CHAPTER 1
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Television is a vital source of information and entertainment. Children all over the world spend maximum free time in front of the TV. The time that children spend in front of television can be better utilised in other fruitful activities (Dietz and Gortmaker, 1985). It has been found that generally the time that children who are in the age group of 5-8 spend in front of television has been 1 ½ - 2 ½ hours per day (Larson and Verma 1999).

In India too TV has reached every nook & corner. However TV watching also has negative outcomes. Children’s interest reduces in reading, playing, exercise, study etc. and they will be seen sitting in front of TV for long number of hours doing nothing developing aggressive and destructive behaviour (R.K Gupta, DP Saini et al 1994).

Most parents today are pre occupied with various activities throughout the day. As a result they depend on TV to occupy their child while they do their household chores. It takes a lot of effort to restrict children’s TV watching. Today with both parents working it becomes a struggle for them to maintain the home and the work place. Whether they like it or not parents sometimes overlook the continuous presence of their child in front of television. They feel that at least the child is quiet and is occupied in the house rather than being naughty and running around. (Karen Hill Scott, 2005). According to recommendation of the American Academy of Paediatrics children should not be allowed to watch TV before the age of 2 and after that not over than 1-2 hours a day. The secret in managing ones child is not in counting how long he is in front of the TV but in calculating how long the parent is able to hold the child’s attention away from television.
Advertising is communication which is non-personal in nature which is persuasive and paid for in relation to products; services or ideas by a recognisable sponsor (Datta 2008). Children are basically innocent and immature. When they see an advertisement they do not understand the “intent of sale” in it and get easily influenced to buy it (Wilcox, 2004). This is not limited to the small children but also the bigger ones. Similarly boys were more influenced than girls in watching television (Chernin 2008). Many of the girls and bigger children watch television due to their curiosity, to find out new things and some due to loneliness. (Ahluwalia and Singh, 2012). Television has been found to be the most effective and popular audio visual media that conveys all types of messages to people. It is available in every home whether upper, middle or low class. People’s accessibility to television is increasing as a number of channels with variety of entertainment and informative programmes are available round the clock.

It has been found that in a year a child on an average sees more than 40,000 television commercials and the main types of product seen are toys, candies, cereals and other fast food items (Kunkel & Gantz 1992).

In countries like India where there is low literacy rate advertisers find television to be a more effective media of communication than any other source (Ciochetto 2004). Children between the ages of 5-14 spend a lot of free time in front of television. They may end up watching 20,000 TV commercials in a year (Cruz 2004). Children also exert a lot of pressure on their parents buying and spending decisions (Hawkins et al 2001).

1.2 CHILDREN AND FOOD ADVERTISING

Research has shown that children become aware of the difference between advertisements and programmes at the age of 3. They understand the communication intent in advertisements from around the age of 5. They understand the persuasive nature of advertising by the age of 7 or 8. With age the understanding about advertising increases.
Children are looked upon by marketers for 3 reasons:

1. They include the present market
2. They include the future market
3. They also motivate parents to make purchases (McNeal 1987)

In Australia children in the age of 5-12 watch TV for an average of 2 hours each week, they view up to 4 hours of advertisements weekly and yearly the number goes up to 208 hours. It can be said that the highest number of TV food advertisements aimed at children are shown on Australian television (Adler R, Bernard F et al 1977). Garber, Morgan & Signorelli (1982) found that consuming snacks while watching TV increases with age and Carrath, Goldberg & Skinner (1991) found that adolescents normally prefer to eat potato chips, popcorn, cookies & corn chips.

Children in UK watch television for 17 hours a week on an average. Food advertising constitutes 40% of the advertisements. The items advertised are mainly snacks, food and drinks which are processed and various breakfast items. Such extensive TV viewing can result into obesity (Anderson et al, 1998). Francis et al (2003) has undertaken study on teenage girls and found that those who were found eating in front of TV consumed more especially dietary fat. There was a strong correlation between eating of unhealthy food and time spent in watching TV daily (Woodward et al 1997).

India is undergoing an enormous nutritional revolution. With the advent of fast food chains the move today is to replace the old eating habits with high energy, high calorie dense foods (Bowmen et al 2004, Nielson et al 2002). Take away food, junk food, fast food are the new names associated with food revolution. Such eating habits have resulted into increased risk of cancer, obesity, poor quality of diet and other ailments (Pereira et al 2005).

Children have been found to consume saturated fat, high levels of sugar, sodium and less amount of fruits, vegetables and whole grains. (Enns CW). The Institute of Medicine of the National Academics found that marketing of food through TV advertising had tremendous effect on children’s preferences of food resulting into obesity.
The phrase ‘part of balanced breakfast’ is something we quite often hear in relation to cereal advertisements. Research shows that maximum of the children below 7 years do not actually know what it means (Palmar & Mc Dowell, 1981). Children normally understand this term to mean that cereal alone is a sufficient meal (Gies 1982).

The food advertisement has a considerable impact on the eating habits of children. Advertisements normally show food items rich in fat, saturated fat, sugar, salt, sodium which are very harmful to children’s health. Children get easily carried away by these advertisements and want to buy the advertised product. Constant TV watching and eating of such food without any other activity leads to various diseases and ailments like heart problems, obesity, cholesterol which is very bad in the long run.

It has been seen that school going children consume a lot of snacks every day but these have high calories, fat, sugar and salt (Webners 2003). The reason for obesity and overweight problem in children were examined by many researchers and it was found that spending long hours in front of TV is one of the prominent factor.

Different aspects surrounding advertising directed to children have been dealt with by researchers (e.g. Preston 2005, Mc Dermott O’Sullivan, Stead and Hastings 2006, Patterson and Fjellstrom 2004).

### 1.3 CHILDREN AND CONSUMPTION OF ADVERTISED FOOD

Fast food means food which can be quickly prepared and eaten. They include items like sandwiches, chicken fried, pizza, potato fry, ice cream and others. They are highly processed so as to retain its taste, and served in an attractive manner. Such type of food when consumed on a daily basis can cause health problems. It has high appeal to persons below 35 years. Such type of food is served in places called fast food restaurants. Such food is low in fibre, calcium and iron and high in calories.
Various factors have contributed to fast food use which include increase in the number of working women, nuclear families, urbanisation, since such type of food are prepared quickly, are low priced and easily available they are more in demand. Many of the fast food centres are meeting needs of health conscious customers by including low fat menu items, vegetables, fruits and use vegetable oil for frying.

Cartoon characters have been used by market players to encourage children to visit fast food restaurants (Guber & Berey 1993). This aspect has been brought to light by many researchers (Neely & Schumann 2004).

1.4 PARENT’S ATTITUDE TOWARDS T.V AND FOOD ADVERTISING

Parents cannot always accept to buy whatever the child demands after seeing various advertisements. Atkin (1975) found that more than ½ of the children got annoyed when their toy request was turned down. Similarly Atkin (1978) observed that children got disappointed and angry when their large number of request for cereal food were turned down at supermarket.

Purchase requests and parent child conflict had a strong relation in families with low income as compared to high income. This could be because parents in low income families tend to refuse the demands due to limited financial resources. (Bardi & Borgognini -Tali, 2001).

Parent’s attitude towards advertising to children: Since parents are the mediators between advertising and children, their attitude towards advertisements is very important. The attitudes of mothers may differ according to cultures. The negative attitude of mothers towards advertising was brought to light by Wiman (1983) in his work in USA. Mukhery (2005) in his comparative study of mothers attitudes in India and Japan found that Indian mothers have less negative attitude towards advertising on television especially those directed at children and indulged in less supervision. There are different types of mediations undertaken by parents. The first one is ‘active mediation’ (e.g. Nathenson 2001, 2002) or ‘instructive mediation’ (Desmond, Singer, Calam and Coli more 1985, Warren 2002).
In simple words active or instructive mediation means the way in which parents talk to their children about various programmes shown on television as and when required.

The second type of mediation is ‘restrictive mediation’. Here parents set certain rules regarding the time spent in T.V watching. (Corder – Bolz and Fellows 1979, Rossiter and Robertson 1975). Here T.V viewing is regarded as a reward or punishment. It may give positive outcome (Desmond et al. 1985) or negative outcomes (Nathenson 1999).

Brucks, Armstrong & Goldberg (1988) state that 9 and 10 year old children have to be constantly reminded about the ill effects of advertising in order to protect them against it. Akin (1975) state that older children (i.e. 7-11 years) were more affected by advertising than smaller children (i.e. 4-6 years). Several more studies by (Metcalf & Mischel 1999, Kuczynski, Kochenska, Reddle-Yarvow and Girmius Brown 1987) have shown that older children (7-11 years) are more affected by advertising, which often result into parent-child conflict. Many studies (Atkin 1975, Buijzen and Valkenburg 2000, Ayla 1994) found that boys mainly indulge in conflicts with their parents on the effects of advertising. According to Cowan and Avants 1988 boys are less complaining and are found to be more independent than girls to demand to their parents.

Young de Bruin & Eagle (2003) in their study on parents in Great Britain and Sweden on television advertising to children found that children constantly pressurise their parents to buy advertised products, their demand increases with increase in TV watching, they are more influenced then adults and end up buying unwanted products.

According to Burra & Burra (1977) stronger legislative control is what is demanded by 65% of the parents while Cosmos & Yannopaulas (1981) state that 64% of mothers want advertisements on television to children to be banned.