

**Presence of Children in Advertisements and its impact on Consumers' Purchase  
Behaviour**

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Abstract

Advancement of technology has enabled households to access different media of communications like television, radio, newspapers, magazines, billboards and several online media. It is nearly impossible to escape the advertisements being flooded over all these media. Given this backdrop, this study aims to understand the impact of presence of children in advertisements and its impact on consumers' purchase behaviour through the process of interviewing, transcribing, coding and analysing. It also tries to explore how differently it influences the purchase behaviour of different generations in a family. This study concludes by giving theoretical and managerial implications of the results and future research avenues.

*Keywords:* advertisements, presence of children, purchase behaviour, impact, generation

**Presence of Children in Advertisements and its impact on Consumers' Purchase Behaviour**

Now-a-days many companies or brands are investing heavily in advertising their products or services. With much advertising expenditure wasted in ineffective campaigns (Abraham and Lodish 1990; Lodish et al. 1995), advertisers are concerned with how advertising affects consumers, how it works, in order to formulate more effective advertising strategies. Also a trend to feature children in advertisements meant for kids' to adult products, commodity to non-commodities, and services, is gaining momentum. Many advertisers are exercising child model in the advertisements to attract children and adults (North & Millard, 2003). Impact of advertisements on children is a widely studied topic; also presence of children in advertisements and their impact on children have been researched to an extent. However the study of the presence of children in advertisements and their impact on consumers' behaviour has mostly been in the quantitative domain. Not much focus has been given to qualitative analysis of this phenomenon.

The present study focuses on nuclear families where most purchase decisions are made by the ladies in the family, however their purchase behaviour are found to be influenced by every other member in the family. It also tries to uncover more about impact of presence of children in advertisements on different generations' purchase behaviour in a family and the interplay amongst all those effects. This study examines what all factors contribute towards consumers' purchase behaviour and how many of these factors are influenced by presence of children in advertisements directly or indirectly. Besides this it also tries to capture the general reaction or response of different consumers towards presence of children in advertisements.

Qualitative research is a great tool to analyse consumer behaviour, though immense quantitative studies have been carried out to explore the impact of advertisements on consumers' purchase behaviour. However qualitative studies are yet to unfold the responses of consumers towards presence of children in commercials and their effectiveness. This study tries to analyse consumers' response which were gathered through situational questionnaire through the interviews. All possible measures have been taken to extract unbiased response from the consumers or respondents. The advertisements shown to them were gender neutral so that it evokes a neutral response from the consumers irrespective of their biological roles. While interviews were in progress, the emotions or expressions were noted separately without distracting the respondents.

With proliferation of various advertising tools and techniques advertisers are leaving no stone unturned to entice consumers, no matter when, how and whom. Several ethical issues have been raised in past about using children as a medium to influence children or employing children as endorser of adult products (North E., 2003). Now-a-days several commercials are observed to be roping in children where role of those children seem to be redundant. Nevertheless this redundancy also leaves a mark on consumers.

However if there exists a significant relation between presence of children in advertisements and consumers' purchase behaviour then these huge advertising investments make sense to advertisers. Therefore this study attempts to identify how presence of children in advertisements affects consumers' purchase behaviour. It may be of help to various advertisement designers and managers commissioning them to understand consumers' psyche better which would help them to invest in right place for right products and in right amount.

The study also explores the context in which children are influenced by the advertisements, like animations, colour, and presence of children of their age etc., whether children take a decision to buy or to ask for the advertised products, whether presence of children in advertisements influence parents or grandparents to make a purchase decision, the involvement of children in decision making process in a family after being influenced by advertisements featuring kids of similar age group.

### **Literature Review**

Children are particularly useful as a vehicle to create emotional appeals in commercials (North & Millard, 2003). They are more credible because of their innocence, and on the societal level they can be used to transmit positive values (North & Millard, 2003). It can be expected that a child will identify more easily with a child model depicted in a social situation than with an adult (North & Millard, 2003). If children of both genders and both races (e.g. a black girl and a white boy) are depicted in the same advertisement, the social implications of these kinds of advertisements can be far reaching (North & Millard, 2003).

The opinion leadership of children is increasingly becoming powerful and influencing, parents also recognise the active role of kids in the buying process, and most parents just give in to the tantrums of their children (Malik & Guptha, 2013). Kids also create positive feelings towards brands, connect the user to the brand and are perceived by consumers as more entertaining. Using kids in advertising or for any other type of communication for brand building is likely to positively affect the consumers' brand preference, brand attitude, brand association and purchase intentions (Malik & Guptha, 2013).

Marketers believe that their marketing messages can be conveyed effectively to the target market when children of the right age, gender and race are depicted in the advertisement (North E. , 2003). Child models in advertising are a very popular method that advertisers apply to communicate with parents and other children (North E. , 2003). The major issues are whether television advertising to children is inherently unfair, whether it causes children to make poor product decisions, whether it increases parent child conflict, and whether it results in the undesirable socialisation of children (North E. , 2003).

Results indicate significant increases in the number of advertisements containing children, findings also show the majority of those advertisements to be for “adult-oriented” products (Viser, 2009). Although consumption, marketing and advertising play a key role in the shaping of individual identities, it must be emphasised that the specific forms of consumer culture and notions of childhood itself are embedded in differing contexts (Korsvold, 2012). Working-class black children’s shopping behaviour demonstrates how they spend money in order to cement their position within households by buying practical items for themselves and gifts for family members (Martens, Southerton, & Scott, 2004). Through interviewing the study tries to explore the respondents reaction about presence of children in “adult-oriented” products.

“Marketers are inclined to believe that targeting / featuring kids in ads pays. They opine that kids are increasingly wielding their power in major purchase decision made in the household, so it makes sense to target them. Brand managers echoing the same tune agree that they want to catch these young consumers early and make them loyal to their brands. And on portraying children in commercials, the child provides an emotional platform and the presence of a child communicates the family emotions; a chance to stand out in the clutter of other

advertisements” (Nabi & Raut, 2012). The study has used many brands or products endorsed by kids to extract the exact influence of the role of children in the advertisements.

“Traditionally, women were seen to be the purchasing agents for the family. Nonetheless, increasing participation of women in the workforce has prompted a shift in this role as children are increasingly the “buyers” for the entire family. Even in families where women do not work, children are observed to share this role with their mothers. Children enjoy greater discretion not only in making routine consumption decisions for the family but also in pestering their parents to buy other products desired by them” (Kaur & Singh, 2006). Contemporary researchers express that children constitute a major consumer market, with direct purchasing power for snacks and sweets, and indirect purchase influence while shopping for big-ticket items (Halan, 2002; Singh, 1998). Therefore the study has taken into account the purchase behaviour of the housewives and how they are influenced by advertisements of all the food items endorsed by children.

“Over a number of years in the past, several models and constructs have been discussed in the marketing and advertising literature, each with the objective of trying to understand the processes used by consumers to make brand or product judgments when they are exposed to advertisements” (Muehling et al., 1993). There is great concern about children as viewers of advertisements primarily because young children are exposed to thousands of commercials each year in India (George, 2003). Hence it is important to analyse and understand the impacts of the commercials on children and how their purchase behaviour is influenced by the advertisements.

### **Research Design and Methodology**

This study covered a wide range of literature which was available about the topic “presence of children in advertisements and their impacts”. The study employed in-depth interviews one-on-one as a means to collect data from five families which included husband, wife, and children and in some cases grandparents too. Each interview lasted about thirty to forty five minutes each till all the required information was extracted.

The interviewees are the PGPX students' families who stay on campus of Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad, so were selected on the basis of convenience and snowball sampling so as to extract as much information available. The interview happened during evening time, when the family members are relaxed; children were playing, in the month of May, 2013 at Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad. The author used an interview schedule for each respondent. Each interviewee was given enough time to think and answer the queries in a casual environment, so that there is no amount of bias or stress in answering the questions. The responses were collected from all members on one-on-one manner. Same queries were asked in different manner to extract the exact information and emotion. They were asked to reflect back while answering the queries.

The language used was English because the interviewees were very much comfortable in that language, moreover they themselves responded in English to introduce themselves, so the same language was used all through the conversation. Even the kids were so fluent and comfortable to interact in English.

Questionnaire was decided thoroughly with much care to be effective enough to explore all nuances of emotions or to evoke true responses. Interviewees were thoroughly observed while



being interviewed and all the visible emotions and expressions were noted down. The interview proceedings were recorded for future reference and analysis.

The recordings were carefully listened to after each interview and transcribed word by word including all intermediary responses like pauses, laughter etc. The transcripts and recordings were then analysed and reviewed, the expressions in the transcriptions were matched with the noted expressions of on-going interviews to rule out any mismatch of data. A repository of all transcripts and recordings was created so as facilitate some re-checking or for the same to be referred to in future.

The questionnaire were constructed to particularly measure how different/similar are the opinions of elderly members, young couples and children in a family on presence of children on advertisements, also to know whether they appreciate the advertisements featuring children or they like the products/services being advertised, how their decision making processes are facilitated and how and why they alter their purchase decision etc. Quotes from the interviews have been referred in the following sections by the coded names of the interviewees.

**Design Concept.** Conceptually, the study was designed to explore basic patterns of a phenomenon of relevance in consumers. Primarily, most of the research that was previously done in this area had confined itself to quantitative models and not focused to presence of children in advertisements. Given this background, this study makes an attempt to unearth the nuances from reality itself thereby constituting an exploratory methodology. This design draws heavily from the postmodernist thought process which can be described as an intentional rejection of previously dominant modernist approaches associated with the scientific mentality of objectivity and progress and hence gets often associated with difference, plurality and

scepticism. According to Rosenau, what is interrogated by post-modernism is not the content of social science theories, but the very epistemological foundations of theory and truth from the modernist paradigm. Most of the concepts have therefore been explained through primary data as secondary data did not really give me the contextual framework under which a certain theory might have been evolved. Since the possibility of prolonged engagement with the participants was not possible, it was even more relevant for us to comprehend the context under which this study was being conducted. This context was understood through prior preparation before interviews.

**Participants.** Research participants constituted the sources of information for this qualitative study. Five families at different stages of family life cycle and of different size formed the sample for this study. This was strongly motivated through in review of literature which suggested deviations in certain age groups.

**Sampling Strategy.** These subjects were accessed based on the convenience of the author considering factors like time constraints; and judgment since they needed to fit into the requirements of being able to understand advertisements, to afford the products they wish to buy etc. Prior consent from participants was obtained in the disclosure of names and if some participant was not happy with his name being included it was represented as confidential. Their homes were preferred to be the site location for interaction so that they are in their natural surroundings and I might get clues about any live interaction with their family members.

**Research Methodology.** The grounded theory approach, which operates against the traditional social science research, was employed, though the sample size was small to warrant for an exact grounded theory approach. No theoretical framework was applied and in-fact

the initial step was data collection with the design concept being primarily exploratory. The research started with exploring and considering the basic experiences of people in order to derive certain concepts from it.

**Research Procedures.** As per the outline of a grounded theory, the research included certain concepts being developed and applied through open coding. Axial and selective coding was also gradually employed in order to enhance the themes emerging out of the data. Convenient sampling was used to select the data set for generating, collecting, preparing and analysing data. Snowball sampling was also used in addition. Active Interviewing was incorporated as a part of the entire process of collecting data. A minimal focus on leading questions was given in order to create a conducive environment for the interviewee to lead the interviewer. Analysis and development of theory happened simultaneously. The interviews were semi-structured & conversational, however certain broad guidelines were discussed based on what was extracted from the literature review. The goal was to explicate how meanings, linkages and horizons are constituted both in relation to and within the interview environment. After every interview, the findings were analysed to aid further understanding while taking other interviews.

### **Quality Control**

It was imperative that one maintained adequate quality control to ensure that the concluded piece of study was in line with the conceived or supposed study. This brought in the cardinal challenge of maintaining Reliability, Validity, Transferability, Trustworthiness and Dependability, augmenting the growing and pre-existing ethical concerns. It was hence of utmost

importance that the design concept, methodology, data collection and analysis were in alignment with the quality control measures being adopted.

The following section discusses activities that made it more likely that credible findings and interpretations were produced, preliminary findings were validated against data, inquiry processes were confirmed, and working hypotheses were refined.

**Reliability.** Each question was asked several times in different manner so as to gauge the reliability of the responses because it is difficult to consciously think and modify answers every time even if it happens by chance once or twice.

**Validity.** Information from literature review was compared against the interview results to measure the validity of the results. Successive interviews validated and cross checked the data collected from the previous interviews. In case of any confusion or ambiguity, the interviewees were requested to clarify or elaborate on the answers that they had given.

**Trustworthiness.** Each participant was made relaxed by initial casual chitchatting. They were assured of anonymity to remove any kind of fear that they might have to talk openly about some products or brands.

**Honesty.** In the process of contributing data, honesty in informants was ensured by giving each approached person the opportunity to refuse to participate in the project. This was done to confirm that the data collection sessions involved genuine participants who were prepared to offer data at their own free will. Participants were put at ease and made comfortable, with the researcher aiming to establish a rapport in the opening moments and indicating that

there were no right or wrong answers to the questions and that utmost care would be taken to ensure confidentiality if required.

**Iterative Questioning.** There were also specific tactics that were incorporated to unravel deliberate lies. Probing was a constant feature where attempts were made to elicit detailed data through iterative questioning in which each of us returned to matters previously raised. I extracted related data through rephrased questions. In cases where contradictions emerged, I decided to discard the suspected data.

**Peer Scrutiny.** After the coding was completed, a few of the coding patterns and transcripts were discussed and reviewed by a few students from the FPM programme at IIM Ahmedabad. This was primarily done since closeness to the project could have inhibited our ability to view it with real detachment. A draft of the findings was shown to a student from the FPM to check whether all the patterns had been interpreted in the best possible manner.

**Member Checks.** These were mostly done either “on the spot” at the end of the data collection dialogues or some of the informants were also sent copies of the transcripts to ensure appropriate interpretations and that their words actually matched what they intended to say.

**Referential Adequacy.** It was ensured through our transcripts, clearly earmarked portions and audio tape recordings that were used exhaustively to examine and compare the critiques developed by all four different investigators.

**Audit Trails.** Audit logs consisting of audiotapes, interview transcripts, summaries, condensed notes would provide a chronological record serving as a documentary evidence of the sequence of activities.

### **Analysis**

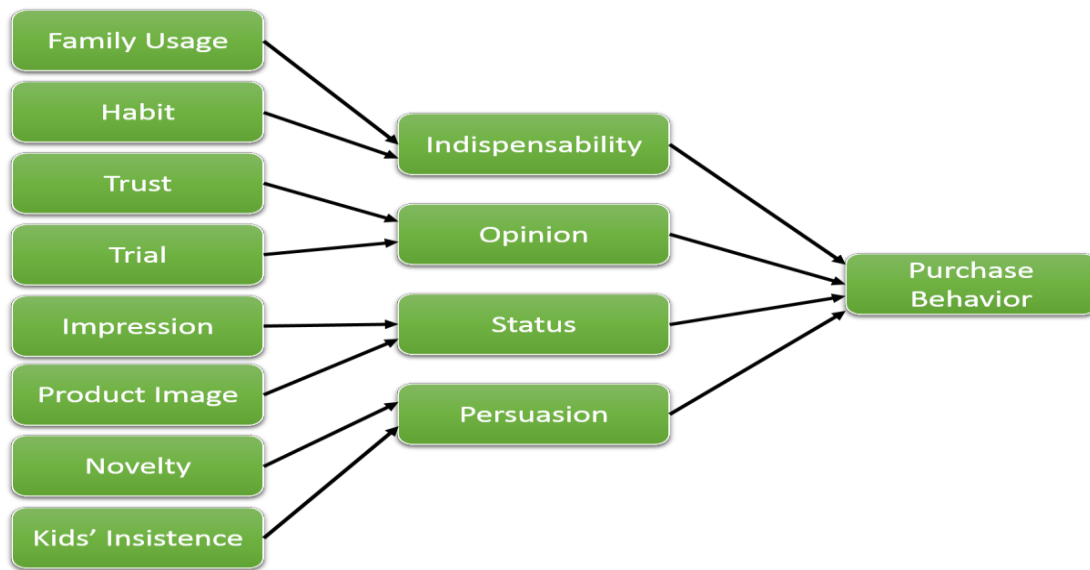
A conceptual map was developed after the analysis of information collected through the research methods. Information collected from literature review of the papers available on related topics was also used for supporting the developed themes. Interviews with five nuclear families and observation alongside with the support of literature survey form the basis of the study. Developed conceptual map is shown in the section below.

The emotions and expression captured during the interview can be further studied to deliver some interesting results. For example the attention level witnessed in case of children while watching advertisements where children of their age have featured is remarkably different from their parents. The power to remember and recall a particular advertisement is much more in case of children than in case of their parents. Even if children do not have purchasing power they get things purchased not only by their parents but also by other people they come across like tutors, auto drivers taking them to school or security guards in their apartments etc.

The interviews of the kids were facilitated by their parents too by asking them same questions in different manners just to make those interesting and to make the kids more comfortable. However care has been taken to make those kids fearless to answer certain queries. Advertisements ranging from commodity products to durables, those issued by government or non-government organisations in public interests were discussed in detail with parents. Pre and post the advertisements reactions and activities by the parents and kids were also enquired to measure the exact impact of the commercials. Respondents' queries were also cordially entertained so that they can easily engage in a friendly discussion with the interviewer. All the responses were carefully listened to, made a note of and properly recorded with

due diligence. The recordings have been carefully listened to afterwards and analysed with the intent behind every response. The responses of the interviewee were matched and compared against each other through proper and standard coding method to reach a tentative conclusion. The entire analysis is represented as a conceptual map below.

**Conceptual Map**



**Discussion**

This section describes how the themes in the conceptual map emerged from the study. As mentioned earlier in the literature review, the main areas of study related to consumer purchase behaviour, how consumer purchase decision is influenced directly or indirectly by presence of children in advertisements. All the aspects leading to a purchase decision have been thoroughly studied; how presence of children in commercials factors in amongst all those deciding factors and finally how a family purchase is influenced by kids in the family who do not have purchasing power but influencing power

### **General Findings**

#### **Finding 1.** Demonstrative advertisements by children are more effective

While conducting the interview the respondents were initially asked to recall any advertisements, most of them were able to recall, then they were asked to recall the advertisements for the products which they were presently using, most of them were able to recall. The kids were asked to recall the commercials of the chocolates and biscuits they consume and they smartly recalled with vivid imagery. During this initial enquiry about remembering and recalling exercise it was found that informational advertisements are more impactful than general run of the mill commercials. Also demonstrative advertisements where usage of the product or consumption pattern of the item is described usually by children were found to be very effective. For example even parents and kids both consume OREO biscuits the same way in the recent OREO commercial, where two kids are demonstrating how to twist, turn and dunk the biscuit in a playful manner. Both the advertisement and the product seemed to have gained popularity because of the innovative ways of consuming a very casual food item as simple as biscuits.

*“The Oreo biscuit ad no... I tried eating the same way they showed in that ad... and I liked that... so some influence is there...”*

#### **Finding 2.** Informational advertisements have a strong influence on purchase decision

Most of the parents especially mothers when asked how they purchase food items for their children, replied that informational advertisements have a strong influence. They told that even if a product is completely new in market but in the advertisements it is shown that it has some unique ingredient/s which is/are healthy or nutritional then we make it a point to buy that



even if it does not taste good. The mothers carefully go through all the ingredients while buying any health drink or any consumable items just to crosscheck if the advertisements are imparting true information.

*“We enjoy watching the ads because they are so innovative... so creative... like sometimes ads of vegetable oil and all are informational... then we may think of buying those products..yeah... then we buy... may think of buying...Yeah it does matter...Sometimes they mention nutritional values... suppose for Bournvita they say it has DHA (Docosahexaenoic acid) and DHA is very important for child's development... so I buy it...”*

**Finding 3.** Presence of children in advertisements has a resounding positive impact on the purchase behaviour of the elder generation as compared to the younger generation

While interviewing the nuclear families an interesting result surfaced which depicts that the grand parents who stay away from their grandchildren miss them a lot because of which they pay a lot of attention to commercials in which children are featured and in turn they tend to purchase a lot those products for their grandchildren; they believe as these products are endorsed by kids of the age of their grandchildren, their grandchildren will eventually like these products.

*“My mom is there in Delhi and she is influenced more than me... may be when she misses her grandchildren... she watches an ad... and it looks interesting to her... she will go and buy it... you are talking about children rite... yeah that's because she misses her grandchildren... I don't know... if otherwise she would have done that...”*

**Finding 4.** Presence of children in advertisements issued in public interest is very effective and essential

During the interview the parents themselves started elaborating a few advertisements in detail which are issued by Government of India in public interest where a lot of children are

featured. For example the recent advertisement for child abuse which in turn comprises a nuclear family like father, mother and son. People pay a lot of attention to these advertisements and they feel presence of children in these commercials particularly sends the message very effectively to the audience.

*“Yeah kids they influence... I saw one ad on YouTube... somebody posted... child abuse ad... the kid was asked to play dumsharaaj... so those types of advertisements are really catchy... very effective... so I also saw that ad on FB(Facebook) too... and after that I asked my kids also... that ad reinforced the message. Actually “Sikhshya Abhiyaan” that ad is there no... that girl comes... we buy those products so that we contribute to their education... all these kind of group ads are really very powerful...”*

**Finding 5.** Any social message or charity purposed commercials work well if they manage to rope in children

Respondents said that they usually prefer to buy products through which they can somehow contribute to the society. They get persuaded by the commercials for some products where it is shown that on every purchase you get to contribute some amount to fund education to some underprivileged kids. The emotion gets stronger because the children featuring in those advertisements look too innocent to be ignored.

*“Actually Sikhshya that ad is there no... that girl comes... we buy those products so that we contribute to their education... all these kind of group ads...PnG products... so that ad particularly affected... the girl in the ad... that is also a commercial which affects us..yeah I do sometimes... for charity purpose... I do...”*

**Finding 6.** Presence of children in advertisements having adult plots are strongly disliked

Many parents raised their concerns about unnecessarily dragging in children to commercials having some adult plots, intimate moments between couples or even romantic

scenes. They expressed negative views regarding those commercials because their children raise a lot of questions about the proceedings which in turn makes them skip all these commercials. These parents are of the opinion that children should only endorse kids' brands or products which are to be used or consumed by children.

*“We like to see kids in ads... but it is not because of them we are buying those brands... it...we like to see kids... in the ads... but also how they are presenting it...yeah...somehow personally I did not like one ad... where husband and wife they are romancing...yeah I think that is Parachute body lotion...yes yes... those kinds of ads I do not like... because if you watch with kids... they will ask what is this... what is that... so it does not look good...yeah... kids should be portrayed in their natural selves... innocent and all...kids should be kiddish... not...sometimes ads like comparing mummies “ye tumhare mummy ne banaya... mere mummy ne nahin banayaa”... these types... these sends a wrong message...hmm... actually if they are featuring kids... then they should add proper language... every aspect should be taken care of... because these kids... they love to see kids in those ads... and they very much follow those kids... so the environment, the plots should be proper...the innocence of kids should be kept intact.. yeah that thing should be highlighted...”*

### **Emergence of Themes**

The interviews were recorded for full length and transcribed for the whole length. The entire transcription was coded in a following a standard format. Then the codes were analysed thoroughly to give rise to several themes, then related themes were clubbed together to build some larger themes which led to the ultimate objective which is purchase behaviour or purchase decision.

**Family Usage.** The lady respondents, all of them are married and staying away from their home have started making their kids use the same products which they themselves have seen being used in their own families since childhood. The kind of attachment with those products is

hard to change even with the persuasive commercials. So there is a product usage flow from generation to generations.

*“Johnson... all Johnson n Johnson, we have been using that for a very long time... No... it's not because of the advertisement... because it is popular... I have been using it for a long time; I have seen people with kids using this. Also in my family they have been using it.”*

**Habit.** In their daily lives a lot of purchases take place for the products which are hard to do away with. No other products can replace those because they just cannot do without taste or feel of these products. From the time they wake up in the morning till the time they go to bed they want or in some cases they demand these products just because they are simply habituated to use these products.

*“Dermicool... thanda waala powder... I do not know... maybe it is supposed to be only a soap... not more than that... for me lifebuoy is a... hand wash... to be kept in a washroom... not a premium product... if we keep it on dressing table ... how would it look?... it is meant for bathroom... Dermicool looks cool...see all the powders are same I feel... because it is an old product... I have been using it since my school days... and this powder and all I buy for my kids only because in summers and all they play... they sweat a lot...”*

**Trust.** Respondents are the opinion that some brands are trusted more than other brands, may be because of family influence, their own experience or may be popularity of those brands. So no amount of advertisements by the competitor brands can dilute the trust for those brands.

*“I would rely on other people's opinion... I would talk to them... and then may be....”*

**Trial.** Some informational commercials are found to trigger trials. Especially in health drinks categories mothers are found to be alert to any new products with new nutritional contents. Sometimes trial of products is a result of just to taste and feel how the new products are about which these interviewees came to know about from commercials.

*“If the product is new, we will try, once we will try...first time we will try... that is it..yeah that is true. Exactly...first time we will try... then we will continue...”*

**Impression.** Respondents' own impression or own mental image about products which are partially the results the positioning of the brands, leads to the final purchase decisions. Even if some products have evolved with new product lines and packaging still those are not able to influence these consumers for the final purchase.

*“Dermicool... thanda waala powder...I do not know... maybe it is supposed to be a soap... not more than that...for me lifebuoy is a... hand wash... to be kept in a washroom... not a premium product... if we keep it on dressing table ... how would it look?... it is meant for bathroom...Dermicool looks cool...”*

**Product Image.** How the product looks like, feels like in some case how the name of the product sounds like is an important factor whether to purchase the same or not. Therefore even if the advertisements are catchy or cute because of presence of children it is immaterial.

*“Dermicool... thanda waala powder...I do not know... maybe it is supposed to be a soap... not more than that...for me lifebuoy is a... hand wash... to be kept in a washroom...not a premium product...if we keep it on dressing table ... how would it look?... it is meant for bathroom...Dermicool looks cool...”*

**Novelty.** Any new concept or new product seemed to have stimulated consumers' mentality to give it a thought. Novelty factor in any product drives trial i.e. novelty persuades consumers to try out products. On the contrary the responses indicated that it does not really matter whether the commercial is renewed or not if the underlying product is the same old product.

*“If the product is new, we will try, once we will try...first time we will try... that is it...yeah that is true. Exactly...first time we will try...then we will continue...yeah if it's a new*

*advertisement that I have not seen it before.... got a call... yeah if it's a new ad and a bit catchy, then may be.. she nodded in negative... so any new ad that is catchy. You will pay attention...if we want to buy something... we will buy... it does not matter whether the ad is good or not... like Pepsi... every year they come up with some new ads. But we know the product is the same... it does not change... so it does not matter... we know the product is not good...the ads keep changing... so it does not matter... ”*

**Insistence by Kids.** Parents are unable to set aside the insistence of their own kids to buy particular items irrespective the fact that they have ever used the products or not. In many case if the product is consumable items by kids and comparatively cheaper parents give in to kids' insistence. The parents are of the opinion that these kids are largely influenced by the kids of their age who are endorsing these items.

*“Nestea ad... Kangaroo... full...I liked full ad...Oreo biscuits... ya...I liked it when I saw it first... it came in my dream..I also saw Kangaroo in my dream...”*

*“It definitely influences them... pointing to her children... they get to see the ads... they get after me and then I am forced to buy the products... that is a different story... you know there are a few items like... food items and all... yaa... chocolate and other items with which you get something for free... you know the other day... some few months back... she told me there is some shampoo which I had never used but along with that shampoo they gave away some Barbie stuff....purchased that...”*

**Indispensability.** A product is found to become indispensable because of its usage in families, generation after generation or it is a habit of particular individuals.

*“Kinds of products... you generally do not change your mind... once decided means decided...like toothpaste... I prefer Colgate... my husband uses Meshwak... so if Meshwak is over... I give him Colgate... he really goes mad... why did you not buy Meshwak... like that...No... it's not because of the advertisement... because it is popular... I have been using it*

*for a long time, I have seen people with kids using this. Also in my family they have been using it."*

**Opinion.** More than commercials opinion of friends, peers and neighbours were perceived to be trusted more for purchasing products. Trials of new products are often found to be the results of influence of other peoples' opinion about the particular products. Children's presence in commercials is rarely the opinion makers.

*"I would rely on other people's opinion... I would talk to them... and then may be.... what comes to my mind when I see children in advertisements...in general... those are just cute"*

**Status.** The thought of status after owning a particular product is identified as one of the key decider of any purchase. The respondents seemed to carry a particular image about some brands or products which are difficult to change by any amount of encouraging commercials.

*"Did you like this Lifebuoy ad? Because it shows that it keeps cool and all..."*

*"I do not know... maybe it is supposed to be a soap... not more than that...for me lifebuoy is a... hand wash... to be kept in a washroom...not a premium product...if we keep it on dressing table ... how would it look?... it is meant for bathroom..."*

**Persuasion.** Persuasive power of children is undeniable. Children are found to be largely influenced by children of their age. They often demand the items in the commercials which are being endorsed by kids of their age. Children are also found to be very attentive to advertisements, they remember all nuances; what comes free with what and they successfully recall it at the time of purchase by their parents.

*"You do not buy until your kids insist..that is true...and obviously kids will do that...yeah they will ask what is this chocolate... cream. I want this pink biscuits etc...like my son is very observant... he keeps things in mind... he gets attracted to any ad... then he insists I want that ... I want that...just because of the ads he has seen..."*

*“So you are saying that these ads they influence children more than you... yaa...”*

**Purchase Decision.** Quality is found to be of supreme importance behind any purchase. Advertisements are just one time influencers, the continued purchase of products are often driven by quality of the already experienced or purchased products.

*“Like Pepsi... every year they come up with some new ads. But we know the product is the same... it does not change... so it does not matter... we know the product is not good...the ads keep changing... so it does not matter...yeah... we don't watch TV...actually influence would be there... but it is like first time purchase... second time... umm... it is the quality of the product that matters...”*

The main themes that emerged from the transcription of interviews, observations and literature were family usage, habit, trust, trial, impression, product image, novelty, and insistence by kids. The related themes were clubbed together to form indispensability, opinion, status and persuasion as the major themes. These four themes can again be directed to “Purchase Behaviour” how the consumer/buyer makes a decision to buy goods. From the analysis it is clear the purchase decision is a result of the interrelation amongst all major forces preceding the same. Purchase behaviour as shown in the conceptual map is influenced by the opinions of other friends or opinion leaders. Moreover, the purchase decision is also a result of persuasion by their own kids, indispensability of the items; may be because of habit or long usage and also sometimes the status symbol attached to a particular brand.

## **Results**

After careful review and discussion of the interviews this study yields some critical results. Findings of this study describe how family purchases are influenced directly or indirectly by presence of children in advertisements. Family purchases, which were found to be mainly



done by housewives, are primarily results of indispensability of the products, opinion of trusted neighbours about products, status symbol of the products and persuasion by their own children. Parents raised concern about kids being roped in the advertisements having adult scenes or themes. They are of the view that the innocence of the kids should be kept intact at any cost. At the same time people are of the opinion that the role of children are indispensable in the advertisements issued in public interest or the advertisements imparting some social messages or the advertisements meant to evoke public response for some good cause. Respondents opined that even if advertisements featuring children have huge influence on kids who insist on buying particular items and parents ultimately purchase those products provided those are comparatively cheaper. Kids' insistence is actually for the free toys, gifts or stickers available with any product rather than the product itself. People prefer to watch advertisements featuring kids irrespective of whether they like or dislike the products or services; they find these commercials cute and entertaining. However when it comes to purchase people are quality conscious, advertisements drive the first purchase but not the continued purchase which is only a result of product quality. Recommendation by peers at the time of purchase also works well in in favour of the recommended products. People tend to buy products as a result of which they can contribute to improve some underprivileged lives, and this tendency is often a result of influence of children featuring in those advertisements who seem to be credible and innocent. Kids demonstrating innovative ways to consume certain items persuade both kids and adults to follow them in practice. Elder generations like grandparents who are staying away from grandchildren pay a lot of attention to kids endorsing certain items in commercials because they miss their grandchildren and they ultimately purchase those products and send those to their grandchildren. The ultimate purchase decision might not be influenced by presence of children in

advertisements, all the time but sometime it is. Every research come with some limitations and this study has its share of limitations too which have been elaborated in the following section. This piece of study is an eye opener and has a lot of scope for future research.

### **Limitations**

Though the samples of families are randomly selected, for the current study the variety is limited to families with kids only, whereas study of families without kids or families who are staying away from kids or even unmarried couples may yield different results. All the families interviewed for this study are nuclear families of young couples, almost 30-35 yrs. range, may be a diversified age range could have contributed differently.

The sample of respondents was selected through convenience and snowball sampling. A thorough study on the same topic can be carried out with random sampling to verify the results which will help in generalisation of the findings.

The considered medium of advertisement is only television for this piece of study. However the respondents are likely to be influenced by several medium of communication. Therefore the effectiveness of the commercials through various other mediums ideally should have been warded off to get the actual results.

This study reporting children's influence across product categories have especially focused on products directly consumed by children or families. Research in this context actually describes the process of decision making undergone by the families at the time of making purchases. The interviews can be conducted to collect similar data for range of products and services starting from consumer durables, food items and different services.

### **Direction for Future Research**

The primary objective of this study was to examine the impact of children in advertisements on the purchase behaviour of consumers. The results strongly support the value of further work on this topic. In particular, the role and influencing power of children in commercials on the purchase decision of older generation will be an important research.

Advertisements featuring only children, children with parents, children with grandparents and children with both parents and grandparents might be having different level of persuasive power which may lay foundation for great research in future.

To classify product categories as per the influential power of children in the commercials can be worth paying attention in future research.

It would be useful to study detailed impact of children in advertisements on people belonging to different economic status, different genders or different stages of life.

The sample size used for this study was very small. Moreover that was selected by convenience sampling, so to avoid any kind of sampling error or to remove any local effect similar studies can be carried out in future with bigger samples and through better sampling techniques. Samples should be selected carefully to cater to diversity like married couple, unmarried couple, joint families, nuclear families etc.. Future studies may look for exploring the degree of influence of children in commercials in purchase decision for range of products and services.

### **Conclusion**

This study reports that consumers' purchase behaviour is a dynamic process which is influenced by many factors like opinions, recommendations of trusted people around, status symbols, cognitive impression about a brand and persuasive power of advertisements, children etc. Different generations get influenced differently by commercials, their need to purchase new products is different, and also the process followed to make purchase decisions is different.

This study on understanding the impacts of presence of children in commercials on consumers' purchase behaviour was conducted using qualitative research methods like interviews along with a survey of existing literature related to the topic. Collected data were analysed and a conceptual map was developed depicting the main themes that emerge from the study. Few suggestions regarding the direction for future research on similar topics are provided based on the research.

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