

IMPACT OF TELEVISION PROGRAMS AND ADVERTISEMENTS ON SCHOOL GOING ADOLESCENTS: A CASE STUDY OF BAHAWALPUR CITY, PAKISTAN

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Abstract. Teenage is the most vital and delicate stage of human life. During teenage youngsters try to follow new fashion, culture and style which is being presented in different programs and advertisements on television. They have strong urge and inclination to adopt something new and extra ordinary different from their surroundings. In Pakistan, there are about 43.40% are the adolescents of the age between 13-16 years as stated by Federal Bureau of Statistics. Adolescents are the age group that is the most effected by T.V programs and advertisements. Target audience of most of the programs and advertisements area adolescents e.g. cell phone advertisements. Most of the children in different countries spend almost 3-4 hours per day in watching T.V as per statement of UNESCO. The effects of the commercials and T.V pro-

grams on children vary from person to person. This research tries to dig out the impact of different T.V programs and ads on the children between the age group of 13-16 of different schools of Bahawalpur City.

Keywords: commercials, advertisements, infotainment, behavior and attitude, academic performance, adolescents

Introduction

Television is the most powerful and influential medium of communication around the globe. Due to its powerful effect, most advertisers rely on television for advertisement of their products to attract the teenagers as they are their target audience in most of the cases. This is due to the fact that teenagers are easy to be persuaded to buy any particular product which is being advertised on television. In the same manner, overall television viewing influences the life style of adolescents in different manners.

The adolescents in America spend on the average 28 hours per week in watching television (UNESCO's statement, 26th July 2000). Thus television is the most powerful medium which affects through its content i.e., infotainment. The purpose of this study is to explore the effect of T.V programs and ads on attitude, behavior and life style of adolescents.

An ideal advertising is aimed at providing positive information in order to gain commercial benefits through a stylish, attractive and refined way, which can persuade and compel the users to buy the product which is being advertised (Kotler & Armstrong, 1993). T.V ads are very vital in expansion of business, especially in marketing. As television is the most popular medium due to its sound with picture, it is the best tool for selling brands and services. It is often said that a picture can tell more than thousand words, that's why television advertisements are the best to demonstrate the product in an attractive manner. Television contents saved in the minds of viewers with jingles

and voices of different characters, which seem to be attached with a particular product, being advertised. Positive and negative impact of television contents may vary from child to child. It might be harmful for one and useful for other (Cantor, 1998). Food preferences of children depend on T.V ads. There is a positive relationship between advertisements of eatables memorized by children and different food items like soft drinks, savory snakes, noodles and biscuits that children eat (Borzekowski & Robinson, 2001). Children often try to imitate the models presented in advertisements because they are appeared on T.V as smart, attractive, powerful and having a profligate life style. Children who spend more time in watching T.V become obese because they are lazy and do not like to have any physical exertion. Moreover they take food which is high in fat and sugar which is the main factor in obesity (Macklin, 1987). Violence in television programs and movies is creating social problems as many children tend to follow those violent and dreadful contents which are not acceptable and recognized by society and their families because their families follow somewhat traditional life style. It's almost impossible that the childhood purity and innocence can become intact, if children are exposed to violent and adult contents which are being presented in T.V programs (Josephson, 1995). It is to be claimed that children's eating habit can be influenced by television advertisements. The brand awareness injects sense of security to the lives of these children. Advertisement is aimed to promote different products and its features but if someone perceives differently, it may have larger sociological influence (Barron et al., 1989). On average a child views almost 12 thousand violent scenes on televisions per year, majority of them are of murder and sex scenes. Excessive exposure to the violent contents of T.V programs, as highlighted in more than thousand studies, may make the boys more hostile (Johnson et al., 2002). Young children get inspiration more than any other age group from the T.V commercials, as they believe what they see. The liking for advertisement by the children depends upon simplicity and

clarity of the message being presented in the advertisements (Rice & Woodsmall, 1988). There is a lot research work on the inter-relationship between watching violent programs and aggressive attitude of the viewers especially children. Due to children's importance in buying decision, advertisers target the children not only in homes but also in classrooms and schools (Barcus, 1980). A single advertisement may effect a little whereas repeated exposure to advertisement may create a strong will for the advertised product as compared to others (Robertson & Rossiter, 1979). In addition to advertisement, the purchasing decision can be influenced by parents, teachers, friends and direct experience. Other factors may include socio-economic status and cultural background of the children and also the education levels their parents (Galst & White, 1976). There are two paradigms of the research on effects of advertising on children, the one is empowered child and other is vulnerable child paradigm. Children are considered as skilled consumers, in empowered child paradigm, which can critically evaluate the message being presented in the advertisement. Children are more vulnerable to the seductive influence of advertisement than adults. On the other hand the vulnerable child paradigm tries to find out the harmful effects of advertisements on children and how to intact them from these effects. A longitudinal study of teenagers shows that advertisements have both short term and long term effects on the materialistic attitude and values of adolescents (Moore, 2004)

Shin (2004) in his study on television viewing and its effect on the performance of the students established three hypotheses for its negative impact. The first hypothesis is the time displacement which means that television watching diverts the students from the intellectual thinking, which is why the performance and grades of students are affected. Another hypothesis named as the mental-effect hypothesis in which watching television can lead to the laziness of the mind. Shin proved that watching television do not requires more mental attention as compared to other form of communication i.e., reading and

writing, which mean that less mental capabilities are utilized during television viewing than any other activity. The third hypothesis is arousal hypothesis which concludes that television viewing can deteriorate the academic performance as it encourages spontaneous behaviors and discourage sustained activities. The third hypothesis also concluded that television viewing can lead to damage the intellectual process of the children as the result children are fail to concentrate on their studies in classroom. Effects of television programs on students, depends upon the amount of television they watch. the research showed that there does not exist a negative relationship between watching television and the performance of the students in their classroom until they start watching more than 10 hours or more per week and the situation will be worsen when the mount of watching television exceeds than 30 hours or more per week (Thompson & Austin, 2003). In the other research it is concluded that there is a positive impact of watching television until react to a particular level, but can have a negative impact if it exceeds to a certain level. Television programs like action movies, cartoons and music may have a negative impact on their (students) minds which can result in decrease of their academic performance and grades.

Hypotheses

(1) Behavior and attitude of the adolescents is affected by T.V programs and commercials; (2) Excessive watching of television affects the physical activities like sports, swimming, cycling, etc. of the adolescents; (3) Performance of the children in the academics is affected by the T.V programs and commercials.

Methodology

The research methodology used for this study is survey. The data was collected from the students of different public schools of Bahawalpur. The

students who have television sets in their home were selected as sample. The sample of 400 students, studying in 9th and 10th class, was selected by Simple Random Sampling (SRS). The data was collected through a questionnaire which was specially designed to collect the information about commercials viewing and the other life pattern of adolescents. Data was manipulated, coded and analyzed by using the statistical software SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences), version 16.

Research hypothesis No 1

Behavior and attitude of the adolescents is affected by T.V programs and commercials.

Table 1. Chi-square test between behavior and attitude of the adolescents and T.V programs and commercials

	Value	Degree of freedom	P-value
Pearson Chi-Square	40.334	9	.000
Likelihood Ratio	36.523	9	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	23.784	1	.000
No of Valid Cases	400		

Since the p-value is less than our significance level 0.05 in Table 1, therefore, we can conclude that there exists strong association between the behavior and attitude of the adolescents and T.V commercials and programs. Our result is supported by the study of Josephson (1995) which presented in his study that the violence present in the behavior of the children is due to the T.V programs. Also, Rice & Woodsmall (1988) supports our point of view that the young children get more inspiration than any other age group. Our findings is also supported by the study of Moore (2004) who observed in his

study that advertisements have both short term and long term effects on the materialistic attitude and values of adolescents.

Research hypothesis No 2

Excessive watching of television affects the physical activities like sports, swimming, cycling, etc. of the adolescents.

Table 2. Chi-square test between excessive watching of television and effects on physical activities like sports, swimming, cycling, etc. of the adolescents

	Value	Degree of freedom	P-value
Pearson Chi-Square	46.035	15	.007
Likelihood Ratio	46.625	15	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	23.957	1	.000
No of Valid Cases	400		

Since the p-value is less than our significance level which 5% (Table 2), therefore, there exists strong association between excessive watching of television and effects on physical activities like sports, swimming, cycling etc of the adolescents. Macklin (1987) also presented the same study by stating that children who spend more time in watching T.V become obese because they are lazy and do not like to have any physical exertion. Moreover they take food which is high in fat and sugar which is the main factor in obesity. Also Borzekowski & Robinson (2001) showed that the food preferences of children depend on T.V ads. There is a positive relationship between advertisements of eatables memorized by children and different food items like soft drinks, savory snakes, noodles and biscuits that children eat. These things definitely create negative impact on the health of children.

Research hypothesis No 3

Table 3. Chi-square test between performance of the children in the academics and T.V programs and the commercials

	Value	Degree of freedom	P-value
Pearson Chi-Square	31.799	9	.002
Likelihood Ratio	31.317	9	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	20.546	1	.000
No of Valid Cases	400		

Since the p-value is less than our significance level 0.05 (Table 3), therefore, we can conclude that there exists the strong relationship between the academic performance of the students and watching T.V programs and commercials. Shine in 2004 gave three hypotheses in measuring the performance of the children after watching T.V programs and commercials. His third hypothesis supports our findings in which he said the academic performance of the children can be disturbed by watching T.V because it encourages spontaneous behaviors and discourages sustained activities. However Thompson & Austin (2003) showed in his study that the effect of watching television and advertisements on the performance of the students depend upon the amount of time they spend on T.V. There will be worse effect on the class work if the start watching television more than 10 hours or more in a week. They also showed in their research study that television programs like action movies, cartoons and music may have a negative impact on their (students) minds which can result in decrease of their academic performance and grades.

Conclusions

The data analyzed show that the teenagers have more access in watching television than any other medium, i.e., 69%. It has been revealed that the students are very much influenced by watching different television programs but particularly music (39%) and dramas (41%) have much more influence than other contents. The study also depicts that most (48%) of the students spend around two-three hours daily in watching television programs whereas in the case of advertisements, majority (68%) of the students spend up to one hour. Almost 56% of the students like to watch television because of different program contents e.g. Dramas, News etc. T.V is the most effective medium as it penetrates its contents in the society like a bullet as explained in magic bullet theory presented by Harold Lasswell (1948). As adolescents are also the integral part of the society so they are also influenced by T.V in different manners like language, style, fashion, behavior etc. Our study shows that style (34%) and fashion (25%) are the most influencing factors on the adolescents. There are different television contents which are the sources of knowledge and information. This study has shown that current affairs programs (23%) and advertisements (21%) are the main sources of knowledge and information dissemination. Viewers especially adolescents have developed strong affiliation and attachment with different television contents because of this television programs have strong impact on youngsters of different age group. As is evident from the study, that after watching television programs, 33% of the respondents feel satisfaction and 21% of them feel anxiety in different ways. Same is the case when youngsters watch advertisements on television, most of them (67%) are not effected by these advertisements in any case whereas 14% feel satisfaction through advertisements. It has been concluded from the study that 54% of the adolescents like to watch television in their bedrooms while 57% of them like to watch in seclusion. It has been observed from the study that 44% of our respondents agreed somewhat with the statement that televi-

sion viewing is affecting their physical activities. Television commercials are also very successful in attracting and persuading the target audience to buy different products as it can be seen from the study that almost 43% respondents somewhat agreed with this statement. Similarly youngster and adolescents are keen to buy the product which is being advertised. For this purpose majority of them (57%) even compel and force their parents to buy that product.

Recommendations

After concluding the study, it is suggested that: (1) the production of more informative and educational programs can help to create the awareness among the adolescents of the country; (2) the program on physical activities and exercises must be broadcasted regularly so that it can inculcate and incite the adolescents to take part in different physical activities practically rather than just to watch television in their leisure time; (3) different television contents and commercials have strong impact on the behavior, attitude and life style on adolescents so that those programs and commercials should be allowed to be broadcasted which induce students to take part in healthy activities and also having a positive impact on their life style; (4) the television sets should be in T.V lounge and the youngsters should not be allowed to watch the television in their bedrooms where there is no check and balance on them.

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