

TARGET CHILD MARKETING AND MENTAL HEALTH- A RELATIONSHIP

Nidhi Kalro¹ and Vijayendra Khannah²

¹Seaspeed Container Lines Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai, India

²Kolkata, West Bengal

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ABSTRACT

Children and adults are averse to the detrimental effects that advertising has on them. Advertising to children is an ethical conundrum for marketers as well. Even though the corporation hopes to boost sales with the advertising campaign, it is really only deceiving vulnerable, young youngsters. By instilling in the child the craving for the comfort and status that come with possessing many possessions, advertising may help mould his values. Children are told by the commercials that they must have certain items in order to be happy and accepted. Long-term, this could encourage materialistic behaviour. Children pick up on the notion that having certain things makes them more attractive, popular, or able to make new friends. This paper claims to identify the types of themes and appeals utilised in children's advertising in India. In TV commercials, marketers employ a variety of themes and appeals to sway children's consumption patterns. Additionally, it has been shown that kids choose things like food more based on these appeals than on their nutritious content. It talks about the lasting impact these commercials have on children's holistic development and how their purchasing patterns change from time to time, due to advertising. Laws that are against advertising towards children in India and other countries, have also been mentioned, providing a comparison for the same. As a part of the research methodology, a secondary data content analysis has been carried out, by critically analysing past literature on the topic and providing citations where necessary.

Objectives

- To understand how brands use children as scapegoats to target their products and earn profits by targeting them during peak seasons.
- To carry out in-depth research on how children respond to such marketing gimmicks

and tactics and ultimately purchase a specific product.

- To learn how brand advertisements that include children's faces for marketing goals might also have an impact on parents.
- To study the effects these strategies have on children' holistic development and mental health.
- To have an insight on the laws and regulations implemented against companies or brands targeting children.

INTRODUCTION

What is Target Marketing?

Target market is the end consumer to which the company wants to sell its end products too. Target marketing involves breaking down the entire market into various segments and planning marketing strategies accordingly for each segment to increase the market share.

In other words, not every customer can consume every product, and every product has a unique group of customers that wish to buy it. The business will occasionally modify the product to appeal to a specific market segment. Developing the target market entails conceptualising the product, recognising the market need for the product, researching the target market, etc. Target marketing would centre on using marketing strategies for a certain market group, which might be important to bringing in new clients, expanding business opportunities across borders, and expanding distribution networks to increase reach.

The process of defining the target market involves several components. The first step is to comprehend the issue that the customer, to whom you are speaking, is facing. Once completed, the clients that are interested in that product can be found.

You may manufacture water purifiers as an example to address the issue of tainted water quality. Farm dwellings lack a regular water connection and rely on hard subsurface water. Hence, there is a significant opportunity for manufacturers of water purifiers to enter this market and capitalise on it. The following stage is to comprehend your customer in terms of their location, income, and other factors.

Always keep the market in mind, as well as your competition and the product's price. This will help in creating a particular benchmark.

Before deciding to enter a new market category, the corporation should always take into account two crucial factors. Firstly, the segment is attractive because there is little rivalry, good profit

margins, etc. in it. Secondly, it is consistent with the goal, vision, etc., of the business.

History Of Target Marketing Towards Children/ Youngsters

India's persistent, inventive, and sneaky advertising has all of a sudden found a brand-new audience in kids. Through television, the most popular advertising medium of the decade, marketing professionals and ad agencies are connecting with a spectrum of children across the nation. They are also employing every attention-grabbing technique known to man, including humorous language, catchy music and jingles, and mnemonics (advertising tools like Vicks' Khich Khich, Colgate's Ring of Security, and Binatone's Quartzzy that help adverts linger in people's minds). And certainly, young actors are now getting prominent roles in ads (Rasna, Maggi Noodles).

Clearly, the advertising sector has hit gold. Since children represent only one component of the advertising game, albeit an increasingly important one, it is difficult to assess the effect of the new trend on corporate sales. However, it is a sign of the times that at least two market research companies are frantically investigating children's lifestyles, perhaps as a first step to drawing some conclusions.

A Eureka Forbes vacuum cleaner commercial, for instance, centres on a youngster recalling the thrill of the company's salesman's visit. According to Suresh Goklaney, vice-president of sales and marketing at Bombay-based Eureka Forbes Ltd. "The whole family gets involved, and the curiosity of children is aroused. This is consistent with real life experience." While Reliance Industries advertised its Vimal line of fabrics with women models playing tag the previous year, the textile behemoth's advertising this year featured a little child.

How Children Respond To Constant Advertising

This increase in interest is due to a number of things. One widespread belief is that since children are the focus of Indian families, they must be included in advertisements for family goods such foods, edible oils, soaps, and toothpastes."Any ad for a family product would obviously have children. People are extremely child-oriented in this country," argues Abhijit Basu, general manager of marketing at HMM Ltd, the Delhi-based food products company.

More significant is the idea that today's kids might genuinely be able to influence consumer choices. A.G. Krishnamurthy, chairman and managing director of Mudra Communications, based in Ahmedabad, argues: "The man of the house may say that a Godrej refrigerator is the best. It's his daughter who's going to say Kelvinator, that's the c-o-o-lest one because she's fallen for the cute little penguin in the commercial. If you ask me, it would require a pretty steel-hearted father to rule her out."

The plan is to persuade kids to bug parents to buy certain brands, especially for items that they decide to buy on whim. As noted by Vinita Bali, marketing manager at Cadburys, "Children today are aware of brands in the sense that they can recall brand names and identify packs." Additionally, new items frequently win over families through children. That sounds like a natural tactic because kids are constantly keen to try new things.

In most houses, according to advertising professionals, children are the ones who are glued to the television. "I don't think there are any two opinions about that. Children watch television the most as a rule," Paul Nayyar, director of Delhi-based Tara Sinha Associates, reaffirms this. Children don't either passively consume television.

Of course, advertising companies are aware of all of this. They contend that their use of youngsters has not been excessive. But they are caught between societal and commercial expectations. It is clear that keeping a fine balance between the two will be everything but simple.

Relationship between Psychology and Marketing

The goal of marketing psychology is to comprehend how consumers reason, feel, and think. The purpose of marketing is to persuade, and you might be able to win over a consumer for life by carefully crafting an emotional appeal.

Since the beginning of traditional marketing, marketers have always attempted to understand how these two disciplines are related in order to achieve the best outcomes. When building a strong relationship with customers by comprehending their purchase behaviour and the reasons behind those actions, psychology is employed in marketing.

Children do not comprehend advertising messaging at the same level as adults, according to solid data. Particularly, younger kids (those who are 8 or younger) are more inclined to think that the advertising they witness is completely educational. Additionally, there is mounting research that shows how children's growth affects their capacity to shield themselves from marketing messages.

Know Your Target Audience

Know who your potential consumers are before you take any action. Which demographics best describe your target market? Are Asian American women aged 18 the bulk of your target market? Are they 65-year-old white males from the middle class? It is crucial to conduct marketing research to gather information about your target market so that you can later develop a client profile.

You can determine what kinds of marketing strategies will be the most effective for you by using a profile. It will also assist you in understanding the psychological strategies you should employ in your marketing strategy.

Evoking Emotion

An individual is more inclined to react when their emotions are triggered, which eventually starts the decision-making process. A sense of urgency is a common emotion that marketers strive to elicit. The phrases "limited time," "few are left in stock," etc. are used.

Why should you buy this thing? Why does it merit it? Right away, customers need to understand the worth of the offering. They are curious as to how it will affect change in their daily life. A lot of marketers emphasise the importance of the product and your need for it. This demonstrates to the customer the strength of the product itself. Marketers give the product a reason to exist and describe how useful it will be over the long term, not just today. Instead of only looking at the price tag, they also pay attention to the product's quality and potential.

The typical person in today's society aspires to blend in. They desire a sense of community with others as well as acceptance from their peers. This way of thinking is used by marketers to create campaigns. They give the impression that the company, particular product, service, etc. is well-liked by its target market and that everyone is eager to get one. Marketers specifically give buyers the impression that this good, service, etc. is flying off the shelves, and that they will stand out if they don't buy it too. No one wants to feel alone, so businesses rely on sentiments of acceptance to persuade people to make purchases.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is essentially the "how" a certain piece of research is conducted in practice. More specifically, it deals with the methodical methods a researcher employs when designing a study to guarantee accurate outcomes that meet the goals and objectives of the investigation.

The kind of research that I have carried out as a part of my project is making use of Secondary data by analysing Case Studies pertaining to my topic of research. Each case study has been carefully and critically examined, by mentioning details about the company or brand, the campaign details and the analysis for the same.

What is Secondary Data in Research Methodology?

In addition to contacting the primary origin or source, secondary data can also be gathered by using a third party. It makes use of the information gathered from earlier studies and employs it

in current research.

Data that has previously been gathered from primary sources and made easily accessible for academics to use for their own research is known as secondary data. It is a category of information that has previously been gathered.

The information may have been gathered by one researcher for a specific study and then made available for use by another researcher. As in the case of the national census, the information may also have been gathered for general use without a specified study goal.

Data that is categorised as secondary for one research may be primary for another. When data is reused, it becomes primary data for the initial research and secondary data for the subsequent research for which it is used.

Books, private sources, journals, newspapers, websites, government documents, etc. are examples of secondary data sources. Compared to primary data, secondary data are thought to be easier to find. Utilising these sources requires relatively little study and labour.

Hypothesis Implied:

Children who are overexposed to marketing of certain products, tend to develop personality traits towards brands that, if unfulfilled, can create an imbalance in their mental health condition.

Literature Review

"Bournvita – A Massive Hit": This article discusses Bournvita, a delectable chocolate health beverage that is occasionally preferred to be consumed raw. It discusses the intriguing details that have contributed to Bournvita's success, some of which include its emphasis on nutrition and wellness, how precisely it recognises and serves its target demographic, and how they continue diversifying their product line, by adding new items along with the drink.

"Using Marketing Psychology to Influence Consumer Behaviour": According to this article, marketing psychology aims to comprehend how consumers reason, feel, and make decisions. The purpose of marketing is to persuade, and you might be able to find a lasting customer, crafting an emotional appeal. Various strategies that are known to affect consumer behaviour are mentioned in the article as well.

"Killing joy with Gender Bias": A prominent psychologist and the child rights organisation Balala Hakkula Sangham have launched an appeal to stop Kinder Joy from making gender-exclusive toys and to explain the harm it does to children's psyche. The article describes how the indicated age is the "most critical" period of a person's life and compares it to adults with certain

behaviours.

“Health drinks like Bournvita, Horlicks give your kids more sugar & hardly any nutrition”: The article claims that the malt-based drinks, which are branded as "health beverages" in this country and are specifically aimed at kids, are just drinks with an excessive amount of sugar, that are extremely unhealthy for children. It discusses the constituents in these malt-based beverages, the growth of milk substitutes, and the fact that milk, not malt, is what gives these beverages their "nutritional" value.

“What is so horribly wrong but terrifyingly right about White Hat Jr. marketing?”: The article addresses White Hat Jr., a live online coding platform for children that wrote its own perfect exit strategy. It claims that because education is a business in India, students are pressured to be overachievers from an early age. The parental aspiration that permeates children's minds and causes them to fantasise about IIT as early as class 9, or three years before they would actually take the exam. Without their knowledge, WhiteHat Jr. directs commercials at parents using the likes of Jeff Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg, Sundar Pichai, and Bill Gates to make the argument that they all got their start in coding early and are now all in charge of multibillion-dollar businesses. This is problematic on many levels because it sets unrealistic expectations for children.

“Study on the impact of marketing through social media, online games and mobile applications on children's behaviour”: The extent and impact of online marketing on youngsters are covered in the article. An extensive research initiative has been supported by the European Commission. The study offers fresh perspectives on the frequency and characteristics of internet marketing that targets kids, how these marketing techniques affect kids' behaviour, and how online marketing is governed throughout Europe.

“Junk Foods avoid Ad Ban by Targeting Children Online”: While stricter broadcasting laws forbid such advertising on children's television, the study suggests that food firms still use loopholes to sell bad foods to youngsters online. The Children's Food Campaign complained about 54 websites that it claimed "failed to protect children from unhealthy food marketing" and that advertised meals that were high in fat, salt, or sugar to children.

“Guidelines for Social Media Influencers: How Will This Impact Content Creators?”: According to the article, social media influencers who post false advertisements or promotions would be subject to a Rs. 10 lakh fine. In order to avoid fraudulent advertising and deceptive marketing, the Union government released guidelines for social media influencers. If social media influencers advocate goods or brands, the decision places tougher standards and transparency requirements on them.

“Teenager cycles from Patiala to Delhi to meet YouTuber”: The article is about a 13-year-old

boy, who was rescued from Pitampura, in north-west Delhi, three days after he left his home for school, but instead travelled to Delhi, to YouTuber Nishay Malhan's home, the Delhi Police said on Saturday. The boy had cycled all the way from Punjab's Patiala to Delhi without telling his family, they added. In the interim, his family in Punjab reported him missing and informed the Punjab Police that he might have travelled to Delhi to see the YouTuber.

“Commercialization of Education in India”: In this article, the commercialization of education in India is evaluated. It results from changes made to the educational system in the past two decades. It shows up in successful private schools, public schools, private colleges, and higher education institutions. Millions of families are impacted financially by the commercialization of education. It also alters the way that education is traditionally thought of. The socioeconomic development of the nation affects what is happening in the education sector. The attitude toward teaching and learning has also been changed by industrialization and globalisation.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

There is little research on advertising directed at children in the Indian setting, despite the fact that it has been strongly criticised for instilling false behavioural patterns in young children. On the basis of socioeconomic and cultural considerations unique to the Indian ethos, hypotheses were constructed. Commercials airing on five of India's top children's television networks are subjected to content analysis. Advertisements usually use familial situations more often than other contexts.

In today's world, marketing of food to youngsters is a serious problem. Different types of food goods and how they are presented to potential customers have been developed thanks to the revolution in the food sector, increased globalisation, and information technology growth. Due to the rising trend in obesity and the shift from communicable to non-communicable diseases, the nation as a whole is not cost-effective. Children have been targeted by multinational corporations as a gullible market to increase sales. Misleading claims in marketing is a common instance of unethical behaviour.

Since ancient times, it has been believed that selling food to children poses a hazard to public health. On this topic, the World Health Organisation has resolutions and recommendations. India is one of the signatory nations to this statement of membership. However, there is still more to be done to compete with these global food monopolies. At the national and institutional levels, laws and policies must be upheld. Parents need to be informed, and social groups like schools need to take the initiative in this area.

Bournvita

About Bournvita:

A delectable chocolate health beverage that some people enjoy eating raw! Developed by Cadbury, a subsidiary of Mondelez International, it is a brand of malted and chocolate malt drink mixes. In India, women and children alike choose Bournvita as a brown beverage to replace their milk. Bournvita has been incredibly successful in India. The brand has sustained itself in the market through these years despite backlashes.

The major goal of Bournvita is to offer a delicious and healthful beverage.

Bournvita was successful in understanding the demographics of its audience. They mainly targeted school going children and promoted the idea that bournvita was a healthy drink when in fact, the drink was loaded with sugar, which has extreme long term side effects if consumed daily.

Marketing Campaign:

The brand has been a part of Movie Marketing in the film “Koi Mil Gaya”. The film is famous for Rohit’s favourite drink – Bournvita and how he drinks it every day as a part of his routine. It indirectly insists that Bournvita can be a huge source of development as a milk supplement in the initial years of a child’s life.

Campaign Analysis

The above marketing strategy worked in the favour of Bournvita as, after watching the movie, every kid desired to drink this supposed “healthy beverage” daily, making it a part of their routine. Parents also gave in to the child’s demands completely ignoring the fact that the drink comprises sugar, which is extremely harmful for the health of the child in the long run.

According to media reports from September 10, the child's mother claimed that he was influenced by television advertisements promising that a specific health drink would make him tall in a short amount of time. After drinking the drink for two days, he committed suicide on the third day after seeing no improvement.

Rahul, an 11-year-old boy from Delhi, allegedly committed suicide after consuming a milk-based health drink advertised as making kids "taller." The class V kid, who wished to grow taller in two days, hanged himself when he did not see the effects.

This clearly affects the mental health of children and shapes them into believing their height or intelligence will be hampered if these drinks are not consumed.

“All the nutrition children get from these beverages is actually from milk,” said Priya Kathpal, nutritionist and founder of Nutrify. “These products only serve the purpose of enhancing the taste of milk that children tend not to like. Constantly feeding such products to children is utterly an ill-informed decision by parents.”

Kinder Joy

About Kinder Joy:

The egg-shaped Kinder Joys are held firmly inside of the box by an egg tray. This sets the product apart from other chocolates, which typically come in rectangular slabs. It uses unique packaging to increase the product's attractiveness to its intended market. The box for girls features a Barbie portrait and is pink, whereas it has a hint of blue hue for guys. The 5R packaging strategy has been implemented by the company. Removal, reduction, recyclability, reuse, and renewal are the 5Rs.

With its objective to expand its market presence in India, Kinder joy had launched a marketing campaign “SMS for Joy” that gave away prizes to customers who buy promotional packs.

Marketing Campaign:

Kinder Joy Surprise Egg has always been a favourite with children and the free gift inside has always been a motivating factor for the children to buy it. A couple of days ago, I heard a small child asking his mother to buy him a blue Kinder Joy. After hearing him say this I recalled the ad and realised that the marketing strategy of the product is misleading. The new Kinder Joy advert has now divided its surprise eggs into “For Boys” and “For Girls” which was earlier gender-neutral. Obviously, the “For Boys” is blue and the “For Girls” is pink. The chocolate is the same, the cream is the same, the cost is also the same, but the colour solely makes a huge difference.

Marketing Analysis:

The chocolate is wrapped differently, but it tastes the same. It is available in two colours: pink for girls and blue for boys. Additionally, there are toys that scream stereotypes. According to Achyuta Rao, there are superheroes, vehicles, and butterflies for guys and princesses and butterflies for girls. APBHS has taken it upon itself to explain the detrimental consequences this has on developing youngsters.

"Our society already has some stereotypes, and we think less highly of women as people. The most prevalent belief is that it is evolving gradually. Long-term mental health of children will suffer if we support major chocolate manufacturers like Ferrero, which makes Kinder Joy, in their discriminatory sales practises. Because men and women have equal rights and are free to make

their own decisions, it is unconstitutional.

Elaborating on the psychological implications Radhika Acharya, a popular counsellor from the city begins by pointing that, “Gender and sex are two different things. Adults do not want to be discriminated against on the basis of gender because we believe that we are humans first. Then why discriminate against children?” she questions.

Why should Kinder Joy choose the toys that boys and girls will play with? Aren't we instilling in their young minds an unfair bias about gender stereotypes? And the idea that pink is for girls and blue is for guys is so archaic. We need to find out from the creators what made them decide that a girl child would choose brushes and mirrors over autos.

Such marketing gimmicks are not only annoying, but also irresponsible for a product with a gender-neutral target market of children between the ages of 2 and 8. Children today should grow up in a culture that allows them to be whoever they want, despite the ongoing efforts to create a more balanced world. A boy should be able to dress up a barbie without being teased, and a girl should be confident that she can play with automobiles, lego, or other supposedly "boyish" toys.

White Hat Jr.

About WhiteHat Jr.

When WhiteHat Jr, a two-year-old firm that teaches coding to children, launched a multimillion-dollar advertising blitzkrieg last year, it instantly became a household name in India. The advertisements were hard to ignore since they made claims that the company's students—some of whom were as young as six—were being sought after by international investors and landing jobs at Google because of the abilities they had attained through WhiteHat Jr programmes.

The campaign was a huge success, according to WhiteHat Jr, whose revenue run rate—a projection of annual income based on one month's actual revenue—rose from just \$75 million in June to \$220 million in August. The business cemented its reputation as a startup success story the same month when it was bought for \$300 million in cash by Byju's, the largest ed-tech unicorn in India.

But ultimately, the very material that propelled WhiteHat Jr to such heights came back to haunt it. Some WhiteHat Jr. commercials were judged "misleading" by the Advertising Standard Council of India in October 2020, and they were requested to be removed. The corporation that had prided itself on hiring masses of educated women who weren't represented in India's workforce afterwards admitted to having harmful gaps in its work environment.

Marketing Campaign:

A particular advertisement of WhiteHat Jr. shows parents proudly overlooking a chaotic scene of investors fighting to invest in Chintu's app, coding for which he learned on White Hat Jr.

We see parents already daydreaming of their child receiving funding for an app that he may develop thanks to White Hat Jr. In this day and age, where the emphasis must be placed on the joy of learning, letting children be children, and not being packed with worldly desires of earning money prematurely, we are placing both parents and children in a race to see who will become a coder with the biggest salary, rather than encouraging them to make the world a better place by finding solutions that address issues and enjoying the learning process, just like you would love a sport.

Campaign Analysis:

The parental aspiration that seeps into children and causes them to fantasise about IIT from as early as class nine, which is three years before they would actually give the exam, has fueled a 5000 crore coaching business in a small Rajasthani town named Kota and that contributes merely 10% of the total applications that competitive exams for engineering and medical receive from throughout the country for a few seats.

Of course, the stress, significance, and exaltation of competitive tests will have unsettling side consequences. According to the most recent data obtained by NCB, 28 students in India take their own lives per day due to the pressures of the educational system, which is nothing short of an epidemic.

Similar to how the sale of fairness creams will continue as long as we don't have a fundamental shift in the way we think about getting a job, gaining confidence, or getting married, this type of communication will continue to resonate and work for the intended audience until we start viewing education as an investment opportunity.

McDonalds

About McDonalds:

Richard and Maurice McDonald opened the first McDonald's restaurant in San Bernardino, California, in 1940. Today, McDonald's is an international American fast food enterprise.

McDonald's is a joint venture enterprise run by two Indians in India. McDonald's restaurants in North and East India are owned and operated by Vikram Bakshi's Connaught Plaza Restaurants Private Limited, whereas McDonald's in West and South India is owned and run by Amit Jatia,

M.D. Hardcastle Restaurants Pvt. Ltd.

McDonald's is renowned throughout the world for treating local cultures with great respect. In order to cater to Indian preferences and cultural norms, McDonald's has created a menu specifically for India featuring vegetarian options. India is the only nation in the world where McDonald's does not provide any beef or pig items in keeping with its respect for local culture. To accommodate the unique needs of vegetarians, McDonald's has also redesigned its operations.

About the campaign:

Since June 1979, the American fast food restaurant giant McDonald's has regularly served Happy Meals to children. The food is typically packaged in a red cardboard box with a yellow cheerful face and the McDonald's emblem, along with a little toy or book.

What marketing approach is used for Happy Meals? Why are young people so crucial to the promotion of fast food?

Fast food chains market to children in a variety of ways, one of which is the happy meal promotion. Fast food establishments employ the happy meal marketing approach to entice customers by appealing to their target demographic of children.

Critics claim that the Happy Meal marked the beginning of an advertising campaign aimed at children and unhealthy fast food. To keep kids interested, McDonald's has continued to run a regular stream of new toy promotions, including Marvel and Beanie Babies. To keep parents on board, the meals have been improved to include healthier food selections and more environmentally friendly packaging.

Analysis of the Campaign:

According to academic study, television commercials for McDonald's healthier Happy Meal offers do not help kids choose healthier meal choices; rather, they seem to increase a general predilection for fast food.

Children between the ages of seven and ten did not significantly reduce their calorie intake after viewing a series of commercials for meals where apples and carrots may take the place of french fries. However, the kids who were exposed to Happy Meal advertisements were more likely to exhibit a preference for McDonald's and fast food in general. Without considering the boost that advertisements for fast food brands as a whole provide to the industry, the regulator Ofcom decides whether food companies can advertise to children based only on the nutritional worth of the products.

Influencer Marketing:

About Influencer Marketing:

The 13-year-old boy was rescued from Pitampura, in north-west Delhi, on Friday evening, three days after he left his home for school, but instead travelled to Delhi, to YouTuber Nishay Malhan's home, the Delhi Police said on Saturday. The boy had cycled all the way from Punjab's Patiala to Delhi without telling his family, they added.

The adolescent spent two days and two nights exploring Pitampura and sleeping inside a parked car in the neighbourhood where the YouTuber lives with his family before arriving in Delhi early on Wednesday morning.

He may have travelled to Delhi to meet the YouTuber, according to his family in Punjab, who reported him missing on October 5 to the Anaj Mandi police station in Patiala.

Analysis:

Tweens and preteens can benefit from social media influencers since they share their experiences in well crafted settings, scripted videos, and frequently spontaneous posts. It is vital for kids and young people to be able to critically analyse what they are watching since influencers like celebrities can have a positive or bad impact on their young audiences.

Influencers may have unfavourable consequences on a child's self-esteem, perception of their bodies, and comprehension of "real world." Parents and caregivers can combat negative impacts on children by having honest dialogues with them. This is similar to how we combat harmful influences in the real world (like young children smoking or acting inappropriately). One of the best ways to support kids in the digital world is to have dialogues about what they experience online that foster critical thinking and digital literacy.

Why do companies target children?

For marketers, children today constitute a key demographic. Children have two jobs in the market. They take on the roles of influencers or purchasers. They make purchases not only for themselves but also for their parents. Kids are a target market for marketers because of their enormous purchasing power.

There are some goods that are simply marketed toward children and sold to them. Kids either choose these products on their own or when parents are there to make the purchase. Children may be able to sway parents' purchase decisions for other items that the entire family uses by outlining their preferences.

Since children are the future consumers and can influence their parents' purchasing habits, marketers have been focusing on them both internationally and in India. Additionally, because of trends like smaller families and dual incomes, parents today buy more things for their children.

The goal of marketing to youngsters is to increase their ability to bug. Children's capacity to pester their parents into making purchases they might not otherwise make is known as "pester power." Kids utilise their Pester power to purchase new toys, video games, pick where to eat out, what clothes to buy, where to go on vacation, and other things. Even the purchase of items like a TV, audio system, computer, mobile phone, or car is influenced by children. Additionally, they choose where their parents should go and how they should dress.

Commercialization in Education

In India, the commercialization of education is a relatively recent phenomenon. It results from changes made to the educational system during the previous 20 years. It shows up in successful private schools, public schools, private colleges, and higher education institutions. Millions of families are impacted financially by the commercialization of education. It also alters the way that education is traditionally thought of. The socioeconomic growth of the nation determines how the education system is performing. The attitude toward teaching and learning has also been changed by industrialization and globalisation.

The process of introducing a product to the wider market is known as commercialization. When students' needs come first and less emphasis is placed on the humanities, education becomes more commercialised. As a result, education becomes more business-focused. As a result of commercialization, universities compete to offer affordable, high-quality education. Education's course is set by students and teachers as a result of commercialization of education.

The amount of money spent on education is the fundamental cause of this. A school's quality of education is generally thought to increase with its level of popularity. In India, this mindset is particularly noticeable. In addition, India contends with intense international competition in the field of education. As a result, schools have started charging more in an effort to become more well-known. Due to a lack of funding, the government is unable to stop such malpractices. There is increased pressure on Indian colleges to raise their tuition as a result of the advent of international universities whose only goal is profit-making.

Marketers have gradually but consistently used educational institutions around the nation. Nowadays, advertisements can be seen on book covers, school buses, etc. Marketers are now aware of the effectiveness of the educational setting in promoting their brands and goods. The use of sponsored instructional materials is only one example of how they are utilising this medium.

Sponsoring school-based athletic or cultural events is one way that many marketers promote their goods. They also hold competitions. For instance, Camel has long had drawing contests in schools where they promote its goods.

How has Social Media given more exposure to children?

Children are spending more time online, and the internet has largely replaced television as a source of knowledge and a pastime for young people. Children are being exposed to questionable internet marketing techniques more frequently, and the Internet has supplanted television as the primary platform for advertising.

Researchers have found it challenging to adapt to these developments as marketing to children has migrated to new media platforms. Researchers used to be able to record a few hours of television to get a feel of how advertisers were marketing to kids. However, because websites can be changed in a matter of hours and social networks can discreetly contact young people with commercial offers, monitoring new media is logistically challenging.

What is known about marketing appeals in contemporary media is that they frequently differ qualitatively from conventional commercials. Online ads engage kids actively rather than passively through advergames platforms (i.e., games with branded content) and/or by asking them to serve as brand ambassadors (eg, encouraging children to reach out to friends about a product). Evidence suggests that youngsters have more trouble recognising that they are being sold to in these online contexts, making these practises particularly troubling.

Research has also shown that advertisers who target youngsters in online environments frequently use more aggressive marketing techniques and behave without much control. Although it is illegal for businesses to collect information on children under the age of 13 in the United States, evidence suggests that marketers do so¹⁶. In addition, content analyses of food product websites reveal that many businesses highlight foods that are significantly less healthy for kids.

Misinformation vs Stereotyping vs misfits

Even a reputable media outlet cannot be totally objective. Every media outlet chooses which stories to cover. It is crucial to understand that our news organisations will have readers, and that each story is produced with a specific reader in mind. In contrast to fake news, which is purposefully false, bias is subjective. Biassed sources don't necessarily tell lies; instead, they simply present the information that is consistent with their point of view and leave out important information. By relying solely on evidence in favour of their position, they present a distorted and partial view of the situation.

Some people are concerned that disinformation has turned into "the major moral dilemma of our age" as a result of the rapid spread of "fake news" made possible by technology. Nevertheless, some people believe that disseminating false information is morally acceptable, for instance when it advances their political purpose. When individuals accept misinformation as acceptable, they should be less motivated to act to stop it, less motivated to hold those who disseminate it accountable, and more motivated to spread it themselves.

Ethics vs Profits

The maxim, "Put honour above gain," is frequently used as a quotation. In today's technologically advanced and industrialised world, there isn't a corporation that can be successful with money as its main goal. There isn't a person in this real, cutthroat world who can succeed without having values. It is without a doubt true that we are all racing, hustling, and hovering around money, and everyone wants to win this rat race. However, losing sight of our morals and ethics will not help anyone win this war.

Being unethical is the surest way to lose reputation, credibility, and trust, which are things that neither an individual nor an organisation can afford to lose. People no longer care about things like fame, religion, etc. Today's generation has the view that "ethics always costs, even when profits don't." There are countless ways to make money, but if you have a terrible reputation from the start, it will be impossible to remove the scar and cure the wound. If we consider financial gain to be the primary driving force behind business, then we must not overlook the importance of ethics as the cornerstone of ethical action.

COMPARISON

Data comparison is likely the most popular and simple tool for data analysis. Comparison is used to assess and contrast values between two or more data points, as its name suggests. It provides a comparative study of the same by making a distinction between two occurrences or items.

Negative impact of advertising to children in other countries:

However, many opponents of child-directed advertising contend that the moral standards and values of young children can be significantly impacted by advertisements. Because they lack the cognitive abilities to guard themselves against the alluring and deftly crafted advertising messages, critics worry that youngsters are more vulnerable to the tempting effects of ads than adults. These writers claim that because kids are less able than adults to resist the temptations in advertisements, advertising to kids can lead to materialistic views, family strife, terrible eating habits, and dissatisfaction.

Advertising to children has always sparked intense emotions and diametrically opposed viewpoints. Some proponents of child-targeted advertising hold the view that advertising has little to no detrimental impact on children and that its effects are rarely long-lasting. They contend that kids are discerning consumers who are able to protect themselves from any potential negative impacts of advertising. Others argue that advertising gives kids useful product information so they can learn how to shop responsibly.

Focusing on kids, it has been discovered that accepting "fantasies" like Christmas myths helps kids learn to recognise truth as an adult, albeit they are less likely to accept them beyond age 8. Previous research on children's letters to Santa found that they are "little consumers in training" because they specifically ask for branded products. Analysis of gift requests revealed middle class kids wanted things they could use on their own, usually from Santa, while upper class kids wanted competitive and sporting goods, usually from their parents.

It has also been discovered that demands from children for Christmas are related to the advertisements they watch, as well as requests that are stereotypically gender-specific. A recent study revealed that requests are typically extremely diverse using a quantitative content analysis of French children's letters. Based on the brands and items mentioned, the letters depicted four different types of young consumers: gourmets, educated, brand name droppers, and sweet tooth. While this segmentation has taken place, it has not yet been addressed how values are infused into a child's emerging consumer culture.

Laws of Regulation in the US:

With a long history of doing so, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has worked to safeguard kids from unfair and dishonest marketing techniques. The Commission has so acknowledged the unique characteristics of the young audience. For instance, a statement or image that would probably not fool an adult could fool youngsters. The agency's efforts have been successful in some cases, but not in others. The history of these initiatives is examined in this article. It does so in light of the recent focus on childhood obesity and calls for a ban on kid-targeted advertisements for meals heavy in sugar or fat. The FTC has travelled this path before as explained below.

Section 5 of the FTC Act, which broadly forbids unfair or misleading actions or practises in commerce, gives the Commission its primary authority to control advertising and marketing practices. If there is a representation, omission, or practice that is "likely to deceive the consumer acting reasonably in the circumstances, to the consumer's loss," the Commission "will find deception." This approach has three key components: the act or practice must be likely to deceive the consumer; it must be viewed from the standpoint of the reasonable consumer; and it

must be significant, meaning that it must have the potential to influence the consumer's choice or behaviour and cause harm.

An act or practice is unfair if it results in or is likely to result in significant consumer harm, the harm is not reasonably preventable by consumers, and the harm is not made up for by competition or benefits to consumers. This approach, which the Commission initially set forth in a 1980 letter to Congress and adopted in a 1984 judgement, was later codified as a statutory definition of the Commission's jurisdiction to determine a conduct or practise to be unlawful on the grounds of unfairness.

Comparison between Laws abroad and India.

The cost of advertising is too high in wealthy nations, and laws and regulations regarding advertising to children are well defined. These legislative, regulatory, and policy rules have been in place for a while. India must therefore use these policy regulatory frameworks and guidelines as benchmarks for a virtual review. These methods of policy regulation typically combine state/legal and self-regulatory systems. India, like other nations, has a co-regulatory framework (legal and self-regulatory policy structure) to protect kids from exposure to marketing.

Distinct countries have different policies and procedures regarding advertising guidelines. Advertising directed towards minors is outright prohibited in certain nations, including Quebec, Canada. Italy, Brazil, Ireland, and other countries have banned children from seeing food advertisements. On the grounds of protecting children's health, a law restricting food advertising to minors was passed in Brazil in February 2003. A Public Health Law change was made in France to restrict the marketing of high-fat and high-sugar foods to youngsters. In November 2003, the United Kingdom approved a law banning some food commercials that are directed at children.

India, like other Western-developed nations, has significant legislative regulations protecting minors from ads. In reality, 18.7% of children worldwide live in India, where one third of the population is under the age of 15. This indicates that the 4% yearly growth rate of this market category indicates its great potential. As a result, advertisers have access to a market of 300 million prospective customers and are keeping a careful eye on it.

Both the Consumer Protection Act of 1986 (CPA) and the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act of 1969 (MRTP Act) provide guidelines regarding deceptive advertising to children. Any false or deceptive advertisement is considered an unfair trade practices under each of these laws (UTP). In terms of advertising, UTP refers to any dishonest strategy or deceitful technique used to advance the sale of the goods. The Objectionable Advertisements Act of 1954 also has legislative provisions for the regulation of deceptive advertising.

Any print media advertisements are handled by Young Act. Therefore, encouraging a child to act differently by promoting a hazardous publication that is dreadful in nature and can corrupt them is penalised by up to six months in jail.

The Newborn Food Act of 1992 forbids the promotion of feeding bottles and replacements for infant milk. As a result, this law ensures that feeding these alternatives is neither superior to or on par with breastfeeding. When this law is broken, a fine of up to 5000 rupees and a three-year prison sentence, respectively. The IT legislation deals with punishing any detrimental publication or transmission of any message that is sexually explicit for minors and that in any manner has the potential to degrade young brains.

The Cable TV Networks (Regulation) Act of 1995 addresses child-related advertisements and establishes rules that all television advertisements must not disparage children, contain vulgar language or images, or any other indecency that could endanger children. In addition to all of these laws, the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) and the Information and Broadcasting Ministry of the Indian government set the guidelines for advertising to children.

In addition to regulatory frameworks, each nation has well-established controlling authorities that keep an eye on the overall system and guarantee industry compliance. All industrialised nations, including the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada, have effective control mechanisms for ensuring industry compliance. All marketers and advertisers in the United States are required to abide by the code of conduct's rules, and the Federal Trade Commission may take immediate action against anyone who violates the code.

A regulating authority that monitors all forms of child-targeting advertising exists in India as well. The Advertising Standards Council of India identifies all such commercials that violate the code's rules and urges their immediate deletion. However, there is still worry that India is not properly adhering to the basic principles of advertising rules. Enormous numbers of advertisements that target children are still being generated in large quantities and shown to children, despite the fact that they are unacceptable.

CONCLUSION

The consumer affairs ministry has included 19 provisions specifically for commercials aimed at children in the "Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and necessary due diligence for endorsement of advertisement guidelines, 2022."

The new regulations state that ads will be deemed deceptive if they make any nutritional or health claims or advantages without having been sufficiently and scientifically supported by a recognised body.

If such advertisements "create negative body image" in children or convey the idea that such commodities, products, or services are superior to the natural or conventional foods that children may be consuming, they may be deemed misleading. If they support or promote behaviours that are harmful to children's physical or mental health or wellbeing, or if they overstate what a typical child can achieve with the product being promoted, they will be regarded as misleading advertisements.

Children-targeted commercials shouldn't make claims that using the promoted product will improve intelligence or physical ability or bring about extraordinary recognition without any reliable support or sufficient scientific data. Any commercial that gives away free stuff to get kids to buy things they don't need or encourages irrational consumption should be avoided. Any marketing that preys on kids' receptivity to philanthropic appeals should detail how much their involvement will contribute to any promotions that are tied to charities.

Advertising will be deemed deceptive if it uses promotions that need payment in order to participate and includes a clear call to action directed at or directed at youngsters.

Loopholes that companies are looking for while advertising to kids

The industry self-regulator has warned eight companies (Asda, Kellogg's, KFC, KP Snacks, Lidl, Marks & Spencer, McDonald's, and Pringles) following research in which kid avatars were constructed to replicate children's online interests and behaviour and evaluate the sturdiness of the existing laws.

"This study by the Advertising Standards Authority adds to the mounting evidence that the laws now in place are riddled with more loopholes than a box of Cheerios. The fact that only a few child avatars were able to find roughly 1,000 advertising in a single two-week period demonstrates that neither the existing regulations nor the methods put in place to police them are adequate. A 9 p.m. watershed on all advertisements for foods rich in fat, salt, and sugar must immediately be implemented by the government across all digital media platforms. It's past time for any businesses breaking the law to face actual punishments, including fines."

Authorities in charge of regulating advertising have been accused of failing to shield kids from obnoxious Internet advertising and marketing by food corporations.

The Children's Food Campaign has urged governments to enact legislation to address the gaps that allow commercials that are prohibited from airing on children's television to appear on brands' own kid-friendly websites.

Singling out websites for Cadbury, Swizzels Matlow, Oreo, and other brands, it claimed that the

advertising industry's self-regulation is failing and issued a warning that the internet has turned into a key arena for the fight over children's diets due to evidence that suggests that advertising games can subtly alter behaviour.

Laws that should be bided by platforms or influencers

According to the Union government, standards for social media influencers will soon be released to stop false advertising and deceptive promotions. The action is anticipated to put stronger guidelines and transparency demands on social media influencers who advertise goods or services.

According to a senior source quoted by Business Standard, "the (social media) standards will fall under the provisions of avoiding false and misleading marketing and fake advertisement rules of the Consumer Protection Act."

The Central Consumer Protection Authority also announced measures in June 2022 to stop celebrities from endorsing deceptive marketing and goods.

According to officials, those detected using false reviews, endorsements, or items to persuade people to make purchases or spend money may be prosecuted under the new rule.

Social media influencers will also be held accountable for transgressions under the rule, with fines of up to Rs 10 lakh for a first offence. For repeat offences, this fine might increase to between Rs 20 and Rs 50 lakh. The Consumer Protection Act will apply to these instructions, and they will be handled as such.

Future of advertising towards kids- kind of research that should be carried out

The level of persuasive power of advertisements portraying children alone, children with parents, children with grandparents, and children with both parents and grandparents may vary, setting the stage for future study that might be very fruitful.

It could be worthwhile to pay attention in future studies to categorise product categories in accordance with the persuasive power of children in ads.

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