1.1 ADVERTISMENT

“You can tell the ideals of a nation by its advertisement”.
- Norman Douglas

Childhood is the time when a person needs nurturing, schooling, time to play and explore the opportunity to grow both emotionally and physically. India is rich in its children with a child population of 440 million and another 26 million being added every year, the largest number in any country in the world. Children across the globe are bombarded with promotions for food items, as it constitutes a sizeable market. Children’s beverage and snack food choices are significantly affected by exposure to meticulously crafted promotions. They are becoming an important segment which no marketer can ignore today. Food marketing on television is one of the major influence on the obesity epidemic today, as also with several other allied health issues, hence it is of special concern when it is intentionally targeted to vulnerable children.

To advertise is to publicize and draw attention. Nature runs the best advertising agency. The peacock loves to advertise his wings in the hope of catching the best mate.

The cuckoo does the same with its voice to woo its partner. From dawn to dusk, we are acquainted and entertained with advertisements. Advertising means blowing your own trumpet. It is the activity of exerting a pull on the public attention to a product or a business, by paid announcements in the print, broadcast, or electronic media. Television has long been the predominant medium that advertisers have chosen for marketing their products to children.
Advertisement convinces people to buy products. All advertisements contain both information and persuasion. Today we can say advertising is a communication, marketing, public-relation, information and persuasion process, usually aimed at a particular segment of the population - the target audience, David A. Aaker, (1995).

The word advertising came from the Latin word 'advertere' means "to turn the mind toward" Belch & Belch (2001). According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) (2001), "Children are influenced by media–they learn by observing, imitating, and making behaviors of their own". It has been found that there is a strong influence of television advertisement among the children’s behavior, attitude and health problems. In the today’s savvy marketers, every child represents a new chance to build cradle-to-grave brand loyalty.

Exposure to Television ads, for example, significantly increases consumption of unhealthy foods, Gorn and Goldberg (1982), and directly affects children’s food knowledge, preferences and behavior, Hastings et al., (2003).

Food promotion influence children’s food preferences. The exposure to food advertisements has shown to influence children’s preferences, choices, and requests for advertised products. It is currently estimated that the average child sees more than 40,000 television commercials a year, most of which are 15 to 30 seconds in length Kunkel, (2001). Children have become an increasingly important target group for marketers in recent times, Valkenburg (2000), largely because their buying power is expanding; they have become more capable of making their own purchase choices and can also strongly influence household purchases. Marketers are becoming increasingly sophisticated in developing promotional strategies and techniques capable of influencing child consumers. They have also recognised the need to be more attuned to the children’s market; they now base their strategies on a
detailed understanding of children and their underlying interests, motivations, values and beliefs, Acuff (1997):

- From age one the child accompanies the parents on shopping sprees and observes all sorts of goodies...
- Between age two to three the child starts demanding things, and begins making connections between what she/he sees on television and the products available in stores. The list of demands starts increasing.
- By age four to five children start selecting items with their parents' permission. They begin identifying brands.
- Simultaneously, the child is learning how to get parents to respond to demands. Whining and screaming are forms of this tactic. Almost all children learn to forcefully persuade their parents.
- From age six onwards the child can go to the store himself and make his own purchase. The final step in the development of a consumer is learning how to pay for a purchase.
- As an advertising saying goes, 'If you own this child at an early age, you can own this child for years to come'.
- As marketing strategies are based on these patterns, child psychologists are questioning the ethics of targeting children through advertisements. They reason that till the age of eight or nine, children are unable to understand the intention behind advertising, thus it is unethical to target them.

1.2 TELEVISION ADVERTISEMENTS – SUSCEPTIBLE EFFECTS

A television advertisement or television commercial, often just commercial, advert, ad, or ad-film (India)—is a span of television programming produced and paid for by an organization that conveys a message. Advertisement revenue provides a significant portion of the funding for most privately owned television networks. The vast majority of television advertisements today consist of brief advertising spots, ranging in length from a few seconds to several minutes.
Advertisements of this sort have been used as a tool to promote a wide variety of goods, services and ideas since the dawn of television.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), recommends that kids under two years old not to watch any Television and that those older than two years can watch no more than 1 to 2 hours per day of quality programs. The first two years of life are considered a critical time for brain development. Television and other electronic media can get in the way of exploring, playing, and interacting with parents and others, which encourages learning and healthy physical and social development. As kids get older, too much screen time can interfere with activities such as being physically active, reading, doing homework, playing with friends and interaction time with family.

1.3 TELEVISION FOOD ADVERTISEMENTS AND CHILDREN IN INDIA

There is no universal definition of a child (although UNESCO - the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, defines early childhood as ages 0– 8 years). Children are otherwise defined according to national jurisdictions, for the purposes of advertising law; the definition of a child varies from one jurisdiction to another. However, 12 is commonly used as a cut-off point, on the basis of the widespread academic view, that by the age of 12, children have developed their behaviour as consumers, effectively recognize advertising and are able to adopt critical attitudes towards it, Vlakenburg and Cantor, (2001).
Over the past few decades, dietary patterns have changed significantly. The average amount of calories consumed per day has dramatically increased. Furthermore, the increase in caloric intake has also decreased the nutrients needed for a healthy diet.

Food portions also play an important role in the unhealthy diet patterns that have evolved. The prevalence of “extra large” options and “all you can eat” buffets create a trend in overeating. Combined with a lack of physical activity, children are consuming more and expending less. In this present scenario, the eating behavior of the children has totally changed and it is influenced by the television food advertisements. They have the habit, either or many of:

- Poor eating
- Over eating
- Unnecessary use of cool drinks
- Eating non-nutritional foods.
- Eating out-side the home.
- Intake of high fat, high sugar, low fibre food.

The dietary habits of children have drastically changed which depends on
the following:

- Eating occasion
- Location
- Spending habits

**Eating occasion**

The eating habits have changed in the children’s diet according to
different occasions. Sometimes they concentrate more on snacks in day time or
evening time thereby ignoring their breakfast, lunch and dinner. Some children like
to consume more food in the night than in the day time. They normally prefer to
consume junk food, while watching television programs.

**Location**

The eating habits of the children depend upon the location where they
eat. The location may be of:

- Home
- Restaurants
- Parties

The level of taking food has also changed according to the various
locations. They are more interested to consume food in hotels/restaurants,
preferably chats, burgers, beverages etc., than having food in their home.
Spending habits

Now-a-days children are reluctant to spend time in playing outdoor games and other physical activities. They are more interested in watching television programs. They are nurtured to be independent at an early age and hence liberally allowed to watch Television programs, as also take buying decisions on their own. This encourages being a squanderer.

1.4 DIETARY CHANGES – INFLUENCE BY TELEVISION COMMERCIALS

Food marketing on television is targeted at children. Foods dominate children's advertising, and a recent report indicates that the diet advertised to children contrasts strongly with the nationally recommended diet, Hasting, G et al, (2003). The exposure to food advertisements has been shown to influence children’s preferences, choices, and requests for advertised products, Chamberlain et al., (2006). A recent review of literature on food advertising was conducted in 2005 and concluded that advertising of foods on television may influence children’s food choices and promote unhealthy diets, Lobstein & Dibb, (2005). Lobstein et al. found that there was a significant association between the proportion of children with a BMI ≥95th percentile (shown in Appendix 4 & 5 separately for boys and girls) and the number of advertisements on television promoting the consumption of energy-dense, micronutrient poor foods.

In addition, a negative association was found between the proportion of children who were overweight and the number of advertisements promoting healthy diets, Lobstein & Dibb, (2005).

Television commercials are influencing children’s eating habits, as according to a recent study, at least 54% Indian children watching commercials opted to buy fast food.
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 this study, children found eating fast food “in” and “fashionable” while their parents claimed that children “just don’t listen”. When the food choices of the children changes, it leads to a dietary problem and affects the health of the children.

In 2002, a Joint World Health Organization/Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (WHO/FAO) Expert Consultation concluded that the heavy marketing of fast food and energy-dense, micronutrient-poor foods and beverages is a “probable” causal factor in weight gain and obesity. Common junk foods include salted snack foods (chips, crisps), candy, gum, most sweet desserts, fried fast food and carbonated beverages (sodas) as well as packed soft drinks, fried and processed food, particularly fast food that contains high amounts of ox cholesterol as reported by the Scientists from China in the National Meeting of the American Chemical Society in August 2009.

1.5 TELEVISION ADVERTISEMENTS – INDIAN SCENARIO

Television advertising in India is one of the fastest growing markets in the Asia Pacific regions of the globe. Since the Indian television is on a threshold of a major technological change, with new distribution technologies like digital cable, DTH (Direct- to – home) and IPTelevision (Internet Protocol television), television advertising has played a major role in Indian Industry. The table 1.1 displays the advertising time per hour of children’s programme in few countries including India.
Table 1.1
Advertising time per hour of children’s programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Minutes of advertising per hour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>6-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Television was introduced on experimental basis in India on September 15, 1959. On 1st January, 1976 was a remarkable day when "Commercials" were telecasted at all the centres. Advertising on television was introduced in India in 1976. During the 1990s, the cable television became an attractive entertainment and media option. Fig.1.2 shows the share of advertisements by different medium as on 2008.

Fig 1.2
Share of Advertisements spending by Medium

[Image: Share of Ad Spending by Medium]

Source: Nielsen Online, AdAcross
Ad watching in fact was much higher on cable TV in comparison to all other media. Advertising industries have welcomed the growth of Television advertisements as a popular and best effective medium. The advertising revenue on television has grown from Rs.300 crores in 1991-92 (3% of total transmission time) to Rs. 3,000 crores in the year 2,000.

1.6 IMPACT ON HEALTH ISSUES OF CHILDREN

Marketing of unhealthy food to children is becoming increasingly pervasive and sophisticated. It occurs in a range of contexts and through a variety of media, including free-to-air and subscription television, cinema, magazines, the internet, email, SMS, sponsorship of schools and children’s sport, product placement, point of sale promotions, and product packaging and labeling. However, television is still the primary vehicle for advertising to children, and an effective medium for reaching large number of children.

Television has been labeled as a powerful variable in the early onset of obesity. Through television, advertisers can reach and manipulate the minds of a whole spectrum of consumers. We underestimate the powerful influence of the millions of televised images registered by children every day. Advertising firms thrive on our susceptibility to be swayed through images and soon come to prey upon the heightened vulnerability of children who are even more sensitive to such visual cues.

In India, 40-50 per cent of advertisements during children's programming were for food. Advertising for food and beverages communicates potentially powerful food consumption cues, including images of attractive models eating, snacking at non-meal times, and positive emotions linked to food consumption Folta et al., (2006); Harrison & Marske, (2005). The messages presented in Television food advertising similarly have the power to act as real-world primes and lead to corresponding eating behaviors. Television commercials of foods, high in fat, sugar or salt greatly influence eating habits of the children, impressionable and make them vulnerable to non-communicable diseases.
World Health Organization (WHO) remarked that a large share of unhealthy foods is marketed through Television commercials and a systematic review of evidence revealed such advertisements influence children’s food preferences, purchase requests and Consumption.

With the advent of television, even in the remotest areas children have become more aware of the fast food items available. Thus, the lure of convenience in addition to good taste gets children to junk food addiction.

1.7 ATTRIBUTES OF TELEVISION FOOD ADVERTISEMENTS

The following factors are the most affecting attributes of Television Food advertisements. The factors were identified for the study from the interaction with the respondents and their parents. The influential factors of television food advertisements are ‘celebrities’, ‘jingles’ and ‘peer influence’ which instigates the ‘food choices’, ‘buying behavior’, and ‘dietary habits’ of children, finally impacting on the psychological and physical health of children.

Fig 1.3
Attributes of Television Food Advertisement
1.8 KEY DEFINITIONS

**Advertisement** - American Marketing Association (AMA) defines as, “any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods and services by an identified sponsor”. As said by Seldon, "Advertising is a business force, which through printed words, sells or helps sale, build reputation and fosters goodwill". John V. W. expressed as, "Advertising like salesmanship is an attempt to influence the thoughts and action of people". According to Canor and Wichart "Advertising includes those visual or oral messages in magazines, newspapers, movies and letters, over radio and television and on transportation vehicles and outdoor signs which are paid by their sponsors and directed to consumers for purpose of influencing their purchases and attitudes". Britannica Dictionary defines as, "A form of paid announcement interested to promote the sale of commodity or services, to advance an idea or to bring about other effect desired by the advertiser".

The London Institute of Practitioners define as, "Advertising presents the most persuasive possible selling message to right prospect for the product or service at the lowest possible cost".

**Hedonic Hunger** - is a major motivation for eating. Hedonic hunger is seen as a drive towards food, food craving and conditioned wanting elicited by food sensory cues. It is, by definition, satisfied only by highly preferred foods. Of course, as noted above these are the foods that are most of the time both liked and wanted. It is explained as the drive to consume highly palatable foods when we are trying to eat a ‘healthy’ diet. Children are induced to eat such palatable foods or junk foods advertised in the television, when they are recurrently exposed to such commercials that interest them most.

**Oxycholesterol** – A form of junk food cholesterol may be the most serious cardiovascular health threat of all. Scientists from China report on the effects of ox cholesterol formed when foods such as burgers and steaks are fried or grilled or processed, causing their fats to react with oxygen. Food manufacturers
also introduce ox cholesterol to improve the texture, taste and stability of processed foods. The new research indicates that eating foods high in the substance gives an extra boost to blood cholesterol levels and is more likely to damage arteries than ordinary cholesterol (or LDL)

1.9 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Most advertisements of Soft Drinks are endorsed by sporting celebrities and film stars. According to the findings of the Delhi based NGO, Centre for Science & Environment (CSE), all soft drinks made in India contain pesticide residues almost 27 times higher than the EU norms. Consumption of these beverages is on the rise in the growing children who nowadays take it as a part of regular diet or a good partying option that is readily available to them. Even after the reports by CSE about the findings of pesticide residues nothing much has been done to curb this menace.

Burgers, pizzas and the fast foods, force their way as an essential diet as most of these commercials are advertised as a diet complete food. The rise in fast food consumption, and eating meals out, has led to a significant caloric intake over the past few decades. In many households, both parents work, meaning there's little time to prepare elaborate meals each night, and all these junk foods are easily accessible to the school going kids. Fast food chains often target their advertising at children and teenagers or the young who more or less have the required purchasing power and who most of the time influence the purchasing behavior of their parents and who can become the target market for their products for a long time to come. For example, Mc Donald’s happy meal which always has a toy attached to it and a newly released children’s movie CD. Children are very fond of clowns and cartoon characters which form the advertising mascot for the target audience.

The early onset of diabetes is mainly due to the changing food habits in the children and the adolescents. Until the very recent times, only people in the age group of 20-35 years used to be affected by diabetes. But now, children aged
anywhere between three months and 17 years are also developing diabetes, which is a cause of great concern.

The habit of regularly consuming fast food will lead to obesity among children. Obesity is not a serious health problem, but it is a prime precursor of many non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases (CVDs), gall bladder ailments, cancer, psycho-social problems, breathlessness, sleep disorders, asthma, arthritis, weak bones and other reproductive hormone abnormalities. A recent World Health Organisation (WHO) report has highlighted that cardiovascular diseases are even now more numerous in India and China than in all the economically developed countries in the world added together. In such an alarming scenario, it is crucial time to create awareness among the society, exclusively for the Parents to understand the severity of the health hazards among children, influenced by the ‘Television Food Advertisements’.

1.10 NEED FOR THE STUDY

Children are becoming an important segment which no marketer can ignore today. Marketers are thus exerting greater and greater influence over what children eat (increasing amount of fast foods and sugar filled beverages), how they dress (with little regard for what is age – appropriate), and how they behave (increasingly restless and aggressive). They target the children with a steady stream of messages that emphasize self-indulgence, instant gratification and materialism. These attitudes are antithetical to what parents seek to teach their children and also to the attitudes and values that make for healthy living and moral life.

Children across the globe are bombarded with promotions for food items. Children’s beverage and snack food choices are significantly affected by exposure to meticulously crafted promotions that significantly increases consumption of unhealthy foods and directly affects children’s food preferences and behavior. In today’s savvy marketers, every child represents a new chance to build cradle-to-
grave brand loyalty. The exposure to food advertisements has been shown to influence children’s preferences, choices, and requests for advertised products.

Television has long been the predominant medium that advertisers have chosen for marketing products to woo children. Food marketing on television is only one of the influences on the obesity epidemic today, but it is of special concern when it is intentionally targeted to vulnerable children.

All these have lead to unhealthy dietary habits due to ‘hedonic hunger’ induced by these advertisements targeting children. Child psychologists are questioning the ethics of targeting children, the reason being that, till the age of eight or nine, children are unable to understand the intention behind advertising, thus it is unethical to target them, unconsciously laying a trap and susceptible to health problems. Thus, the need to study the various problems caused by television advertisements on the health issues both physiological and psychological, in children and to suggest measures to overcome these health problems for a society of healthy children in future.

1.11 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the children’s responsiveness to television food advertisements
- To identify the attributes of television food advertisements inducing children
- To analyze the influence of television food advertisements in children’s food purchasing requests and dietary habits.
- To assess the responses of parents on children’s purchase requests and health issues.
- To examine the views of pediatricians on children’s psychological and physiological health problems due to television food advertisements
- To explore the remedial measures to apprehend this menacing situation.

1.12 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A conceptual framework was developed to know the factors that contribute to the dietary habits resulting in the health hazards of children, from the
children’s point of view, supporting views from parents and pediatricians as validating information.

1.12.1 ‘Hedonic Hunger’ of children – Impact of Television Food Commercials:

A conceptual framework, as shown in fig.1.3, is to identify the influential factors of television food commercials and to find out its impact in the dietary habits and the ensuing health problems in children. The most influencing factors of television advertisements are; ‘celebrities’ endorsing nutritional supplements, energy drinks and beverages. Children aspired by their favorite stars try to imitate them. ‘Jingles’ and tunes is another influencing factor, that guarantees memory of the product by effectively associating with the product; ‘peer influence’ has a major impact among children, whatever his/her friends consume, the same product is demanded by the children. These factors induce buying behavior and food choices made by the children, due to ‘hedonic hunger’, which ultimately has an impact on the health of the children, physically and psychologically.

Fig. 1.4

‘Hedonic Hunger’ of children – Impact of Television Food Commercials
1.12.2 Parental views on the buying behavior and food choices of children

Advertisement effects can work both for and against healthy eating. “Parental encouragement to eat healthy was somewhat able to help undo the message of commercials, although the effects of parents were smaller than anticipated” from the study conducted by Dr. Christopher Ferguson (2011) of A&M International University. It was found that 71% chose for French fries by viewing the food advertisements and however, the number only dropped to 55% when the children were encouraged by their parents to choose a healthier option. A conceptual model was developed to test the influence of television food commercials on the food choices and the buying behavior of their wards, as given in Fig 1.5.

Fig.1.5

Parental views on the buying behavior and food choices of children

The health issues of children is an outcome of the food products advertised in television, inducing the food choices and the buying behavior of children, sometimes by forcing or by pleading their parents which has an impact on their health.
1.12.3 Pediatricians views on the psychological, emotional and dietary behaviour of children

A conceptual framework was constructed to find out from the Pediatricians, the Psychological, Emotional Behaviour and the Health Problems of children due to Television food advertisements as given in Fig.1.6. The information from the pediatricians is to corroborate the data collected from the parents of the respondents.

**Fig 1.6**

Pediatricians views on the psychological, emotional and health issues of children

The health problems of children according to the pediatricians emanate from the food choices and dietary behavior that causes from the psychological and emotional behavior influenced by television advertisements. When parents refuse to buy the food choices of their children, some of them, show an aggressive attitude or stubbornness until they achieve what they want.
1.13 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

While the current research is made to give significant contributions from both theoretical and practical point of view, it also has some limitations which are described below:

Firstly, the dimensions which we have taken into consideration for Television Food Advertisements are only for children at the age of 7 – 12 years. Hence research can be conducted by considering some more dimensions or factors from the point of view of adolescents or elderly people.

Secondly, further research can also be carried out by taking into consideration other factors like changes in character and behaviour, obesity, stress and emotional attitude.

Thirdly, this study is limited to the geographical area, restricted to only 3 districts in South TamilNadu due to time and cost constraints. Hence further research can be extended to other districts in TamilNadu.

Finally the respondents i.e., children under study were not medically diagnosed, as it is not an experimental research. Hence the study has a limitation on the authenticity of evidence on the health problems of the children.

1.14 CHAPTERISATION

The thesis has been arranged in seven chapters. The chapter scheme is as given below;

**Chapter -1: Introduction**

It highlights the implications of Television Food Advertisement, and its allied health issues of children. It also states about the need for the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study and chapter scheme.
Chapter – 2: Review of Literature

It discusses the various studies related to Television Food Advertisements and its influence on children’s health issues. It also includes the attributes of Television Food Advertisements inducing the viewers especially children.

Chapter – 3: Research Methodology

It clearly states about the methodology of the research work done in the study. It provides the information on the research design, sampling techniques and statistical tools used. It also exhibits the Hypothesis formulated in the study.

Chapter – 4: ‘Hedonic Hunger’ of Children -Impact of Television Commercials

It portrays to find out the Food Habits and Food Preferences of Children influenced by the television food commercials inducing their buying behavior.

Chapter - 5: Parental Views on the Buying Behaviour and Food Choices of Children

It discusses on the views of Parents of the respondents under study, about the Buying Behaviour and Food Choices of Children.

Chapter – 6: Pediatrician’s views on the Psychological, Emotional and Health Problems of Children

The study was deliberated to find out the views of Pediatricians, about the Psychological, Emotional and Health Problems of Children

Chapter – 7: Summary of Findings, Recommendations and Conclusion

It summarises the findings of the analysis done and also deals with the recommendations for parents and scope for further research, with concluding remarks.