advertising makes kids want things; it creates desire which puts a lot of pressure on parents. Television is a showcase for "must have" items that parents are expected to buy. Shift in target audience has happened on account of the fact that in middle and upper income families, television has come to occupy the prime space. TV viewing has even replaced dinner table conversation. Nuclear families, working parents and latchkey kids in the metros mean that children get to spend very little time with either parent. Many spend their free time watching television or surfing the Internet. Driven by guilt, parents tend to lavish gifts on their children a little too often, and they give in to the demands of children more easily than they would have otherwise”.

However, “Kids and parents always have to struggle about purchases. When a parent says, 'No, I can't buy that, I don't have enough money', there's an underlying sense that the parent is not meeting the child's needs and is depriving the child of what he or she needs to be happy. At the same time, the youngster is learning how to get parents to respond to his or her wishes and wants. This may take the form of a grunt, whine, scream, or gesture, indeed some tears may be necessary, but eventually almost all children are able on a regular basis to persuade Mom or Dad to buy something for them”.

The studies also revealed that “most of the time children determine the family budget. There is greater influence on food items and toys. There are certain families where in the purchase decision regarding buying of cars, electronic equipments are also to the extent influenced by children. With the increasing income, reduction in the number of children and shrinking size of the family, the Indian child is also becoming influencing consumer for today and powerful buyer for tomorrow”.

In the absence of a ‘family support system’ and ‘reliable domestics’ - “parents find themselves unable to discipline children and the result is that most children in today's upwardly mobile families find it difficult to take 'no' for an answer. And buying decisions
often do not reflect the requirements of the family; they are based more on the whims and fancies of immature children who might grow up to be the unreasonable adults”.

2.7.2 Effects of Advertisements on Children

As advertisements help us to become aware of the available products in the market, they have their positive as well as negative effects.

- **Positive Effects of Advertisement on Kids**

1. Advertising makes the kids aware of the new products available in the market there by increasing their knowledge about the latest innovations in the field of technology as well as otherwise.

2. Convincing ads of healthy food products can help improve the diet of a child, if they are attractive enough.

- **Negative Effects of Advertisement on Kids**

1. Many advertisements in the present times include dangerous stunts, which can be performed only by experts. Even though the commercials broadcast the statutory warnings with the ad, the kids often try to imitate the stunts at home, with fatal results.

2. The kids usually get more attracted towards the costly branded products, such as jeans and accessories. They disregard the inexpensive, but useful, ones that are not shown in the commercials.

3. Advertisements encourage the children to persuade their parents to purchase the products shown in the commerce whether useful or not. The little ones tend to get adamant, if they are not bought the product.

4. Children, after watching the glitter of commercials, often lose the ability to live a life without materialistic joy.

5. The personal preferences in clothing, toys, food and luxurious of children are altered by the advertisements, to a great extent.
6. Children often tend to misinterpret the messages conveyed in commercials. They overlook the positive side and concentrate more on the negatives.

7. Advertisements have an indirect effect on the behavior of children. They might develop temper tantrums, when deprived of the latest toys and clothes that are shown in the commercials.

8. The flashy advertisements broadcast in television generate impulse shopping in children.

9. Junk foods, such as pizzas, burgers and soft drinks, are heavily promoted during children's TV viewing time. This develops a craving for fatty, sugary and fast foods in kids, thereby affecting their health adversely.

2.8 Ethics in Advertising to Children

Marketing ethics is an area that deals with the moral principles behind marketing. Ethics in marketing applies to different spheres such as in advertising, promotion, pricing, etc.

“Many marketers and analysts have agreed that children are marketer's best friend. Regardless of all this potential returns that children can give to manufacturers and their marketers, there are also key ethical issues”. For example:

• Do children have the capability of understanding some of the intricate marketing tactics?

• Do children posses the final buying power?

• Do marketers need to get permission from their parents?

• And do children understand the negative effects of some of the products advertised to them?

2.8.1 Key ethical issues in marketing to children

• Involving psychologists in market research

In the present scenario “most of the companies are taking the help of psychologists while framing their advertising and marketing campaigns. Normally what such companies do is that when they are trying to create marketing strategy, they involve the psychologist to tell them
about tactics that they can use to influence children. Since psychologists understand the way that how the child's mind works so they can help the marketers create campaigns that will be directly aimed at them and those ones that can easily influence their choices. This trend has becoming so alarming that the American Psychological Association has raised an alarm about it. They have set up a committee to estimate the effect that the involvement of psychologists in the marketing process of children's products has on them. The group has asserted that no psychological principles should be used when marketing to children. They are also recommending that there should be some sort of strategy to protect the young ones from exploitation though the use of psychological ploys” (Beder, 1998).

The basic framework which steers marketing ethics revolves around the three main issues:-

1. Values
2. Stakeholders
3. Processes

“Marketing ethics that are done on a ‘value inclined framework’ are those one that involve the analysis of the kind of value that the marketing idea creates. So advertisements may instill in their target audiences positive or negative attributes. This all depends on their implementation. For example, an advertising targeting a child may become a problem if it violates the right to privacy, transparency, honesty or autonomy. By using psychologists in the process of creating advertisements for children, marketers are imposing upon children's right to autonomy and transparency. They try studying children's behavioral trends and then use this to exploit those children. This is quite unethical. The ‘process oriented framework’ in marketing ethics is founded on the basis of analyzing marketing ethics through the categories that marketers use. For example research, promotion and placement must be done in an ethical manner. This is something that marketers have chosen to ignore because their research is not done in an ethical manner. Their research involves using psychological experts who may use their knowledge to take advantage of children who belong to vulnerable groups” (Lizabeth, 2001).

• Targeting children alone

Marketers who create marketing campaigns that are just directed towards children only are engaging in ‘unethical marketing practices’ this is because “children are naive, they are at a
stage of development called ‘proximal development’. At this stage, children simply take up elements of what they perceive in the world around them and then use it in various aspects of their lives. There is a certain level of trust that children have over and above than one of adults. They lack the ability to weigh arguments in a sober and even sometimes a cynical way. Consequently, this makes them very vulnerable to exploitation” (Murphy et al, 2004).

Examples of advertisements that are directed towards children alone “are those that have cartoon characters and are seen as specifically meant for children. At that point, children will feel like they are the only ones with the ability of purchasing the item yet it is their parents who have to foot the bill. Unethical advertisements are those ones that do not involve getting consent from parents. Most of the time such advertisements are usually aired in the afternoon during kid's programming sessions. They usually create desires in children to have those advertisements at all costs. When advertising is done without parental consent; that is when children are watching shows on their own then it become unethical. Children are too young to realize the manipulations that are going on through television or media advertisements. They also do not realize the financial pressures that come with the purchase of items. It would therefore be unethical for marketers to leave parents out of their marketing strategies. Normally, ethical advertisements are those ones that require children to get their parents involved in the marketing place. This can be achieved by stating it directly in the advertisement. It can also be achieved by limiting some children's products in parental magazines or targeting families in general instead of just children” (Waymack, 2000).

Advertisements targeting children alone have shown their effects in a number of ways - “In the year 2007, it was found that about fifty eight percent of all the items purchased by children (through their allowances) are sweets and toys were the next highest items to be purchased by children. This took up a whooping thirty percent. Toys and candy are all items that are advertised directly children hence the staggering statistics” (Davidson, 2002).

Advertising to children alone brings out very fundamental ‘ethical issue’. “It highlights the power analysis issue in marketing. Any form of marketing that claims to be ethical must adhere to the power balance principle. The scales must not be tipped towards the consumer neither should they favor the marketer either. When marketers target vulnerable markets, they tend to make the situation favorable. This is what is called caveat emptor in marketing. It is an unfair scenario and is also exploitative in nature” (McGee and Heubusch, 1997).
Types of products, manner of advertisements and other qualities can indicate whether or not an advertisement is targeting children. It should be noted that “there are certain elements that if conducted by marketers may be deemed unethical for example, when an advertisement is made in such a manner as to imply that it is meant for children”. Some elements to watch out for are:-

- images
- voices
- music
- color

“These are all elements that are meant to draw on children's attention. Besides this, there may be certain activities expected to captivate children such as drawing, then those advertisements may be meant for them. Besides that, some advertisements may have characters that are designed for that demographic group. Sometimes some advertisements may be placed in publications that are usually read by children alone. They may also be placed in areas that have children” (Murphy et al, 2004).

However, “all these features can be deemed unethical if they will be seen or heard by children exclusively, For example, if the advertisement is placed in a publication that is read by children alone then this is unethical because there is not parental consent there or if it is broadcast at times when children could be watching without parental consent” (Lizabeth, 2001).

Sometimes the “kind of content” in the advertisements matters too. “Advertisements that are created in such ways as to make children feel less about themselves if they lack that product may be deemed unethical. Also advertisements that will promote harmful products to children are also unethical. For example, there were certain toys from China that had an excess of chemical elements and exposed certain risks to children who were playing with them. If advertisements posses those characteristics, then they may be considered unethical”.

2.8.2 Do Children Understand Advertisements

No matter how we try to protect our kids from advertisements, whether they are from televisions, computers or bill boards, they can still look at them and try to decipher them on
their own. Kids are smart people who understand what they see around them and worse because they imitate what they see.

Children imitate what they see whether they are good or bad, the advertisements that children see on televisions and in magazines have great impact in their life.

“Advertisements that kids watch become their favorites. If they see food on television, they want to try the food or if they see games being advertised they want to try the games. Countless products are being advertised everyday on televisions and papers. And children must be trained to know which product is really good. The main purpose of advertising is to attract people and make money. Every advertisement whether on paper or on television has a purpose of brainwashing the watchers so that they will patronize their product. When children see advertisements they immediately develop affection to the said product being advertized so it is up for the parents to educate their kids about advertisements. As children watch the advertisement, they absorb everything that the advertisement says and they believe what they see and hear. Children always listen to what they hear and believe in them. It is therefore very important to watch the children and teach them what is true and what is not. There are advertisements that exaggerate and sometimes this is dangerous to children. Advertisers maybe trying to attract people to patronize their products and services but they are not very good for children. Sometimes too much advertisement of a certain product could make the child crave for that product even if it is not good for the health”.

For example the junk foods that are often advertised on television – “It shows a child who became Superman when he ate the product. A young child will think that the product could really make him a Superman and would like to try the product. Parents should be vigilant enough about advertisement and explain to the child that advertisements are only for attracting customers. Parents must be responsible in educating their kids about the advertisements. Children must always be guided accordingly when they are watching television so that they will be corrected on their wrong beliefs about products being advertised. Not all products being advertised on papers and televisions are good for the kids. Sometimes the products are not what they claim they are. Although many things could be learned from the television, it is always wise to guide the child when watching. If your child really loves a product flashed on the television then you should ask your child why he likes the product. Your decision to buy the product being advertised will depend on
your child’s reason for wanting the product, whether his reason is right or wrong. Buying a product through advertisement must be carefully studied in order to give the right product to your kid”.

While advertisement is a very good way to convince your child during the times when they refuse to listen, what you tell them is very important. Be sure to tell them the truth about every advertisement they see around them.

2.8.3 Marketing to Children: Accepting Responsibility

For all the significant achievements companies are making “as corporate citizens, the issue of their real impact on society and what as a result society may actually need back from them, raises the question of whether we are adequately defining what is expected by being socially responsible”.

![A McDonald's Happy Meal](image.png)

The issue of marketing to children really brings that into focus “with food marketing a timely lens, the issue of obesity a hot health care crisis, and McDonald’s handling of responsibility, as one of the world’s largest fast food chains, a case in point”.

As background “McDonald’s Happy Meals for children with toys has come under attack. San Francisco is one of the cities that have voted to ban selling toys with fast food for children that exceed certain levels of salt, fat, calories and sugar. McDonald’s was accused of deceptive marketing practices to children over the lure of toys as an inducement to buy Happy Meals. Healthy alternatives are available, apple slices in place of fries and milk instead of soda – if kids are willing to eat them. But, there is still the issue of high sodium content in burgers”.

126
“At McDonald’s May 17, 2011 shareholder meeting, activists focused attention on McDonald’s marketing to children. In February 2011, in anticipation of McDonald’s shareholder meeting, Corporate Accountability International launched a campaign to fire Ronald McDonald, the clown mascot for the last nearly 50 years, and encourage headquarters to stop marketing to children by delivering petitions to individual restaurants. They also asked the chain to address directly the relationship of fast food to obesity. Beginning the campaign in a Portland, Oregon suburb, by May they had gathered 20,000 parents and community resident’s signatures on petitions which they delivered to the shareholder meeting”.

In Oregon, McDonald’s threw down the gauntlet, and affirmed Ronald’s job security, saying he is “the heart and soul of Ronald McDonald House Charities, which lends a helping hand to families in their time of need. The response demonstrated how McDonald’s infuses the emotional and the marketing: Ronald, the symbol to families dealing with sick and dying children, is also the brand, signifying the food and fun atmosphere to eat it in”.

A letter signed by 600 health professionals and organizations, critical of the link between fast food and obesity, was read at the shareholder meeting. It had run as full page ads in newspapers across the country. In addition, shareholder Proposal 11, by the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, requested McDonald’s undertake a report on its “policy responses to public concerns about the linkage of fast food to childhood obesity, diet related diseases and other impacts on children’s health.” The proposal was soundly defeated.

In his remarks at the meeting, CEO Jim Skinner asserted “the company’s right to advertise freely, to offer its menu and lifestyle selections, and leave to parent’s the right to chose what their children eat, saying it is up to personal responsibility. McDonald’s Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) information indicates the company serves a balanced array of quality food products and provides the information to make individual choices”.

“Marketing to children, whether the subject is food, toys, clothes or anything else raises enormous concerns for Susan Linn, director and co-founder of a national coalition of health care professionals, educators, parents and others called the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood”.
“There is no ethical, moral, social, or spiritual justification for targeting children in advertising and marketing, said Linn recently at a Conscious Capitalism Conference. Linn, who also teaches psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, cited obesity and a number of other issues impacting children and society that stem from targeting kids, including youth violence, sexualization, underage drinking and smoking, excessive materialism and the erosion of creativity”.

“Kids are inundated with advertising in a way never before, she said in an interview. I don’t believe in any advertising to children”.

The food industry has been effective in limiting the Federal Trade Commission’s ability to regulate marketing to children, and unless Congress changes the rules, companies self-regulate. I asked Linn what protection the Children’s Food and Beverage Initiative provides. Linn indicated it didn’t provide any because it has no actual authority and the standards are voluntary.

The Coalition advocates that children be able to develop a healthy relationship to food, but McDonald’s, Linn says, entices kids not because of the food but because of the toys and the message of happiness that is part of their advertising.

Marketing to children is inherently deceptive because kids take things literally and media characters play a big role in their lives, Linn says. They don’t understand persuasive intent until they are eight years old; and the brain’s capacity for judgment isn’t developed until their 20s which makes them very vulnerable as marketing targets.

Of course “parents are accountable for educating their children about responsible choices and healthy foods. And, they have the choice not to take their kids to McDonald’s. Except if you serve more than 64 million people in 117 countries each day and many of your restaurants are open 24/7, the chain has created a compelling draw”.

A recent report by Yale University’s Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity that more fast food marketing dollars for toys are being spent (to get kids in the door) while marketing efforts to promote healthy meals haven’t really increased.
“CSR has had an enormous influence helping companies reduce their global footprint by addressing human rights and other issues. But companies are socializing kids and the imprint on those kids is not necessarily creating common good outcomes”.

“Having a young over-sexualized population of kids who have no awareness of the implications or consequences of their choices is unhealthy. Foods appealing to kids because they are tasty, high fat and zero nutrition is also unhealthy. When we start to imprint early in behaviors and consumer choices things that don’t lead to personal and common good, and that need to be corrected in teen years by good SR programs”.