



## **Advertisements Targeting Children**

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### **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. Author AG designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors DR and JG managed the analyses of the study. Author AG managed the literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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### **ABSTRACT**

In this research paper, we are trying to touch upon the issue of rising consumerism in children by targeting them through advertisement. The study is carried out in Indian context to check the view of the people on advertisements targeting to the children. Through such advertisements, children are being made dutiful and tempted consumer, and they impact largely on the buying decisions of their parents. The advertisements play a very important role in impacting the social and cultural behavioural pattern of society [1]. The mind of the children is very raw and impressionable and can be easily manipulated by showing a very attractive advertisement. The children easily copy the acts which they see in the advertisements. The food habits of the children are mainly getting affected due to very attractive advertisements of fast food, cold drinks and chocolates leading to obesity and other health hazards [2]. The attempt is made here to understand the viewpoint of the Indian people on product placement by targeting children through advertisements. Whether such advertisements should be allowed or they should be controlled or restricted.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Objective and Purpose

The area of our research is to study the impact of advertisements, which mainly targets to children as their audience and its effect on their fresh minds & how it affects their psychological behaviour and intern their health. Our research project also deals with the study of children and their upbringing which have a significant impact on their decision-making capabilities and this intern has a great influence on the buying decision of their parents. We are going to study whether the advertisements have any role to play in such buying decisions?

### 1.2 Background

Children being an emotional weakness of every parent, they are always a target audience for advertisers. Advertising comes in different forms such as television, print, radio & internet. In the new age of technological communication and mass media advertisements, the marketing of many products has been done to target children and teenagers. In the age of social media and smartphones, we cannot even imagine any newspaper, magazine, TV serial, Cinema etc. without advertising. Advertising is a critical tool for marketing at the same time is a very powerful communication medium. The basic objective of any advertisement is to stimulate sales, direct or indirect by trying to make tall claims about product performance. The scale of impact of advertisements on the psychology of adult humans can be considered problematic, but on the extreme, the result of this is more devastating for children. Advertisers earlier used to target parents even for the products of children, but now they have started appealing directly to children who do not have the emotional tools or cognitive capabilities to rationally evaluate what's being sold to them. Television and internet have not only been limited to the source of entertainment of knowledge but at the same time have become the great instrument for companies to showcase their product in a very influential way to attract the large audience and make them buy their products. Students and children, before they reach the age of 3 to 5 years, they start watching advertisements on TV and other media and become the target of the advertiser. The technological revolution and tech-savvy generation of today are playing a great role in the area of the advertisement [3,4,5].

## 2. HISTORY

The word advertising comes from the original Latin word 'advert ere' which means 'to turn' the attention. The audio and visuals of the advertisements, both for television and print media are made in such creative ways to create a strong image of the product in the mind of the consumers, especially children as their brains are more susceptible. The association is created so that people can remember the brand and can identify it with them. The children are increasingly becoming a new target group for the companies to attract them through an intelligent way of advertisement for boosting promotion and sale of their products.

Through the literature review, following surprising facts have come up in our knowledge (International Marketing Conference on Marketing & Society, 8-10 April 2007, IIMK).

- In 55% of the cases, it was found that children have a major stake in decision making about buying food, FMCG items, clothes and cosmetics.
- 86% of the parents have voiced that the food advertisements should be controlled.
- 84% of the children watch TV while having the food leading to overeating [6,7].
- 78% of the children watch cartoon programs and the cartoon characters and the food pattern showed makes a significant impact on their mind. Also, fast food advertisements are mainly shown during cartoon programs [8].
- 62% of the parents indulge in the discussion related to fast food advertisements with their children [9].
- Indian children on average watch about 14 hours of television in a week.
- Asia Pacific region is the world's second largest advertisement market reaching 158.3 billion U.S. dollars in 2015 and expected to grow to 235.5 billion U.S. dollars by 2020.
- As per the EMIS Insights Industry Report on Food and Beverages Sector 2016-17, the gross value added of the food and beverage sector expanded at a CAGR of 4.8% over FY 2013-16.

The secondary research data on the USA reveals the following facts.

- In the United States, children and adolescents watch TV for almost four and

a half hours each day. And they are exposed to about 40 minutes of advertisement during this period.

- The food and beverage industry in the USA spends about \$1.23 billion on advertisements of food and beverages targeting to children under the age of 12 years.
- The advertisements and use of junk food have increased by 40% of the obesity in the children.

Today's children practice more power of decision making as compared to the previous generations in the family. They are more straightforward and open with their parents for purchasing the products of their requirements [10]. Hence, the advertisement to the children is at the peak because the advertisers know the kind of impact it can create on boosting the product sell. Since children are mainly targeted on TV advertisements, their sleeping habit is greatly affected [11,12]. The television watching and eating habit change in the children due to fast food advertisements on TV, is leading to obesity in the children. The rising obesity and banning such advertisements are proposed by Currie et al. [13] and Dhar et al. [14].

In today's world of technology, when more often both the parents are working, they want to provide all the possible facilities and luxuries to their children [15]. The emotional attachment of the children plays a very important role in the parent's buying decision by influencing the type of product selection and its brand. Attractive Jingles with music, the use of cartoon characters and animations and casting of favourite actors of children are mainly used in the advertisements to attract the children effectively and permanently creating the brand image into their mind; Sandra L. Calvert [16]. Also, attractive gifts, toys and rewards and special offers with the products on purchase of certain products make children forcing their parents to buy those products, even if they are not necessary to buy.

## 2.1 Impact of Advertisements on Children [17]

Tilottama Chatterjee, in her article published on January 23, 2018, at <http://parenting.firstcry.com> has elaborated on the positive and negative impact of Advertisement on children. Advertisements can have both positive as well as negative impact on the children depending upon the theme, content, quality and representation of an advertisement.

## 2.2 Positive Impacts

- Some of the advertisement, which is technically sound and makes use of technology may impart good knowledge and awareness to children and creates excellent learning opportunities for them.
- Advertisement focusing on a right and healthy diet can have great impact on the health of the children and their food habits.
- Advertisements for certain products can be helpful in imbibing good hygiene habits in children.
- Advertisements having patriotic content can motivate children to work towards the welfare of the country.
- Certain motivational advertisements can also help in setting quality dreams for the future growth of the children.
- Advertisements, which brings awareness about the environment and social issues can greatly help in building great understanding in children and keep them away from bad habits like smoking and drinking.

## 2.3 Negative Impacts

- In persuasion to buy their product, advertiser tries to attract and target children to a great extent, and this may lead to the stubborn nature of the child.
- Sometimes the message interpreted by the child in the wrong way leads to focus on negative aspect rather than positive aspects of the advertisement.
- Advertisers try to create impulse buying habits in the children for their recurring business.
- The consciousness and affinity towards the expensive brands may increase in children leading to more spending of the family.
- The sexual objectification of women in many advertisements, especially cosmetics products is a cause for concern, as children grow up to think that this is the norm.

## 2.4 Research Hypothesis

### 2.4.1 Null hypothesis

Certain Advertisements are not harmful to children, and they should not be banned

### 2.4.2 Alternative hypothesis

Certain Advertisements are harmful, and they should be banned

### 3. METHODS

- Research Method: Questionnaire and interview
- Sample method: Non-probability convenience
- Questionnaire validation: Split half reliability Method.
- Data Analysis: Simple statistical methods and Graphical presentations
- Evaluation: Regression analysis (ANOVA table, F test)

#### 3.1 Data Collection

Based on the hypothesis, a questionnaire was designed, which can be administered to the parents of the children of different age group. This questionnaire was designed in such a way to get the viewpoint of parents about the eating and purchasing habits of their kids and the influence of their kids on their eating and purchasing decisions (Annexure 1).

The questionnaire was mainly prepared in the direction towards assessing the kind of impact does the Advertisements have on the raw and impressionable minds of the children & how advertisement influences their buying and eating habits. The survey was conducted in the form of personal interaction and /or online by

designing a questionnaire in a format so that it can be easily answered by the parents of children of different age groups. The Questionnaire was then validated by collecting survey of 40 respondents and running a split-half reliability test. The t calculated was more than the t listed ( $t_{cal} = 4.58$  and  $t_{listed}$  (at 0.05, for  $Df=38$ ) = 2.024) making the questionnaire reliable.

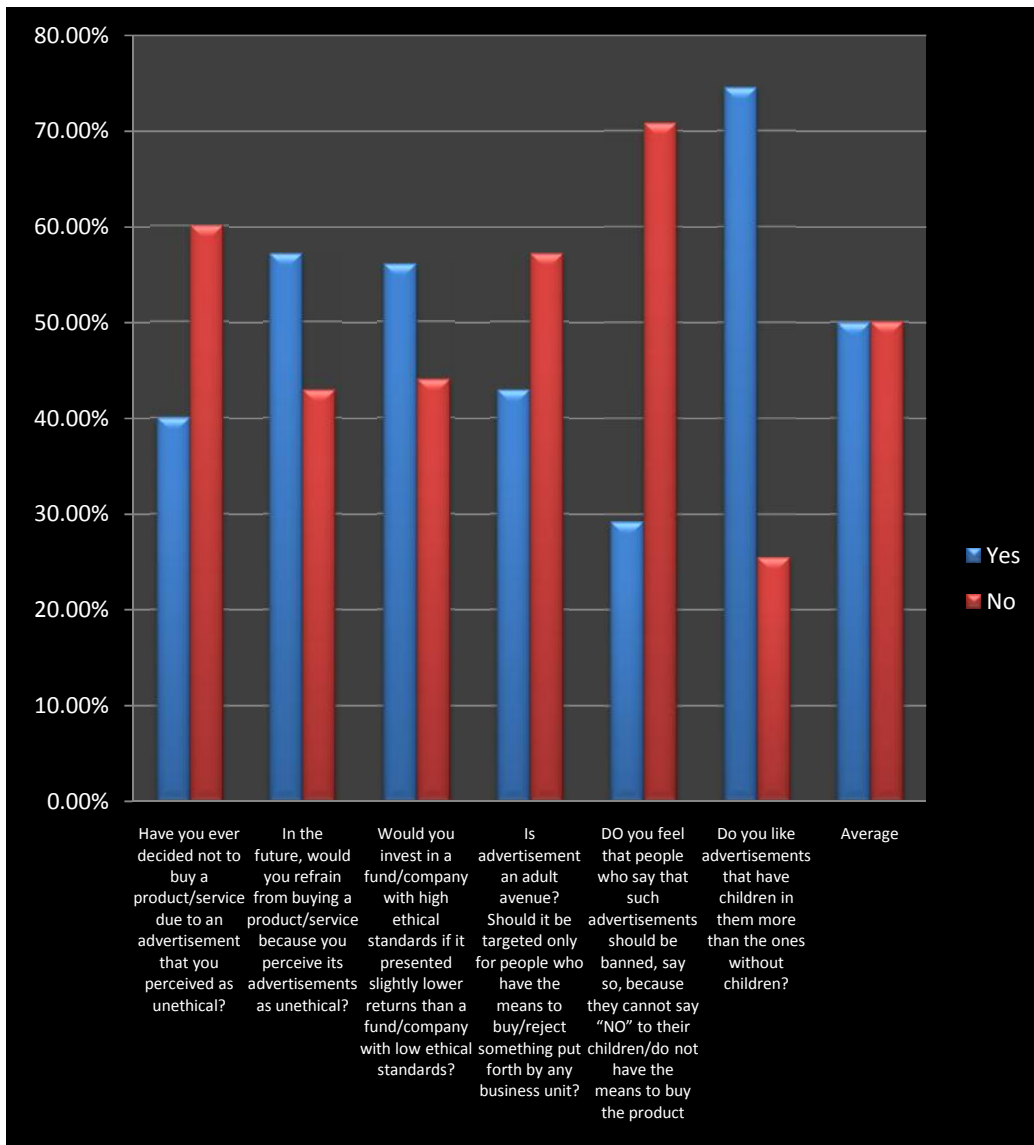
#### 3.2 Technique

Non Probability Sampling Technique was used & in that Convenience, Sampling was done. A total of about 50 different people were interviewed with the questionnaire at different places of purchase. Hence a convenience sampling technique was decided upon which would enable using personal judgment to approach the parents and children conveniently. Many of the time an online administration of the questionnaire was done.

### 4. ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS, TABULATION & PRESENTATION

1. When asked parents if their child helps them while making any shopping decision, it was found that children influenced the buying decision of parents to a large extent.

| Options | Have you ever decided not to buy a product/service due to an advertisement that you perceived as unethical? | In the future, would you refrain from buying a product/service because you perceive its advertisements as unethical? | Would you invest in a fund/company with high ethical standards if it presented slightly lower returns than a fund/company with low ethical standards? | Is advertisement an adult avenue? Should it be targeted only for people who have the means to buy/reject something put forth by any business unit? | DO you feel that people who say that such advertisements should be banned, say so, because they cannot say "NO" to their children/do not have the means to buy the product | Do you like advertisements that have children in them more than the ones without children? | Average |
|---------|---|--|---|--|--|--|---------|
| Yes     | 40.00%  | 57.10%   | 56.00%  | 42.90%   | 29.20%   | 74.50%   | 49.95%  |
| No      | 60.00%  | 42.90%   | 44.00%  | 57.10%   | 70.80%   | 25.50%   | 50.05%  |



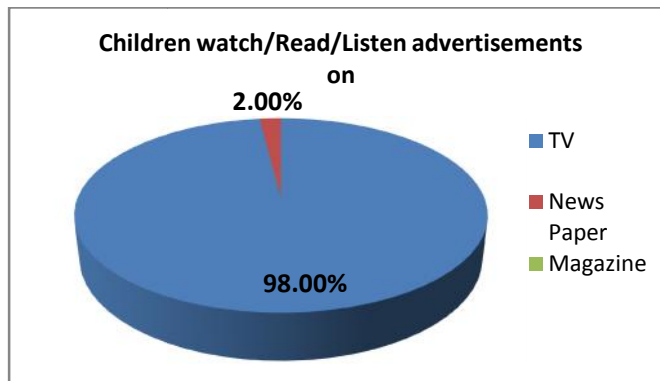
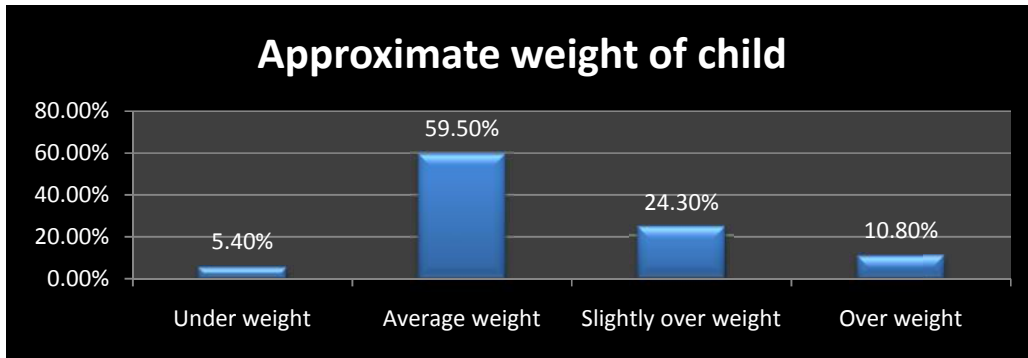
The above results show that almost 50 % of the Parents are influenced by the ads/marketing techniques aimed at Children

**5. CHILDREN WATCH/READ/LISTEN TO ADVERTISEMENTS ON**

| Children watch/Read/Listen to advertisements on |            |
|---|------------|
| Form  | Percentage |
| TV  | 98.00%     |
| News Paper                                      | 2.00%      |
| Magazine  | 0.00%      |
| Radio   | 0.00%      |
| Holdings  | 0.00%      |

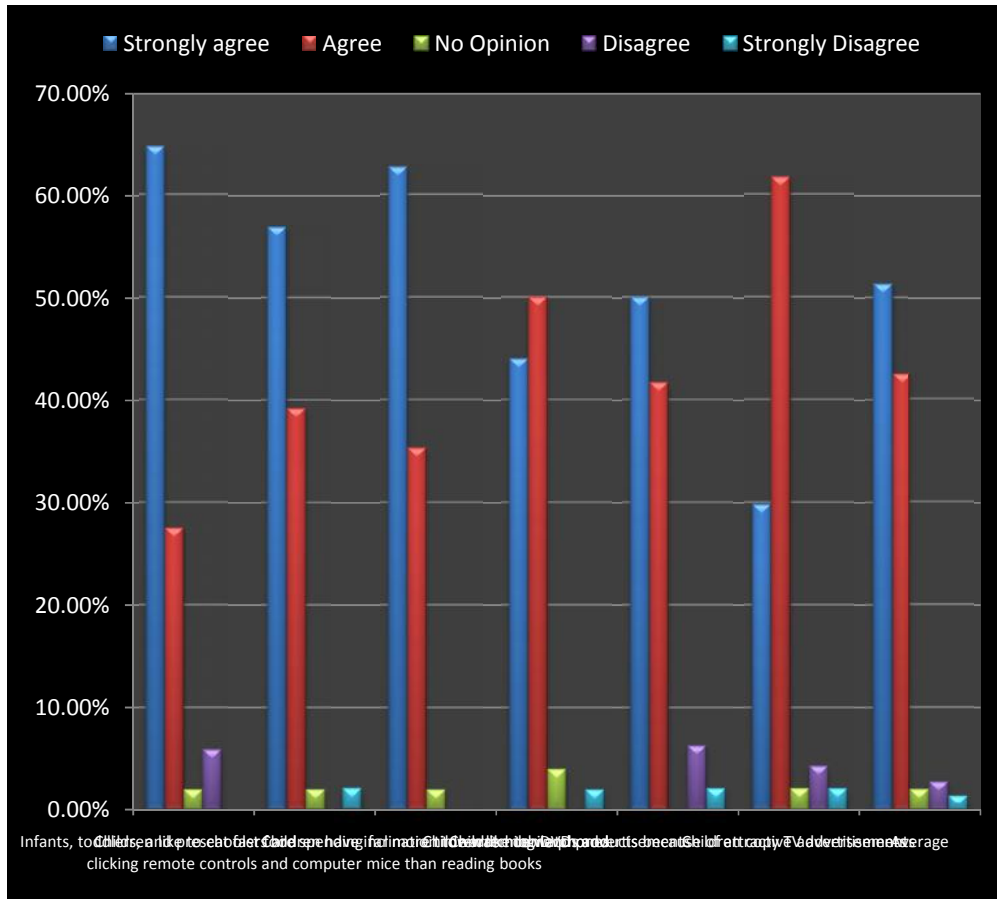
**6. APPROXIMATE WEIGHT OF THE CHILD**

| Approximate weight of the child |            |
|---------------------------------|------------|
| Form                            | Percentage |
| Underweight                     | 5.40%      |
| Average weight                  | 59.50%     |
| Slightly overweight             | 24.30%     |
| Overweight                      | 10.80%     |



When the analysis was done looking at Children’s perspective, the below results were found;

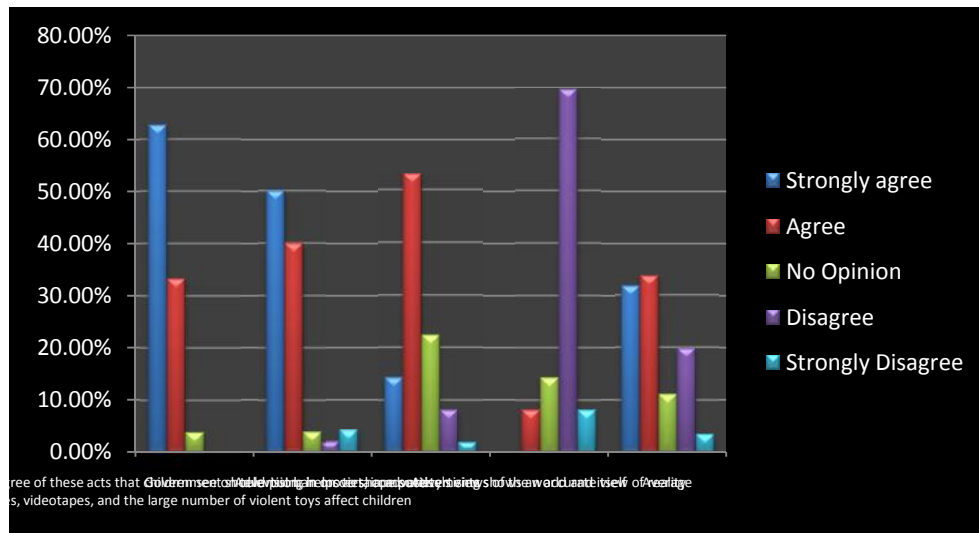
| Analysis based on Children's Perspective   |        |        |        |        |        |        |         |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| Options  |        |        |        |        |        |        | Average |
| Children like to eat fast food   |        |        |        |        |        |        |         |
| Infants, toddlers, and preschoolers are spending far more time watching DVDs and clicking remote controls and computer mice than reading books |        |        |        |        |        |        |         |
| Children have an inclination towards mobile phones   |        |        |        |        |        |        |         |
| Children like to watch advertisements  |        |        |        |        |        |        |         |
| Children demand products because of attractive advertisements  |        |        |        |        |        |        |         |
| Children copy TV advertisements  |        |        |        |        |        |        |         |
| Strongly agree   | 64.70% | 56.90% | 62.70% | 44.00% | 50.00% | 29.80% | 51.35%  |
| Agree  | 27.50% | 39.20% | 35.30% | 50.00% | 41.70% | 61.70% | 42.57%  |
| No Opinion   | 2.00%  | 2.00%  | 2.00%  | 4.00%  | 0.00%  | 2.10%  | 2.02%   |
| Disagree   | 5.90%  | 0.00%  | 0.00%  | 0.00%  | 6.30%  | 4.30%  | 2.75%   |
| Strongly Disagree  | 0.00%  | 2.00%  | 0.00%  | 2.00%  | 2.10%  | 2.10%  | 1.37%   |



When the analysis of society's outlook was done, below are the findings;

|                   | Social Views   |   |  |   |         |
|-------------------|--|---|--|---|---------|
|                   | High degree of these acts that children see on television, in movies, computer games, videotapes, and a large number of violent toys affect children | The government should put a ban on certain advertisements | Advertising helps to shape society's views of the world and itself | Advertising shows an accurate view of reality | Average |
| Strongly agree    | 62.70%   | 50.00%  | 14.30%   | 0.00%   | 31.75%  |
| Agree             | 33.30%   | 40.00%  | 53.10%   | 8.20%   | 33.65%  |
| No Opinion        | 3.90%  | 4.00%   | 22.40%   | 14.30%  | 11.15%  |
| Disagree          | 0.00%  | 2.00%   | 8.20%  | 69.40%  | 19.90%  |
| Strongly Disagree | 0.00%  | 4.00%   | 2.00%  | 8.20%   | 3.55%   |





Looking at the above data, we can say that Advertisements do affect the Society.

In today's age of the Internet and Social media, Advertising has become an inevitable part of everyone's life [18,19]. It is impossible even to think any of the article, program, event, newspaper, magazine, TV serial, or Cinema without a single advertisement. Advertising is an important and vital marketing strategy of the business today, which communicates with the audience so powerfully and built a brand image into their minds. The very objective of any advertisement is to promote the product and increase sales by promoting its performance. Advertisements focused on adults may not be a great concern, but at the same time the impact they are creating on children is very significant

and needs the attention of the governing authorities.

## 7. RESULTS OF F-TEST

### 7.1 Certain Advertisements are Really Harmful to Children

|                   | Rank (X) |        | (Y) |
|-------------------|----------|--------|-----|
| Strongly agree    | 5        | 50.00% | 25  |
| Agree             | 4        | 48.00% | 24  |
| No Opinion        | 3        | 0.00%  | 0   |
| Disagree          | 2        | 0.00%  | 0   |
| Strongly Disagree | 1        | 2.00%  | 1   |

| Regression Statistics |          |
|-----------------------|----------|
| Multiple R            | 0.859338 |
| R Square              | 0.738462 |
| Adjusted R Square     | 0.651282 |
| Standard Error        | 7.823043 |
| Observations          | 5        |

| ANOVA      |    |       |       |          |                |
|------------|----|-------|-------|----------|----------------|
|            | df | SS    | MS    | F        | Significance F |
| Regression | 1  | 518.4 | 518.4 | 8.470588 | 0.061975131    |
| Residual   | 3  | 183.6 | 61.2  |          |                |
| Total      | 4  | 702   |       |          |                |

|              | Coefficients | Standard Err | t Stat   | P-value  | Lower 95%    | Upper 95% | Lower 95.0% | Upper 95.0% |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------|----------|--------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|
| Intercept    | -11.6        | 8.204877     | -1.41379 | 0.252327 | -37.71157921 | 14.51158  | -37.7116    | 14.51157921 |
| X Variable 1 | 7.2          | 2.473863     | 2.910428 | 0.061975 | -0.672937358 | 15.07294  | -0.67294    | 15.07293736 |



## 7.2 Government Should put ban on Certain Advertisements

|                   | Rank (X) |        | (Y) |
|-------------------|----------|--------|-----|
| Strongly agree    | 5        | 50.00% | 25  |
| Agree             | 4        | 40.00% | 20  |
| No Opinion        | 3        | 4.00%  | 2   |
| Disagree          | 2        | 2.00%  | 1   |
| Strongly Disagree | 1        | 4.00%  | 2   |

| SUMMARY OUTPUT               |                     |                     |               |                |                       |                  |                   |                    |
|------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| <i>Regression Statistics</i> |                     |                     |               |                |                       |                  |                   |                    |
| Multiple R                   | 0.889493            |                     |               |                |                       |                  |                   |                    |
| R Square                     | 0.791199            |                     |               |                |                       |                  |                   |                    |
| Adjusted R Square            | 0.721598            |                     |               |                |                       |                  |                   |                    |
| Standard Error               | 6.096447            |                     |               |                |                       |                  |                   |                    |
| Observations                 | 5                   |                     |               |                |                       |                  |                   |                    |
| <i>ANOVA</i>                 |                     |                     |               |                |                       |                  |                   |                    |
|                              | <i>df</i>           | <i>SS</i>           | <i>MS</i>     | <i>F</i>       | <i>Significance F</i> |                  |                   |                    |
| Regression                   | 1                   | 422.5               | 422.5         | 11.36771       | 0.043359392           |                  |                   |                    |
| Residual                     | 3                   | 111.5               | 37.16667      |                |                       |                  |                   |                    |
| Total                        | 4                   | 534                 |               |                |                       |                  |                   |                    |
|                              | <i>Coefficients</i> | <i>standard Err</i> | <i>t Stat</i> | <i>P-value</i> | <i>Lower 95%</i>      | <i>Upper 95%</i> | <i>ower 95.0%</i> | <i>Upper 95.0%</i> |
| Intercept                    | -9.5                | 6.394008            | -1.48577      | 0.234028       | -29.8485859           | 10.84859         | -29.8486          | 10.8485859         |
| X Variable 1                 | 6.5                 | 1.927866            | 3.371604      | 0.043359       | 0.364670506           | 12.63533         | 0.364671          | 12.63532949        |

Significance F is 0.06 for the H01 which is more than 0.05 hence the null hypothesis is rejected and it proves that certain advertisements are really harmful to the children.

Co-efficient of determination is 73.84% and 79.12% respectively for the above two questions. Since it is on the higher side, it proves the high agreement of respondent towards the harmfulness of the advertisements targeting to the children.

## 8. CONCLUSION

Though advertisements are an integral part of all the industries for promoting their products and creating the reach of the product to the end users and consumers, but in this process they should not forget that it's their social responsibility to take care of the society and the well-being and behaviours of the people living in the society.

Children are the future of the country which is been targeted tactfully through the advertisements to earn handsome profits from the advertisers.

Also, the appropriate actions to be taken to either restrict or categories advertisements based on the target audience.

- No advertisements should be published, which targets children of age group from 0 to 5 years, This is because children in this age group do not have any functional understanding of the products.
- The competition created regarding usage of brands in the mind of children is responsible for creating a non-healthy environment and low self-esteem into those who can't afford the purchase of costly articles.

- Some the adventurous advertisements may also lead to increase violence in the mind of young children.
- The advertisement greatly impacts the social behaviours of young children due to conformity, compliance and obedience.
- Parents are often facing pressure from the media and social media to buy costly things for their children in comparison with other children. This type of pressure increases as children get older.

### SOME QUESTIONS FOR THE AUDIENCE

- 1) Is advertisement an adult avenue? Should it be targeted only for people who have the means to buy/reject something put forth by any business unit?
- 2) Do you feel that people who say that such advertisements should be banned say so because they cannot say "NO" to their children/do not have the means to buy the product?

### COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist. The company names used for this research are commonly and predominantly selected in our area of research and country. There is absolutely no conflict of interest between the authors and the company because we do not intend to use these companies as an avenue for any litigation but the advancement of knowledge. Also, the research was not funded by the company rather it was funded by the personal efforts of the authors.

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## ANNEXURE 1

Advertisements targeting children

### 1. Personal information:

Age:

Gender:

Education :

Profession :

Marital status :

No. of Children :

No. of children in family:

### 2. Children like to watch advertisements

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

### 3. Children watch/Read/Listen advertisements on

TV

News Paper

Magazine

Radio

Holdings

### 4. Advertising helps to shape society's views of the world and itself

Strongly agree

Agree

No Opinion

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

### 5. Advertising shows an accurate view of reality

Strongly agree

Agree

No Opinion

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

### 6. How do you view the level of ethics in general advertising?

Very high

High

Average

Low

Very low

### 7. Which advertisements children like the most

1

2

3

4

5

6

**8. Children demand products because of attractive advertisements**

Strongly agree  
Agree  
No Opinion  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree

**9. Children copy TV advertisements**

Strongly agree  
Agree  
No Opinion  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree

**10. Which products children demand the most?**

1  
2  
3  
4  
5

**11. Children like to eat fast food.**

Strongly agree  
Agree  
No Opinion  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree

**12. High degree of these acts that children see on television, in movies, computer games, videotapes, and the large number of violent toys affect children**

Strongly agree  
Agree  
No Opinion  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree

**13. Infants, toddlers, and preschoolers are spending far more time watching DVDs and clicking remote controls and computer mice than reading books.**

Strongly agree  
Agree  
No Opinion  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree

**14. Children have inclination towards mobile phones**

Strongly agree  
Agree  
No Opinion  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree

**15. Your child is**

Under weight  
Average weight  
Slightly over weight  
Over weight

**16. Whose responsibility is it to deal with the social problems of the world?**

Businesses  
Non-Profit Organizations  
Government  
Non-Government Organizations (NGOs)  
Schools and Universities  
General Public

**17. Whose responsibility is it to deal with the social problems of the world?**

Businesses  
Non-Profit Organizations  
Government  
Non-Government Organizations (NGOs)  
Schools and Universities  
General Public

**18. You feel certain advertisements are really harmful for children.**

Strongly agree  
Agree  
No Opinion  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree

**19. Government should put ban on certain advertisements. [20]**

Strongly agree  
Agree  
No Opinion  
Disagree  
Strongly Disagree

**20. Write your view on advertisements targeting to children.**

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**21. Have you ever decided not to buy a product/service due to an advertisement that you perceived as unethical?**

Yes  
No

**22. In the future, would you refrain from buying a product/service because you perceive its advertisements as unethical? [21,22]**

Yes  
No

**23. Would you invest in a fund/company with high ethical standards if it presented slightly lower returns than a fund/company with low ethical standards?**

Yes  
No

**24. Is advertisement an adult avenue? Should it be targeted only for people who have the means to buy/reject something put forth by any business unit?**

Yes  
No

**25. DO you feel that people who say that such advertisements should be banned, say so, because they cannot say “NO” to their children/do not have the means to buy the product.**

Yes  
No

**26. Do you like advertisements that have children in them more than the ones without children?**

Yes  
No

**27. Do you sometimes sing songs from commercials? Do you think that this is good for Kids?**

Yes  
No

**28. Did your kids ever want to try something because they saw its commercial on TV? Yes**

No

**29. Do you think that advertisements with celebrities encourage people as well as children to eat fast food?**

Yes  
No

**30. Do you think fast food advertisements towards children should be banned or educate children in healthy fast food eating messages why?**

Yes  
No

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