CHAPTER-1
INTRODUCTION

Children represent a potential market segment. Marketers are interested in them because of their enormous spending power, purchase influence and their treatment as future adult consumers. Marketers believe that brand awareness, loyalty and preferences developed in children in young age would continue till they become old (McNeal, 1999). Therefore, in order to influence purchase decisions of children, they try to develop favourable image of their products/brands. They use mass media such as television, internet, radio, newspapers, magazines and periodicals to deliver messages and stimulate purchases among children.

Nonetheless, role of children as consumers is important in families. They do not only make purchase requests to parents or purchase products for themselves, but also act as purchase agents for the family. According to a survey of 6412 households in 14 cities in India, it has been found that children play an imperative role in 25 to 30 per cent family purchase decisions (Velloor, 2005). Their influence is higher in case of low value and child-centric products such as—food and grocery items, toys, children’s clothes, stationery items, products for family consumption (shampoo, toothpaste, soap) and low in case of high value goods such as—electronic goods, automobiles etc. (Kumar, 2013). Their influence can also be witnessed during the time they accompany mothers on shopping trips to buy foods and groceries (Kaur and Singh, 2006).

Most of the time, children request for branded foods that are highly marketed (Story and French, 2004). Further, younger children make more purchase requests than the older ones. More so, the probability of purchasing foods of child’s choice also increases manifold if a child is more assertive or if a mother honours each and every request of child (Berey and Pollay, 1968). Hence, children’s influence on family food decision making can be witnessed either in different stages of purchase decisions or in selecting various types of foods. As the purchase decision-process framework is segmented into four stages namely, initiation, general decision, choice and purchase act, children gain most influence on food decisions in initiation and choice stage and least influence in purchase act stage (Norgaard et al., 2007).
As regards nature and types of foods, a majority of children in western countries are seen to request for breakfast cereals, candies, chips, savoury snacks, packaged foods, beverages and chocolates in retail stores (Galst and White, 1976; Atkin, 1978; Story and French, 2004; O’Dougherty et al., 2006). Similar trends have been witnessed in India as children request for sweets (chewing gums, candies and chocolates), ice-creams, soft drinks, fruit drinks, fast foods (noodles, pasta) and health drinks (Khanna, 2012). Further, in a recent study, it is found that children influence purchase decisions for ice-creams/chocolates/juices followed by cereals, fruits/vegetables and bread in India (Kumar, 2013). They exhibit strong pester power and nag their parents to buy foods of their choice. Most of the time, they are seen to request for foods advertised on television (Galst and White, 1976). Owing to combination of voice and visual features, television advertisements wield long-lasting effects on purchase behaviour of children. More so, television also acts as an electronic baby-sitter for children. While mothers are busy in their regular household chores, children tend to watch favourite programs/cartoons and advertisements on television. Besides children, parents as well as grand-parents also take interest in watching cartoons after television serials and news. A majority of parents watch television with kids and further, in case of parents of younger children, this percentage is quite high (Anand, 2013). Hence, many advertisers find opportunities to capture target audience (children and their parents) through television commercials.

Besides, traditional advertisers such as GlaxoSmithKline, Hindustan Unilever, Cadbury, Mattel, Kellogg, Perfetti and ITC, many non-traditional advertisers such as Maruti Suzuki, Honda bikes, Hero Moto-Corp, Micromax, LG, Samsung and Hitachi also take interest in advertising products through television commercials. It is reported that approximately fifty per cent of advertisements revenue on kids’ channels are generated through non-traditional advertisers (Anand, 2013). In India, marketers spend huge amount of money on television advertisements. This expenditure was around US $2.4 billion (INR 10648 crore) in June, 2010 and is growing rapidly. The size of television advertisements industry in India was projected to rise to US $3.3 billion by 2013 (www.deloitte.com/in).

Further, positive relationship has been found between children’s habits of watching television and their preferences for advertised foods (Coon et al., 2001). A
majority of children prefer advertised foods due to increased exposure to advertisements (Miryala, 2011). Thus, children’s requests for foods also depend upon the nature and extent of food advertisements to which they are exposed to (Hastings et al., 2003).

An average child views over 40,000 commercials per year (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2004). In a report prepared by Consumers International (2004), it is revealed that the percentages of food advertisements shown during children’s programming vary between 40-50 per cent in India. For other Asia-Pacific countries such as Philippines, Pakistan and Malaysia, this percentage ranges between 50 and 75 per cent. However, in developed nations such as the USA, UK and Australia, the proportion of food advertisements varies between 20-46 per cent of all advertisements broadcast during children’s programs (Byrd-Bredbenner and Grasso, 1999; Zuppa et al., 2003; Chapman et al., 2006; Stitt and Kunkel, 2008; Powell et al., 2011; Castonguay et al., 2013). Furthermore, a child views on an average, 5-13 food commercials per hour in developed nations such as the USA, UK and Australia. Some children also view twenty five food advertisements per hour daily in Germany (Effertz and Wilcke, 2012).

As regards the nature of foods advertised to children, it has been found that fast foods are most frequently advertised (Byrd-Bredbenner and Grasso, 1999; Zuppa et al., 2003; Harrison and Marske, 2005; Chapman et al., 2006; Connor, 2006; Kelly et al., 2007; Powell et al., 2007b; Stitt and Kunkel, 2008; Warren et al., 2008; Castonguay et al., 2013). Other frequently advertised foods on children’s television networks are breakfast cereals (Page and Brewster, 2007; Powell et al., 2007a; Castonguay et al., 2013), candy and confectionery (Consumers International, 1999; Zuppa et al., 2003; Neville et al., 2005; Huang et al., 2012), snacks or/and soft-drinks (Kunkel and Gantz, 1992; Hastings et al., 2003; Karupaiah et al., 2008; Castonguay et al., 2013) and fats/sweets (Stitt and Kunkel, 2008; Warren et al., 2008). Contrary to this, advertisements for core foods appear in a very small proportion. For example, advertisements for fruits and vegetables are rarely appeared during children’s programs (Byrd-Bredbenner and Grasso, 1999; Zuppa et al., 2003; Harrison and Marske, 2005; Neville et al., 2005; Powell et al., 2007a; Galcheva et al., 2008; Stitt and Kunkel, 2008) and the proportion of broadcasting advertisements of dairy products such as milk and yogurt during children’s programs is also very less (Byrd-Bredbenner and Grasso, 1999; Powell et al., 2007a; Stitt and Kunkel,
In addition to this, frequency of fast food advertisements on commercial networks has increased over a period of time (Zuppa et al., 2003; Powell et al., 2011; Effertz and Wilcke, 2012).

Food marketers are witnessed to advertise foods through persuasive marketing techniques such as themes/appeals (Kunkel and Gantz, 1992; Byrd-Bredbenner and Grasso, 1999; Buijzen and Valkenburg, 2002; Page and Brewster, 2007; Roberts and Pettigrew, 2007; Kelly et al., 2008; Stitt and Kunkel, 2008; Warren et al., 2008; Effertz and Wilcke, 2012). An effective advertising appeal is an important weapon to gain competitive advantage in market (Mishra, 2009) as unique themes/appeals make advertisements more fascinating to children. Appeals are generally used in food advertisements to guide the target audience regarding features of the advertised product or to arouse feelings of purchases among them.

Appeals are classified as rational, emotional and moral appeals. “Rational appeals appeal to the audience’s self-interest” (Kotler, 1996, p. 605). A rational appeal is based on logic and is informative in nature. Such appeals are generally used in advertisements of durable goods where customers are much interested in knowing about various features of the product. Industrial buyers are more interested in such appeals because they gain knowledge regarding various attributes of the advertised products through these appeals. Besides, these appeals are the best source of information for rational consumers who tend to evaluate similar types of products on the basis of common features before making a final buying decision. The rational appeals which are frequently deployed in food advertisements include uniqueness, premium offers, new, quantity/size/amount, taste/flavour/smell/texture, nutritional content, convenience, variety/choice, price, etc. (Roberts and Pettigrew, 2007; Warren et al., 2008). The uniqueness appeal presents the advertised food as different or as better than other brands. If some free gifts or material benefits are highlighted in the food advertisements, it refers to use of premium offers appeal. The new appeal is used if a new product is introduced in the market or some modifications have been done in flavour and taste of the advertised product. If any advertisement highlights size or amount of the advertised food, it is seen to use quantity/size/amount appeal. If characters acting in food advertisements are shown as enjoying the taste, flavour, smell and texture of the advertised foods, it reveals the use of
taste/flavour/smell/texture appeal in the advertisement. Some advertisements also use nutritional content appeal by making claims that the advertised product contains fiber, fat, calories, sugar, protein and carbohydrates or claims about product purity. Advertisements for products which are ‘ready-to-eat’ or ‘heat and eat’ are seen to focus on convenience appeal. If the advertised food is shown in different shapes/colours then, it indicates the use of variety/choice appeal. Further, demonstration of price of the food points to the use of price appeal in an advertisement.

“Emotional appeals attempt to stir up negative or positive emotions that will motivate purchase” (Kotler, 1996, p. 605). These appeals are based on psychology of human beings. Various emotional appeals that are found to be deployed in food advertisements include—mood alteration, health/well-being, speed/strength, achievement/enablement, action/adventure, magic/fantasy, peer acceptance/superiority, adult approval/disapproval, popularity, humour etc. (Ji and McNeal, 2001; Roberts and Pettigrew, 2007; Warren et al., 2008; Khanna, 2012). The use of mood alteration appeal in the food advertisement suggests that by consuming the advertised food, a consumer would get positive feelings such as joy, happiness, relief or remove negative feelings such as anger, anxiety, fear etc. If an advertisement highlights that consumption of the advertised food makes a person healthy or manages weight then, it depicts the use of health/well-being appeal. The use of speed/strength appeal in an advertisement is acknowledged if consumption of the advertised food increases physical performance or energy of the person. If it is depicted in the advertisement that after consuming the advertised food, a person can achieve his/her desired goals then, it is an indication of the use of achievement/enablement appeal. The action/adventure appeal is found to be used if the consumption of the advertised food enables a person to perform daring/adventurous/risk-taking activities. If the advertised food is associated with performing some magical acts in an advertisement, then it shows the use of magic/fantasy appeal. If an advertisement demonstrates that the product is used/consumed by every member of the family including adults or old-aged persons, it is the depiction of adult approval appeal. If the food is shown as used/consumed by children or persons of same age group in an advertisement, then, it reveals the use of peer acceptance/superiority appeal. Advertisements which focus on universal recognition and acceptance of the advertised food by displayed
characters or/and depiction of a celebrity/celebrities eating the advertised food or/and talking about features/benefits of the advertised food to other people represent the use of popularity appeal. The use of humour appeal is indicated by visual or textual representation of the quality of being amusing or comic that makes audience laugh. Thus, emotional appeals are used in food advertisements to magnetize the attention of audience.

“Moral appeals are directed to the audience’s sense of what is right and proper” (Kotler, 1996, p. 605). For example, appeals regarding serve old-aged persons, keep your environment pollution free, help the needy persons etc. are moral appeals. However, such appeals are rarely used in advertisements of daily use products including advertisements for foods and groceries.

Apart from appeals, themes are generally used in television advertisements to create an emotional bond with target audience. Various themes that are used in food advertisements include eating location, eating occasion, eating alone or with others and use of health-related messages (Harrison and Marske, 2005; Roberts and Pettigrew, 2007). The theme of eating location depicts the place where the advertised food is consumed i.e. whether the advertised food is eaten inside home or outside home such as in park, restaurant, car or at any other place outside home etc. Another theme which is generally used in food advertisements is the eating occasion which specifies when the food is eaten i.e. in morning, afternoon, evening or at night. If an advertisement shows that the food is consumed by displayed character/s only or it is consumed during family meals or with friends/peer groups or with siblings, it is represented by the use of eating alone or with others theme in the advertisement. Some food advertisements also claim that the food contains low fat, low calories, abundance of vitamins/minerals and real/natural ingredients such as fresh fruits and vegetables or other essential nutrients. If such types of messages are highlighted in food advertisements then, it represents the use of health-related messages theme in food advertisements. Besides, other themes that are mainly used in television advertisements targeting children comprise of—portrayal of grazing (showing children eating advertised foods) and denigration of core foods (showing children dislike core/unprocessed foods and wishing to eat advertised foods) (Roberts and Pettigrew, 2007).
However, the most prominent themes/appeals found to be used in children directed food advertisements are taste/flavour/smell (Byrd-Bredbenner and Grasso, 1999; Stitt and Kunkel, 2008; Khanna, 2012; Cairns et al., 2013), fun/happiness (Connor, 2006; Stitt and Kunkel, 2008; Khanna, 2012), convenience and economy (Byrd-Bredbenner and Grasso, 1999), physical strength (Stitt and Kunkel, 2008), action/adventure (Connor, 2006; Cairns et al., 2013) and humour (Cairns et al., 2013). In a majority of food advertisements, it is depicted that the advertised foods are consumed during snack time (Harrison and Marske, 2005; Roberts and Pettigrew, 2007), outside home (Harrison and Marske, 2005) and/or by the character/s shown in advertisements alone in the absence of family members or friends (Roberts and Pettigrew, 2007). However, health-related messages/appeals are rarely highlighted in food advertisements (Harrison and Marske, 2005; Khanna, 2012; Cairns et al., 2013).

Marketers do not direct food advertisements at children only. Rather, they try to capture attention of general-audience (child-audience and adult-audience both) as sometimes older children and adults also watch programs appeared on children’s television networks (Ernst and Young, 2012). Therefore, on comparing the nature of themes/appeals used in food advertisements directed at audience of different age groups, it is found that the most frequently used appeals in commercials aimed at children are play, action-adventure, fun, courage, affection for animals and collecting (Buijzen and Valkenburg, 2002). Whereas, commercials aimed at teenagers are found to use appeals of being modern, being cool, seizing opportunities, having the best, belonging to a group and energy. Similarly, appeals of convenience, financial security, health, tidiness, love, physical attractiveness, having natural, self-esteem and career were found to be used frequently in television food advertisements targeted at general-audience. Further, it is concluded that advertisements which make use of promotional elements such as—action/adventure, fun/happiness, premium offers, taste/flavour/smell/texture, health-related messages and economy and savings attract the attention of children and influence their purchase decisions (Khanna, 2012). However, advertisers focus more on emotional appeals in comparison to rational appeals to advertise their foods (Hastings et al., 2003; Page and Brewster, 2007; Stitt and Kunkel, 2008; Cairns et al., 2009). This may be so because emotional appeals play an imperative role in purchase decisions (Khanna, 2012).
Besides themes and appeals, food advertisements also feature jingles/slogans, showing children with advertised foods and featuring real children and animal characters to promote foods (Unnikrishnan and Bajpai, 1996; Page and Brewster, 2007). The use of promotional elements such as catchy jingles/slogans, storyline and music make the advertisements entertaining for children (Unnikrishnan and Bajpai, 1996; Panwar and Agnihotri, 2006) and influence their food choice as well as brand choice. Some advertisements are seen to use promotional characters such as celebrities, sports persons, cartoon characters and spokes/branded characters to woo children (Kunkel and Gantz, 1992; Consumers International, 2008; Kelly et al., 2008; Effertz and Wilcke, 2012). Thus, whenever, children are asked to choose between the foods with or without promotional characters on packaging, they generally select foods promoted through promotional characters (Kotler et al., 2012) or occupation specialists such as doctors, engineers etc. (Panwar and Agnihotri, 2006). In a report, prepared by Deloitte and ASSOCHAM (2011), it is noticed that the percentages of using animated characters in advertisements have been rising rapidly. Further, advertisements in which animated characters are used seem to be more captivating for children. The reason behind using animated characters more in advertisements is to make them cost effective as hiring a celebrity, even to play a small role in advertisements is not within the financial reach of every advertiser. Sometimes, animated characters are also used in food advertisements to enhance the visual appeal of the advertisement (www.deloitte.com/in).

Thus, use of promotional elements in food commercials increase the likability of commercials amongst children. Television commercials do not only wield a powerful influence on children’s food knowledge and preferences but also on their buying behaviour (Hastings et al., 2003; Cairns et al., 2009, 2013). Therefore, children who watch television during mealtime prefer pizzas, snack foods and sodas in comparison to fruits, vegetables and healthy foods (Coon et al., 2001). Children consume unhealthy/non-core foods more frequently after being exposed to food advertisements. The effect of exposure continues when they go for shopping with parents to retail stores. Higher frequency of visiting stores is associated with higher involvement of children in purchasing foods (Soni and Arora, 2010). More so, if parents seek children’s opinions
frequently, children also provide greater support in the shopping activity (Soni and Arora, 2010). Hence, children play an important role as active shoppers in retail stores.

Marketers therefore, try to promote foods in retail settings. They use various promotional strategies in retail stores to persuade children (Gelperowic and Beharrell, 1994; Hastings et al., 2003; Chapman et al., 2006; Harris et al., 2009). These food promotional strategies include attractive packaging, stocking foods in retail stores, offering child incentives/freebies/premiums/collectives along with foods, keeping the foods at reachable shelf locations and presence of helpful and kids-friendly sales personnel in stores.

Out of these promotional strategies, packaging and its various attributes attract children’s attention and appear to stimulate demand for products (Hawkes, 2010). There can be different attributes of food packaging like bright colour(s) of package, character(s) depicted on the package, game(s) depicted on the package, shape(s) or picture(s) of food etc. that attract children. Words like “Special”, “New”, and “Improved” may make children look at a package and buy it. Use of television/movie celebrities and cartoon characters on food packaging also entice children (Chapman et al., 2006). Other marketing techniques which are frequently used on packaging to magnetize children in retail stores include semiotics (such as use of child-oriented graphics, child-oriented cartoons and celebrities, and claims about health and nutrition), cross-promotions (links to television, movies and websites), attractive packaging designs (attractive lunch box/kids-size packaging and unusual shapes), price promotions (discounts and bonus offers i.e. buy one get one free) and premium promotions (such as give-aways (toys and games) and competitions) (Mehta et al., 2012). More so, appealing package of a product influences shopping decisions of children as well as mothers (Gelperowic and Beharrell, 1994).

In retail stores, foods are available with various types of incentives/freebies/premiums/collectives such as toys, contests, games and coupons along with children’s foods that capture their attention. Children’s purchase decisions are basically influenced by these incentives (Pettigrew and Roberts, 2006). Hence, children prefer a particular brand of breakfast cereal because of premiums and incentives offered on a purchase than nutritional features of the product (Atkin, 1978). For example, if toys are offered with
fast foods, children do not consider quality, taste or nutrient content of a meal but give more importance to toys (Pettigrew and Roberts, 2006). Hence, most of the time, they request a meal (that offers a toy) which seems to be uneconomical and also nutritionally inferior. Sometimes, after getting toys, children lose interest in meals altogether.

Apart from these, retailers tend to keep children’s foods at reachable shelf locations so that children can easily catch them and influence purchase decisions of their parents. For example, candies are placed at child’s eye level in stores (Ebster et al., 2009). A majority of chocolate bars having colourful packaging are stored at a reachable shelf location in order to allure children; whereas, mints, luxury chocolates and chewing gums/bubble-gums are usually kept at the mid-top levels. Products with children’s promotions inside (chocolate eggs containing a toy) are generally observed to be positioned at the lowest point in the display within reach of child sitting in a pusher or walking through the aisle. A majority of checkouts within each supermarket display confectionery items, foods or drinks, sweets, chocolates, chewing gums or bubble-gums. Very few supermarkets display fruits and vegetables at any of their checkouts (Dixon et al., 2006). In addition to these strategies, helpful and kids-friendly store personnel also play an effective role in arousing impulse buying behaviour among children. They welcome children as customers and help them to find foods of their choice. Hence, they establish a sense of belongingness with children and accord importance to them as potential consumers.

These promotional strategies have strong influence on food shopping behaviour of children in retail stores (Hastings et al., 2003). Hence, they tend to behave actively in retail stores. Younger children, while sitting in shopping carts/strollers, make verbal purchase requests or touch or catch foods which are placed at reachable shelf locations. Whereas, older children surf for favourite foods and put them in shopping carts. However, if they do not catch foods themselves, they pull mothers to show foods that they wish to buy. The probability of purchase requests of children also increases if they find favourite foods in attractive packaging or in different brands, shapes/varieties and tastes/flavours. Some children are seen to recall jingles/slogans or talk about celebrity/ies associated with food brands to parents. The purchase requests of children in retail stores tend to be directly associated with their movement in retail stores. If children move in
retail stores freely, they explore more foods in retail stores which are promoted meticulously using different promotional tactics. Contrary to this, if their movement or view is restricted through sitting in a shopping cart or stroller, they make fewer purchase requests (Ebster et al., 2009). Furthermore, spending more time in retail stores is directly associated with increased food purchase requests of children. Besides, colour and taste preferences of children also have an influence on selection of foods in retail stores.

As foods marketed to children are mostly processed/packaged and unhealthy (owing to high level of fat sugar and salt), parents try to monitor and control eating habits of children through meal time actions and feeding practices followed with them. Meal time is the time when all family members take meals together and share their feelings. A majority of children enjoy eating meals with families. They also believe that they eat healthy foods at the time of eating dinner with their families than in any other eating situation (Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2000). More so, parents also focus on taking family meals together because of many reasons. Firstly, they feel that dietary habits that are acquired in childhood continue through to adulthood. Secondly, their food habits and choices transform food preferences of children. Hence, they think that it is their prime responsibility to inculcate healthy eating habits in children through family meals since childhood. More so, parental encouragements to eat increase the probability of eating meals by child (Klesges et al., 1983). Therefore, a habit of taking family meals together also increases the prevalence of consuming nutritious foods and reduces the chances of eating unhealthy foods. Children who sit along with family members and take dinner together consume more fruits, vegetables, grains and calcium-rich foods, protein, calcium, iron, folate, fibre, and vitamins A, C, E and B-6 (Patrick and Nicklas, 2005). They also prefer to eat vegetables during meals if they watch their parents eat vegetables regularly during meal times (Sweetman et al., 2011).

In contrast, a negative association has been found between frequency of eating meals as a family and soft-drink consumption (Patrick and Nicklas, 2005) as well as amount of watching television by children and frequency of family meals (Gable et al., 2007). Adolescents consume less fruits, vegetables and nutritious foods due to frequent exposures of advertisements of unhealthy foods and availability of fast foods (pizzas, burgers, soft-drinks etc.) in large portions at home (Patrick and Nicklas, 2005). Younger
children are seen to be much interested in family meals than older children (Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2000). However, no significant difference has been observed in mealtime behaviour on the basis of gender.

Thus, in order to arouse interest in family meals and to develop healthy eating habits in children, parents follow feeding practices with children. Parental feeding practices (such as pressure, modeling and availability of foods) and styles (setting snack limits, ensuring daily fruits and vegetables availability, using fat reduction and positive persuasion during meals) wield a lot of influence on children’s eating behaviour, dietary preferences, intake and subsequent weight status (Ventura and Birch, 2008; Hendy et al., 2009). Parents use many strategies to inculcate healthy eating habits in children. These include physical encouragement (pats, hugs, kisses, pushes or moves, directs physically, holds and points, models), physical discouragement (hits, restrains from action, pushes, removes child or object), verbal encouragement (such as suggests, commands, directs, make positive statements about foods), verbal discouragement (such as forbids, scolds, refuses, makes negative statements about), presents food (feeds, places food in child’s direction without physically encouraging food intake), offers food (ask child to eat more food) and model eating (tell child to eat like themselves). However, verbal encouragement to eat are much effective than physical encouragement (Klesges et al., 1983).

Further, maternal prompts to eat occur at a higher rate than paternal prompts (Klesges et al., 1983). This is so because mothers have much influence on children’s eating behaviour as they have been shown to spend significantly more time than fathers in direct interactions with children across several familial situations (Orrell-Valente et al., 2007). They also use more feeding practices than fathers (Orrell-Valente et al., 2007) as they feel mealtime behaviour problems of the children (Williams et al., 2008). These feeding practices include—controlling the eating habits of children; regulating their eating habits emotionally; encouraging balance and variety by giving them healthy or different food choices; maintaining a healthy food environment by making available fruits and vegetables at home all the time; offering tasty foods such as sweets/desserts to them in exchange of good behaviour or withholding those foods for showing bad behaviour (Musher-Eizenman and Holub, 2007). Moreover, involving children in planning and
preparing meals and asking them to participate in grocery shopping; acting as role models by eating healthy foods themselves during meal times; keeping a track of types of foods (for example, sweets, snack foods, high-fat foods or sugary drinks) consumed by them; pressurising them to eat proper diet at meals; restricting them to eat too much favourite unhealthy/junk foods and sweets; instructing them to eat less in order to avoid fat and to remain fit and healthy and discussing with them the importance of consuming nutritious or healthy foods are some more feeding practices followed by mothers. Besides, other parental feeding practices include—setting meal rules (taking their permission before eating anything and not allowing their children to leave the table without eating anything), insisting food amounts are eaten (pressurising them to sit until food amount is eaten or ask them to clean the plate), increasing intake with food (offering them favourite foods/desserts/sweets for eating foods during meals), using non-food rewards (praising them or give a gift to them for eating foods), becoming punitive (insisting them to eat a bite of new foods or try new foods or punish child for not eating foods) and becoming permissive (allowing them to eat foods between meals/giving them to eat other foods/encouraging them to eat fruits and vegetables daily) (Williams et al., 2008). However, a significant difference has been observed in maternal feeding practices across gender of child. Hence, mothers perceived overweight girls as more unhealthy in comparison to overweight boys and thus, use more controlling child-feeding practices with girls (Mulder et al., 2009).

Thus, the aforesaid discussion points to the fact that marketers, on one side, use promotional tactics meticulously to advertise processed/packaged and unhealthy foods. Parents, on the other side, make constant efforts to inculcate healthy eating habits in children as they wish to protect them from negative effects of ubiquitous food marketing. However, the extent to which efforts are made by each of the parties need to be comprehensively explored in Indian context.

**NEED FOR THE STUDY**

Socio-economic changes in Indian society such as increasing education level, dual income families, disposable income and reduction in family size increase the frequency of exposure of children to electronic media. Some parents also feel that they do not spend
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sufficient time with children because of paucity of time. Hence, they constantly compensate for time with materialistic things and honour most of the requests of children. These factors cumulatively arouse a feeling of dominance among children in shopping decisions, particularly for foods. Thus, they either purchase foods themselves or request parents to purchase foods of their choice.

However, most of the time, children prefer foods that are heavily advertised and promoted by marketers. Marketers do not just confine to advertising, but bombard children with food promotions in retail stores also. These marketing activities promote consumption of unhealthy foods in large portions. Experiences from western countries show that heavy food marketing leads to increased incidence of obesity and other health related disorders in children. More so, skyrocketing sedentary activities such as watching television for longer hours, playing in-door/computer games, less physical exercises and ‘westernization’ of diet fuel the problem.

However, little is known about the status of food marketing activities that are directed at children, the manner in which children reciprocate to these activities and the scenario of feeding practices in Indian families. Therefore, the present study aims to sketch the picture in Indian settings before physical and psychological problems reach alarming or epidemical levels in children. The study would enable all interested parties—children, parents, nutritionists, food marketers and the government understand the dimensionality and rigor of the problem.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the nature and extent of food commercials broadcast on children’s television networks in India.
2. To investigate the manner in which promotional elements are used in food commercials to target children.
3. To investigate retail store characteristics which influence food purchase requests of children.
4. To study food shopping behaviour of children in retail stores.
5. To examine the nature of feeding practices used by parents to mediate food consumption habits of children.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY
This study has been divided into eight chapters. The first chapter ‘Introduction’ briefly introduces various issues of the present study such as—nature and extent of food advertisements shown on children’s television networks, types of promotional elements (themes/appeals) used in food advertisements to capture the attention of children, retail store characteristics which influence food purchase requests of children, food shopping behaviour of children in retail stores and feeding practices followed by mothers to control unhealthy food consumption habits of children. This chapter also explains the need for the study and the objectives of the study.

The second chapter ‘Review of literature’ reviews the past literature regarding various issues of the present study.

The third chapter ‘Research methodology’ explains that primary data (observation as well as survey method) have been used to conduct the present study. It describes the design of the study, methods of collecting data, techniques used to analyse data and also the limitations of the study.

The fourth chapter ‘Nature and extent of food advertisements broadcast on children’s television networks’ discusses in detail the nature and extent of food advertisements broadcast on children’s television networks during weekdays and weekends as well as targeted across child-audience and general-audience. It also presents analysis of non-repetitive food advertisements which are broadcast with low and high frequency on weekdays and weekends separately. Besides, food advertisements which are targeted at child-audience and general-audience, each, are further classified separately on the basis of frequency of appearing those advertisements on children’s television networks. This chapter also presents a list of prominent food marketing companies who advertise foods during weekdays and weekends and target child-audience and general-audience through advertisements.

The fifth chapter ‘Promotional elements (themes/appeals) used in food advertisements’ presents a comprehensive view of themes/appeals used in food advertisements to attract attention of audience. Further, an analysis of themes/appeals used in food advertisements directed at child-audience and general-audience has been done in this chapter. It also describes themes/appeals used in food advertisements
broadcast with low and high frequency on children’s television networks across weekdays and weekends as well as child-audience and general-audience respectively.

The sixth chapter ‘Antecedents of shopping behaviour of children in retail stores’ explains frequency of mothers visiting retail stores to buy foods, frequency of children accompanying mothers on shopping trips, children’s role in buying foods in retail stores and retail store characteristics which influence food purchase requests of children. This chapter also explains that how variables such as retail store characteristics, frequency of child accompany mothers on shopping trips to retail stores, seek child’s opinion while buying boods in retail stores and other demographic variables cumulatively influence food shopping behaviour of children in retail stores.

The seventh chapter ‘Parental feeding practices used to mediate food consumption habits of children’ discusses feeding practices followed by mothers to inculcate healthy eating habits in children.

The findings of the present study are summarized and conclusions are given in the eighth and final chapter ‘Summary, findings and conclusions’. Directions for further research and recommendations for marketers, parents and government have also been included in this chapter.