

## **Pester Power Effect of Advertising**

*Prof. Swati Soni\**

*Prof. Makarand Upadhyaya\*\**

### **Abstract**

The Paper touches upon a sensitive issue of rising consumerism in children owing to the flood of new TV programming presents gleaming images of a consumer culture at odds with the realities of most Indian children. Advertisers in India are frankly preparing children to become dutiful consumers in a society riddled not just with economic problems but also with social and cultural patterns that defy the entry of modern gadgets such as washing machines. There are several ads that could be detrimental to children either because they encourage them to act in an unsafe manner or because they propound questionable values. Some also misrepresent information. The second issue that the paper addresses is premature brand learning that plays an important role in future brand selection behavior. The third issue addresses the childrens' culture, which is over dominated by technologically mediated entertainment and advertising. Indeed, in their culture advertising and entertainment are converging. This hybridization is happening in a variety of ways. These include cross-selling and licensed merchandising, program length commercials, product placement and the production of advertisements as entertainment in their own right. 'Product placement' is also growing as marketers introduce brands into the sets and increasingly the scripts of children's films. Like program length commercials, product placement is a covert form of advertising which promotes brand awareness and loyalty.

### **Introduction**

The world belongs to kids. Kids today mean business. Marketing to kids may be your passport to growth. Companies are using this segment to rake in profits. Kids have a firmer grip over the society than what their parents ever had. Not only are they consumers in their own right, they also have a major influence over the family's purchasing power. "Kidfluence" is the direct or indirect influence kids have over family household purchases. Indirect influence means that the kids' preferences are given consideration when parents make a purchase decision. The major driving force behind this sweeping change is the Advertising. Advertising has changed the way kids learn, react and behave to a large extent. On the television, too, only 18 percent of the total viewing is of the kids' channels, while 80 percent still continues to be general viewing. One can imagine the vast untapped potential that lies hitherto.

### **Kid-fluence, the 'Nag' Factor and 'Pester Power'**

"Mom I want this. Dad I want this" are the demands, fuelled by marketing tactics that erode the adult wallets. The bug is none other than Pester Power. The power children have, by repeated nagging, of influencing their parents to buy advertised or fashionable items is called as Pester power. The marketers are relying on the kids to pester the mom to buy the product, rather than going straight to the mom- Barbara A Martino (Advertising executive)

Kids rule, be they in terms of what to watch over TV or what to buy for themselves or what a household buys. The influence that the kids wield over purchase decisions in a household along with the nagging effect that they have on their parents is growing day by day. With the increase in the number of working couples, their pester power is inversely proportionate to the time available with parents. Their day begins with Tom and Jerry and ends with Dexter. Besides, there has to be in place the entire collection of Barbie, Playstation, frequenting at Mc Donalds, trendiest watch, school bag with Power Puff Girls on it, an independent mobile, television, PC and that too 'cool' branded ones. Kids seem to want virtually 'more' of everything. There is an untiring wish list of food, fun, collectibles, gadgets and brands.

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\* Faculty, Jaipuria Institute of Management, Jaipur

\*\* Senior Faculty, ICFAI Business School, Jaipur

Frontline, the PBS documentary series, notes that Millennial Teens influence more than \$50 billion adult spending every year and pester an adult 25 times on an average before the desired product or experience is finally bequeathed. Over 95% of kids have pestered their parents for a product promoted on TV, according to a new survey by [www.raisingkids.co.uk](http://www.raisingkids.co.uk).

### **Pester Power in India**

The arrival of niche channels like the Cartoon Network, Hungama and Toonami has given a big push to the kid power in India. According to some estimates, in 2005, there were more than 120 million tween (children between 8-12 years of age). Among them around 45 million live in urban areas who have the power of determining or influencing the whopping Rs. 20,000 crore worth purchasing decisions on food, mobile phones, apparel, cars and FMCGs. This offers a big temptation to the marketers to treat the pre-adolescents as mature and independent customers and creating a pester power. Using this strategy, they have been successful in making parents almost redundant in purchase decision.

Starcom India MD, West and South, Ravi Kiran puts the ad spend per year on products that are for kids' consumption but bought by mothers (parents) like Horlicks and Complan is 12 to 15 per cent of the total Rs 38000 million pie, close to Rs 5000 to 6000 million. "Ad spend per year on products targeted for kids' consumption and also bought by them like chocolates, wafers etc is seven to eight per cent, that is around Rs 3000 million," says Kiran.

India's top advertising spenders have included Nestle India at Rs 1507.1 million in December 2002, Britannia Industries which spent Rs 906.3 in March 2002 and Cadbury India which spent Rs 876.7 million in December 2002 - MNCs all which push products consumed predominantly by children.

### **What and How Much Indian Tweens spent on (Rs. in crores)**

Apparel	7,000
Gizmos	4,650
Food and Eating Out	2,500
FMCGs	940
Games	150
Entertainment	150
Books	80
CDs/DVDs	60

**Source:** "Tween Power", Business Today, January 1, 2006

### **Drivers of Pester Power**

Indian society has undergone a sweeping change in terms of the structure and environment of its vital institution-The Family.

- More **working women** and consequently more dual income families.
- **Grand parents' increasing role in bringing up children** because of working mothers. Grand parents' are the fastest growing income sources for the children.
- **Rise in the number of single parent households**  
Research supports that children in single parent households make their first purchases almost a year earlier than their two-parent household counterparts.
- **Delayed parenthood**  
This results in parents with more disposable incomes at the time their children are born. A 2000 study of 50 older couples by SNTD University showed that most of them had kids after they turned 35. "The average age of career women starting a family may well have touched the mid-30s," says gynecologist Dr Duru Shah.
- **Greater exposure to kids**  
There is an ever-increasing exposure to kids both in terms of technology and mass media.

- The pang and guilt of **not being able to spend much quality time with children** is compensated by smothering them with material goods.
- **Hurried Child Syndrome and Hyper parenting**  
Parents today overscheduled their children's' life with a heavy dose of academics and extra-curricular activities, forcing the little adults to excel both at school and extra academics. David Elkind, a child psychologist, first proposed this in 1981 in his book **The Hurried Child: Growing up too fast.**
- **The 'Askable' Parent**  
The great authoritarian divide between parents and children is inexistent. 'Parenting' is out and being pals/friends to the children is the in thing. Communication between parents and children has opened up considerably and the stereotypical roles have become rarer. This endearment encouraged the wanton kids to ask for material pleasures which they know would never be denied by their parent turned pal.
- **Growth of retail sector**  
There appears to be a high positive correlation between the growth of the retail sector and the development of the kids market. There are opportunities galore. Every departmental has a space assigned exclusively for kids merchandise ranging from Kriish apparels to Power Ranger bikes. A perfect example is the growth of indoor amusement centres in malls targeted to children.
- **Kids channels-a newer phenomenon**  
The dedicated channels to kids programming target kids in two ways-'eyeballs' on channels that is, **viewing** and **brand promotions**. Cartoon Network and Disney lead the pack.

### **Children and Advertising-Issues and concerns**

The effect of advertising on children and their portrayal in advertisements are sensitive issues. The common issues surrounding children and advertising are:

- Making children desire things which their parents cannot afford or which they (children) will not be able to use.
- Pester power: Encouraging children to pester their parents for advertised product or service.
- Showing children in unsafe or dangerous situations which the kids may emulate. Child rights activists are up in arms against MTV and Pepsi for depicting children in a negative light and endorsing child labor in their advertisements. The NGOs are especially peeved with the Pepsi commercial as, they say, it glorifies child labor. The ad shows a child negotiating a dangerous route to reach the Indian cricket team that is waiting for their drinks. The protestors believe that by featuring the entire Indian cricket team, the multinational was depicting India as a whole as endorsing child labor.
- Making children feel inferior, especially if they don't buy products and services shown in the ads.
- Showing children in a sexual way, i.e. wearing make-up and glamorous clothes.
- Advertising soft drinks and high fat/sugar contents to kids.

Images of children often appear in advertisements, both those designed to sell children's products and those designed to persuade adults to buy anything from car insurance to carpets Children are the vulnerable members of the society- in order for them to lead healthy, normal lives, children rely on adults for safety, shelter, food, clothing education and love. The marketers, as adults, have the responsibility to depict children in the advertisements in a more responsible and responsive manner.

### **Catering to the Little Customers-the Kids**

There are numerous examples where the marketers are either innovating their offerings for the kids or re-positioning themselves to cater to the segment that is becoming influential in the family purchase decisions.

- Horlicks repositioned itself as a ‘pleasurable nourisher for the entire family’.
- ICICI has launched a special account for kids in association with cartoon network. This is to cater to the aspirational and demanding kids by catching them young. Doing this, ICICI has made a presence across the entire life cycle of a person. Along with the account, the child can now avail of a personalized debit card.
- The rising fad among kids towards toiletries and cosmetics has given birth to products targeted at children like L'Oréal Kids.
- Britannia Khao, World Cup Jao - a campaign that was a rage, especially among the kids during the 1999 cricket World Cup. Thanks to Kidstuff's Promotions and Events (KPE), the brainchild behind the campaign, Britannia's products were picked up from the shelves like hot cakes. Britannia even launched a new biscuit called Multi-vita just for the kids aged between one to three years.
- Novartis India tells school children that they need two calcium tablets (Calcium Sandoz) a day to develop healthy bones and sharp brain. After complaints by the Consumer Education and Research Centre of Ahmedabad, Novartis dropped the exaggerated promotional campaign it was conducting inside schools. Doctors are of the view that calcium sandoz contained salts in addition to calcium carbonate and its reckless use by children who did not suffer from calcium deficiency might lead to kidney stones because of excessive intake of salts.
- Raymond eyes the Rs.27, 000 crore kids wear market with ZAPP! The first store in Ahmedabad followed by another in Bandra, Mumbai. (The name ZAPP! comes from the initials of the four cartoon characters — Zion, Ashley, Posh and Pixel — who have a different world on planet Zuto.)ZAPP! has tied up with Warner Brothers for the ‘Superman’ brand of clothing in India. Each of the stores comes with lots of space for kids to move around and choose from. The clothes are kept in such a way that kids of any height can pick them up, so they get the feeling that they are shopping for themselves. The company wants to create an open communication channel through a website and build upon the relationship through it and the ZAPP! Club, giving each member an individual experience through special events. A membership card records preferences such as styles and colors. It also allows kids to swipe their cards to see a customized version of themselves on a plasma screen at the entry of every store.
- Magazines such as *Time*, *Sports Illustrated* and *People* have all launched kid and teen editions—which boast ads for adult related products such as minivans, hotels and airlines.

### **Catch Them Young at Schools and Web**

Advertisers have very blatantly entered the schools. They put up posters and billboards in the schools, persuading the cash-starved schools into opening their doors to them by paying for access to classrooms and space for their advertising material and promotions.

Web-based groups providing free e-mail accounts and contests with tempting prizes is another strategy that is rampantly used.

This almost approximates to a crime because it is nothing less than attacking the natural credulity of the most innocent, most gullible and most inexperienced beings on earth.

### **Child Psychology Unraveled**

Children think and behave differently from adults. They are great observers, highly creative, very insightful, spontaneous, sensitive and volatile. They have different emotional, social and developmental needs at different stages. Consumer socialization is the process by which these kids acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes pertaining to their functioning as consumers in the marketplace. This is based on child development -how age related patterns emerge across

children's growing sophistication as consumers, including their knowledge of products, brands, advertising, shopping, pricing and decision-making.

Three to seven years of age is approximately the Perceptual stage wherein the child can distinguish ads from programs based on perceptual features, believes the ads as truthful, funny and interesting and holds positive attitudes towards the ad. As against this, seven to eleven years of age is the Analytical Stage wherein the child distinguishes ads from programs based on persuasive intent, understands that the ad may have contain a bias and deception and can also hold negative attitudes towards ads. Eleven to Sixteen years of age is the Reflective Stage and here the child understands the persuasive intent of ads along with the specific ad tactics and appeals. He believes that the ads lie and knows how to spot the specific instances of bias and deception. In a nutshell, he is skeptical towards the claims made in the ad.

### **The Development of Critical Sense**

Children's reactions to advertisement can be very different from grown-ups. Kids have a short attention span and are extremely quick to criticize or reject advertising that does not fulfill their viewing criteria.

If adults see a product advertised and don't find it when they go shopping they forget about it. As children develop the ability to recognize and understand ads and their purpose they start making demands. If these demands are not fulfilled they might start screaming or throwing themselves to the floor. It is difficult to explain to young children the reasons why they cannot have everything which - according to advertising - is 'for them'.

Research by advertising agencies has confirmed that children's personal preferences can be targeted and changed by TV advertising. Family dynamics are thus influenced by advertisements that create demands and provide children with arguments why they should want a particular thing; this can make life extremely difficult for parents who for financial or moral reasons refuse to comply.

Research has confirmed the influence of the media upon the close conformity between children's tastes and perceived needs and the content of the programs they watch. Teachers say they know what has been on TV the night before by the games the children play the next day.

### **Some Research Findings**

#### **Findings of the Kids' Lifestyle Study- New Generations 2005-conducted by Cartoon Network**

- Mobile Phones with cameras rank the highest in the list of gadgets of desire for kids 7-14.
- 74 percent of the children, who have heard of mobile phones with cameras, saying that they, would like to own one.
- This is followed by X-Box at 45 percent, apple I-Pod at 43 percent and Sony Play station at 33 percent.
- Nokia turned out to be the 'coolest' brand among this age group with 72 percent saying that its very 'cool' followed by Sony (71 percent), LG (60 percent), Microsoft (39 percent), Reliance (56 percent), Wipro (35 percent), HCL (32 percent), Google (31 percent), Infosys (30 percent) amongst the kids who have heard of these companies.
- Passe Syndrome-The research talks of a Passe Syndrome amongst kids that makes kids increasingly dismiss products that fail to cater to their immediate needs, an outcome of the wide choice that they have at their disposal. They seem to be moving to the next beat thing a lot quicker and a lot many times. They form the most unloyal, ever experimenting and most fickle demographic segment, being always in the 'what's next' mode. They are actually promo loyalists and keep switching brands for better offers.

### **Times Magazine and Consumer report 2005 list of top-10kid-bribes**

- Nintendogs
- FLY Pentop Computer
- I-Dog
- Zizzle Iz
- Pixel Chix
- Shift Tricycle
- PlasmaCar
- 20Q Orb
- One laptop per child

### **AC Nielson Research**

- A greater access to pocket money and a bigger say in purchase decisions has resulted in children being more informative and demanding. Impulse category brands are always being evaluated. The need for something new, something novel makes them experimenting on the retail front and keeps marketers on their toes, trying hard to keep their brands in the top-of-mind-recall at all days of the week and all times of the day.
- Kids are extremely conscious about product features and thereby brands and hence comes the kidfluence.

### **US studies on the impact and influence of advertising on children show that**

- An estimated \$12 billion a year is now spent on advertising and marketing to children (*The Kids' Market: Myths and Realities*; McNeal, James; 1999)
- Young children are not able to distinguish between commercials and TV programs. They do not recognize that commercials are trying to sell something (*Television and the American Child*; Comstock, George, 1991; Academic Press Inc)
- In 2000, teenagers, ages 12 to 17, spent a record \$155 billion (*New York Times*; Salamon, J. March; 2001).
- In 2001, children ages four to twelve spent an estimated \$35 billion (*Tapping the Three Kids' Markets. American Demographics*; McNeal, James; April 1998).
- In 1997, children 12 years and under, directly and indirectly, influenced the household spending of \$500 billion (McNeal, 1998).
- The average American child may view as many as 40,000 television commercials every year (Strasburger, 2001).
- Children as young as age three recognize brand logos (Fischer, 1991), with brand loyalty influence starting at age two (McNeal, 1992).
- Children, who watch a lot of television, want more toys seen in advertisements and eat more advertised food than children who do not watch as much television (Strasburger, 2002).
- The market sales of licensed products for infants increased 32% to a record 2.5 billion dollars in 1996 (*Business Week*, 6/30/97).
- Four hours of television programming contain about 100 ads (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*, 1999).

### **The Outcome of Indiscreet Marketing to Children**

- Magazines aimed at children have blossomed. Many of these magazines are kid versions of adult magazines. For instance, the popular Sports Illustrated for Kids, carries ads for minivans.
- Promotional toys either tie in to cartoons, TV shows and movies or promote brand consciousness and loyalty.
- Cartoon and toy characters are used on all kinds of products, seeking to catch the children's eyes and purchases.

- Databases of child customers are being built from information gathered on Internet sign-ups and chat rooms, from electronic toy registries at stores like Toys 'R' Us, and from direct surveys.
- Advertising in schools: Advertisers and marketers take advantage of severe budget shortfalls in schools to offer cash or products in return for advertising access to children.
- Channel One: short news briefs are surrounded by commercials that children are forced to watch in schools.
- Promotional licensing of products aimed at kids which will include media pitches, e.g., a brand of pagers will include messages from MTV.
- Logos on all types of merchandise, everywhere children go.
- Children's radio networks are becoming popular.
- Children's toys are starting to carry product placements (e.g. Barbie™ dolls with Coca Cola™ accessories).
- Give-away programs include promotional merchandise aimed at children (e.g., McDonald's™ "Happy Meals").

In Britain too the numbers are startling. That is why advertising agencies such as McCaen-Erickson and Saatchi and Saatchi have launched separate divisions to produce advertising aimed at children.

### **Kids –the chief design element of commercials**

Kids are everywhere in advertising. They are being used as effective ways of grabbing adult attention. There is Videocon with Sharukh Khan and a bunch of kids and Hutch with a pug and a boy to hook the adults to the commercials. Close-up has now entered the fray with two cute tykes, Tata Steel uses children symbolically to show how their company works. Kids with celebrities like the Big B in the Hajmola ad make a still more lethal combination.

### **Kids and ICTs**

Informal evidence suggests that the most popular in –thing for kids these days are the ICT product and services. All stakeholders in this area should recognize the particular vulnerabilities of young children who are still developing physically, socially and emotionally. The risks to young children from the use of ICTs are enormous:

a. **Physical risk** of developing a ‘sms thumb’ caused by very young hands using a keypad designed for adult hands.

b. **Gaining access to harmful content as a form of communication.**

c. **New technologies likely to increase risks for young children**

Pervasive and ubiquitous computing products, embedded and wearable communicating devices, and *ad hoc* networking technologies will bring a paradigm shift greater than that precipitated by the telephone, the internet and the mobile phone taken together. The main concern will be that the risks of harmful contacts, outside of direct parental supervision will increase. As an example, consider Location Based Services (LBS). Today, the accuracy of the location is limited to the size of the mobile cell in which the mobile phone is operating. The question parents are asking is “if I can establish the location of my child with this technology, can anyone else do this?” Next generation LBS will put satellite positioning technology into mobile phones. This will improve the accuracy of location to about 3m. Will this make a child more or less safe?

The recent introductions of **Advergaming** and **Tribal Marketing** need to be mentioned in this context. Advergaming are web based computer games that incorporate advertising messages and images. They serve to reinforce brands in compelling ways because users have to register to be eligible for prizes. This helps marketers in collecting customer data. The gamers may also invite their friends, the brand benefits from propagating a word of mouth.

Tribal Marketing strategy helps in creating communities or social groups focused on a product or service. The strategy is based on the premise that the tech savvy child today has a fascination for

technology that can add to his or her comfort along with providing the social advantage of being connected and linked. The ‘functional’ value and the ‘connecting’ value is the most sought after.

### **Kids and Eating Habits**

The kids market remains crucially important as the marketers seek to attract a new audience and build brand loyalty at a very young age. Mc Donalds has long been using children as a bait to lure the family into its restaurants. Through constant engaging, fun, lively communication, brand bonding efforts, Mc Donalds has been able to capture its little consumers. It has lived by its symbols-the Golden arches, Ronald McDonald and the red fry carton have all become iconic. The Mc Donalds Happy Meals ad, which talks about distributing free toys, has a great nagging effect and the parents are almost forced to visit Mc Donalds by the little customers that Mc Donalds sets its eyes on. “The Action Man and My Little Pony” figures are a lure to buy a high fat meal which probably contains fewer nutrients than the toys themselves. The advertisements have created very powerful and vocal kid consumers with huge buying leverage.

In a compilation of studies done on children's media habits spanning nearly four years, the APA has deduced that children under eight are unable to critically comprehend televised advertising messages and are prone to accept advertiser messages as truthful, accurate and unbiased, leading to unhealthy eating habits.

All supermarkets display food products at their checkouts, with most checkouts displaying chocolate (87%), gum (81%) and sweets (80%). Only 7% of checkouts had their display of foods or drinks out of the reach of children.

Malaysia is considering a ban on fat food advertising as it has been considered that the food that the ads promote act as ‘silent killers’. Links between fat rich fast food and health issues like obesity were heightened by a 2001 U.S Bestseller –Fast food Nation and a 2004 documentary movie about eating only fast food for a month-Super Size Me.

### **Food Advertising and Obesity**

Zuppa, Morton and Mehta suggest that the amount of advertising to which children are exposed “has the potential to influence children’s health attitudes and behaviors. Television may be more influential than families in setting children’s food preferences” Epstein et al (1995) clarify the link by identifying a co-relation, but not causation between television viewing and obesity.

Another study released by the Kaiser Family Foundation on Wednesday, says children’s exposure to billions of dollars worth of food advertising and marketing in the media may be a key mechanism through which media contributes to childhood obesity

### **What is the Role of Advertising in Promoting Food Choices?**

It is claimed that advertising manipulates consumer preferences, thereby reinforcing the biological pressures driving obesity (Anon, 2003).The same anonymous authors who make the above assertion (Anon, 2003) specifically blame high profile fast food brands for manipulation of consumer perceptions.

*“For example, McDonald’s exploits the affect heuristic (i.e. emotional aspects of learning about the brand - via trial and error - acquired by consumers and then used as a shortcut in subsequent decision making – explanation added) by advertising a family friendly environment and generating positive associations that may cause consumers to devalue their perceptions of the risks arising from unhealthy diets” (Anon, 2003: 1168).*

### **Kids Market Research**

The research techniques used for the little consumers need to be less structured, more qualitative, flexible and exploratory in nature.

**Micro-ethnography**

This involves the researcher in some form of a close participative observer role in a natural, everyday setting. The ethnographer thus synthesizes disparate observations to make meaningful constructs.

**Alpha Pup Scrutiny**

‘Alpha Pup’ is the child who is fully armed with the latest, coolest and the most hip brands. Tracking this alpha pup is critical for marketers because peer groups have a very strong and vital power and influence in the kids’ community. Unraveling the psyche of the alpha pup helps creating a buzz or ‘street marketing’ effect with the little pup as a cool trendsetter and leader in his own way.

**Objectives of the Study**

The paper plans to study the impact of TV Advertisements on School Going Children. It proposes the following:

1. To assess the “Pester Power” effect occurring on account of exposure to advertisements.
2. To study how adept the children are at recognizing brands and logos of both children and adult products.
3. To examine the effect of TV ads, both FMCG and consumer durables, on school going children.
4. To study how and why do the ads impact the children psychologically in order to effect purchasing by them directly and indirectly affecting the purchase decision of their parents/family.
5. To determine strategies to use children constructively in ads.

**Research Methodology**

**Sample size:**

A sample of 100 school going children and their parents/guardians  
(Parents/guardians serve as respondents for qualitative research)

**Sampling technique:**

A stratified random sampling technique using age and gender as stratification variables is applied. One stratum for age has been decided ie.9-14. Samples of 50 male and 50 female children are drawn from the two age strata that have been decided in each city. Thus, a sample of 100 respondents is reached.

Sampling Unit	Sampling Size	Sampling Procedure
Children	100	Stratified Random Sampling using age and gender as stratification variables.

**Type of Research Design:**

Descriptive and Exploratory Research Designs. Descriptive research is employed for the kids and Exploratory Research is used for the parents.

**Research Instruments:** Research Instruments would include questionnaires containing closed end questions and qualitative comments of the respective parents/guardians.

- The method of contact was personal in-home interviews, commonly referred to as door-to-door interviews.
- A total of 100 interviews were conducted among tweens between ages of 9 and 14.
- Sample size-The sample comprised 50 girls and 50 boys.
- For tweens the average length of the interview was 20 minutes.
- The parents were subjected to a questionnaire while their child was being interviewed.

## Findings

- The media-specifically the Television for 80% of the respondents represents the primary way in which the kids learn about “cool” new products and brand names. Two thirds refer to TV commercials in this context.
- The top 5 products for which the kids have pestered their parents in the last six months include – Fast Food Restaurants, Own clothing, Chips ,Chocolates and games and toys.( 35 percent among girls and 80 percent among boys for toys and games).
- 80 percent of the parents interviewed confirm that the kids have an appreciable good recognition of brand names and logos.
- 10-13 percent kids have a favorite clothing store. Boys in general indicate that they do not have any favorite store when it calls for purchasing apparels whereas girls are store loyalists and do not really shop anywhere and everywhere.
- Tweens admit that they ‘nag’ when they want something. 50 percent report that they “keep asking and asking”. A similar proportion (47 admit to asking again after a first parental refusal, but then give up and don’t keep asking.
- Parents report that kids influence them into buying by adopting a variety of strategies-- offering to pay part of the cost (60 percent), doing extra chores (62 percent) as well as more aggressive tactics - keep on asking and asking (70 percent) and ‘begging’ (70percent)
- 50 percent of tweens are reported as using “doing better at school” as leverage to persuade their parents to buy something the parents are reluctant to buy, this emerged as the nagging strategy that parents say works best (30% of parents saying it is effective all or most times).
- Kids accompanying parents at grocery shopping-92 percent parents say that ask for at least one thing while the entire trip. The in store demands, 35 percent of the times are non brand specific.
- Parental susceptibility to tween request-15 percent of parents usually succumb to the kid’s request and buy him the requested item even if it is ‘more expensive’
- Parents see peer pressure, to the extent of 40 percent, as the major reason for their kid asking for a specific brand or label.
- The most important source of money for the tweens is- pocket money and grand parents.
- There is observed a differential in the spending patterns of male and female tweens. Girls spend heavily on clothes and shoes (58percent), hair accessories (12percent) and makeup (22 percent). As against this, boys spend heavily on Video games, Games and toys and clothing, with no mention of accessories and makeup.

## Advertising Industry regulations across the globe

- Countries such as Sweden, Norway, Belgium and Austria have imposed a ban on advertising during children's television programs. TV advertising and sponsorship of programs aimed at children below the age of 12 are prohibited. In Austria and the Flemish part of Belgium no advertising is permitted 5 minutes before or after programs for children.
- In Britain, The Independent Television Commission's code on advertising, "No method of advertising may be employed which takes advantage of the natural credulity and sense of loyalty of children."
- Another rule says: "No advertisement may lead children to believe that if they do not have or use the product or service advertised they will be inferior... or liable to contempt or ridicule."
- In Greece, the advertising of toys on television is banned between 7.00 a.m. to 10 p.m.
- In Germany and Denmark there are bans on certain forms of toys.
- Australia does not allow advertisements during programmes for pre-school children.

## Advertising Industry Regulations in India

Rules governing advertising aimed at children differ country to another. Multinational companies are selling their products across the globe. **This necessitates having an international code on advertisements.** This is a Herculean task, because such a code would have to take into account different cultural traditions and national priorities and it will also have to battle powerful manufacturers' lobbies that spend millions of dollars on breaking down such codes and restrictions.

The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI), the ad industry's self-regulatory voluntary organization, has come out with a campaign encouraging viewers to pick up their pens and write in, if they find any ad offensive, vulgar or false in any way. ASCI has been at it for over 20 years, with its earlier campaigns occasionally featuring popular faces to bring out the message such as Priya Tendulkar (the 'Jhoot bole, ASCI kaate' campaign). Ads which make an **Over claim**, are **Indecent** and depict a **Dangerous Behavior** are the ones which are called as offensive ads.

Chapter III, Rule 2 of the Advertising Standards Council of India clearly says that "Advertisements addressed to minors shall not contain anything, whether in illustration or otherwise, which might result in their physical, mental or moral harm or which exploits their vulnerability. The International Code on Advertising too supports this rule. Article 13 says, "Advertisements should not exploit the natural credulity of children or the lack of experience of young people and should not strain their sense of loyalty".

### Guidelines for action

#### 1. Responsible Advertising- Using and Targeting Children Constructively

Responsible advertising would imply encouraging children to relate the type of foods that you want them to eat with "cool" characters like Harry Potter, who tucks into a whole variety of foods including plenty of vegetables. Then there are icons like Popeye who ate spinach to make him strong. And what about Bananaman – say no more!

#### 2. The Role of Parents

At the "Have You Lost Your Marbles?" awards at Britain there were five recipients.

- Reebok, for footwear ads featuring nude and bikini-clad models
- distributors of 'Teletubbies' TV show, for promotional campaigns with McDonald's and Burger King
- two market research companies which studied child psychology to boost sales
- Channel One Network, which includes commercials in a daily newscast shown at 12,000 schools nationwide.

In Australia, the Parents Jury committed to reducing childhood obesity has lashed out at McDonald's Happy Meals Ads by giving it the Pester Power Reward for the second time in a row.

In other parts of the world, there exist voluntary groups like the 'Adbusters' and 'Mothers groups' that watch and pressure governments to clamp down on aggressive and intrusive advertising.

Such a move is anticipated from the parents on this part of the globe. Parents can and should try to make a difference in the way advertising is being perceived by children.

**3. Immediate ban on all promotions of FMCGs and drugs at school.** The promotion should be through parents and doctors in case of drugs rather than doing so in schools without the approval of the parents.

### Conclusion

Kids are emerging as a homogenous consumer cluster of their own with peer group factor and mass media having an overwhelming impact on their brand choice, consumption behavior and consumption patterns.

Kids are keen observers, ever experimenting, do not take anything for granted and want to learn while having fun. There is no stickiness, no brand loyalty, ultimate materialism and consumerism in sync with the latest trends and fads.

Kids are wanton, inexperienced, naïve and easily gullible, but, a very important set of consumers. Catching them young for product categories not actually meant for them is an act of irresponsible marketing. In no case should the children be made a target of reckless consumption and materialism.

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