ABSTRACT

TV Advertising has emerged as the most pervasive and a powerful tool for reaching consumers. It has grown increasingly sophisticated, elaborate and highly personal in nature. Children constitute an important target market segment and merit attention from a marketing perspective. They are the main focus in any form of advertising and their role in advertising is increasing day by day. Advertisers use all possible tactics to muster the attention of the children which may include illegal, dirty or underhand tricks, promoting untrue claims and reliance on false information. There has been a growing parental concern about the effect of TV advertising on the juvenile minds of the children as they believe that children are immature and unable to decipher the hidden intentions of the marketers. Parents are really concerned with the immediate and the long term impact the TV advertising would have on the overall development of their children.

This study is an attempt to examine the parental attitudes and perception about TV advertising directed at children. An empirical analysis of the views of 408 parents selected from three cities of Punjab viz; Amritsar, Jalandhar and Ludhiana and the Union Territory of Chandigarh is carried out. Mothers of the children of age group six to twelve years have been considered as a basic sampling unit. This is because of the fact that mothers in the Indian family are more invasive, interventionist and assertive in their families, particularly towards children. Working status of the mothers has been selected as the variable for present study, likewise mothers have been divided into two categories: Working and Non-working. Broad null hypothesis framed for the study is “There is no significant difference in the responses of the working and non-working mothers with respect to their attitude towards TV advertising directed at children, the manner in which parents mediate TV viewing by children, impact on social and cultural values and issues related to control and restriction of TV advertising”. In order to arrive at meaningful results statistical techniques such as Weighted Average Scores (WAS), t-test for independent samples, ANOVA, Chi-square test and Factor Analysis have been used.

The analysis of attitude of mothers towards TV advertising directed at children in general reveals TV advertising to be promoting aggression, pestering tendencies, defiance and senseless consumerism among children. Comparative analysis of responses of working
and non-working mothers reveals three common factors namely ‘Pestering Behavior’, ‘Immune Behavior’ and ‘Parental Involvement’. The assessment of the beliefs towards mediation of TV advertising revealed ‘Active Parental Role in Child Rearing’ to be the most significant factor among working and non-working mothers. However, the factor of ‘Restrictive Parental Role’ in case of working mothers is different from the non-working mothers who believe in ‘Instructive Parental Role’. The common dimensions identified among working and non-working mothers in context of impact of TV advertising on the social and cultural values of children are materialistic behavior, obscenity promotion, unhealthy eating habits and unnecessary portrayal of children. Regarding the issues related to the control and restriction of the TV advertising directed at children both working and non-working mothers agree to setting up of central regulatory authority, parental vigilance, active parental involvement and complete ban on TV advertising for children.

In general the study reveals that there is a growing parental concern regarding TV advertising directed at children. Parents accept TV advertising as an important source of information for children, but they believe it to be responsible for rising aggression, violence, materialism and obscenity thereby, leading to corrosion of social and cultural values of children. Mothers advocate the mediation the TV viewing habits of children and increased involvement of parents in the upbringing of the children to curtail the unconstructive effects of TV advertising directed at children.