



A STUDY ON THE DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS MEDIATION ON CHILDREN'S UNDERSTANDING OF TELEVISION ADVERTISEMENTS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the parental perceptions related to the demographic factors mediation on children's understanding of television advertisements in India. Parent's age, type of family structure, parent's education, parent's employment status, family income, child's age group, child's gender, and number of siblings were included as demographic factors in the study. A survey had been conducted on 3600 parents from 6 selected cities with the aid of structured questionnaire to find their children's understanding of television advertisements. Children age group was 7 to 11 years. ANOVA statistical technique was applied to find the relationship between the demographic factors and children's understanding of television advertising. Using the children's understanding about television advertisements reported by the parents as the dependent variable, the possible relationships with diverse demographic variables of the families were investigated. Except type of family structure and child's gender all other demographic variables included in the study parent's age, mother's education, father's education, parent's employment status, family income, child age group, and number of siblings were shown significant differences on children's understanding about televisions advertisements. The results of the study suggest the need to develop consumer segmentation profiles based on the diverse demographic factors which helps the marketers in designing effective marketing communications targeted towards children.

Keywords: *Understanding of television advertisements, Demographic factors mediation, Marketing communications, Consumer segmentation.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Consumer behavior is a process associated with diverse cultural, social, personal, psychological, and behavioral factors. Social factors refer to the forces that other people exert and which affect consumers purchase behavior. Social factors are reference groups, membership groups, peers, family, social role and status (Belk, 1988). Cultural factors are culture and societal environment, sub cultures, social classes and societal trends. Personal factors are age, purchasing power and revenue, lifestyle, personality and self-concept which are unique to a person (Bloch et al., 2003). Psychological factors are motivation, perception, learning, belief, attitudes and personality. Psychological factors are internal to an individual (DeBono, 2000). Behavioral factors are brand loyalty, the extent of usage, usage situation and benefits desired.



Understanding the factors that influence the consumer behavior will help the advertisers to plan and enhance the effect of advertisements towards the consumers. Instead of simple stimulus-response perspectives, it is important to gain insight into the different antecedents of children's exposure to different media to understand the media effects on children (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2000). Demographic variables play an important role in shaping the consumer behavior. Growing number of exclusive kids channels in India indicating the enhanced marketing communication efforts targeted towards children. Marketers are giving importance to the children in family purchase decision making product categories related to the children as well as family like automobiles, televisions etc.,.

Present paper provides insights about how the demographic factors parent's age, type of family structure, parent's education, parent's occupation, family income, age of child, gender of child, and number of siblings mediate the children's understanding about television advertisements. Results of the study will help the marketers for effective segmentation of the products based on the demographic profiles pertinent to children.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Rossiter (1979) stated television advertisements have three kinds of effects on children namely cognitive, affective and behavioral effects. Cognitive effects deal with the nature and the intent of television advertisements to create awareness of the product, providing information about product features, price, and availability to the viewers. Affective effects compare the product with the competitor's products and creating belief that the product advertised is the best. Behavioral effects make the viewers try and buy the product. O'Donohoe, S. and Tynan, C. (1998) referred advertising literacy means one's ability to read and understand a text such as advertising.

Young (1990) indicated that children's understanding of advertising is dependent on their understanding of the fact that there is a source deliberately creating television advertisements, and they should be aware that this advertising source trying to persuade its audience to purchase. Kapoor & Verma (2005) conducted research with a sample size of 500 parents and 500 children from Delhi to find the children understanding of television commercials. Age group of 207 child respondents belonged to 6-12 years. This study revealed children aged six also able to find the difference between the television programs and advertisements apart from understanding the purpose of television advertisements.

Bartholomew and O'Donohoe (2003) in a qualitative study which sought a child's eye view of advertising experiences using photo diaries, individual interviews and small friendship group discussions among 10-12 years old. Since the application of Piaget's theory of advertising in the studies of children understanding of television advertising, more attention is needed to adopt theories like Erikson (1968) to include social and cultural issues into the studies. It is suggested to study the children literacy in three aspects. First one ad mastery consists of children understanding of advertisers objectives, adopting styles through advertisements, and imitating the acts shown in the advertisements. Second aspect exercised control over advertisement influence through avoidance of specific advertisements. Third aspect is children ability to critically evaluate the advertisements.

Gunter and McAleer (1997) indicated that children choose the advertisements based on perceptual cues like the short length of an advertisement, its colors, the speed of action, adult voice-overs, and the presence of a jingle



rather than understanding. These cues help the children to recognize the advertisements by catching their attention. They also stated the following abilities necessary for children to understand the advertisements: 1) Distinguish advertisements as separate from programmes 2) Recognize a sponsor as the source of the commercial message 3) Perceive the idea of an intended audience for the message 4) Understand the symbolic nature of products, character and contextual representation in commercials 5) Discriminate by example between product as advertised and products as experienced.

Some researchers (Donohue et al., 1980; Macklin, 1987; Harvey & Blades, 2002) followed non verbal approaches like picture identification to study the young children understanding about television advertisements. It is found in many researches (Blatt et al., 1972; Butter et al., 1981; Gaines & Esserman, 1981; Levin et al., 1982; Stutts et al., 1981); children in the young age group between 3 to 8 years were able to distinguish television commercials and programs.

Randrup and Lac (2000) investigated how children process and understand the television commercials and found that, children watch commercials mainly for entertainment and they react to peripheral cues like jingles, tunes and slogans. They concluded that though young children can remember the peripheral cues, increased exposure to the same advertisement will help them to recognize the central message.

Lawlor & Prothero (2003) conducted exploratory study by conducting group discussions with children aged eight and nine with a sample size of twenty six to explore children's understanding of advertising intent. The key findings are children are able to distinguish between advertisements and television programmes with hints like relative length, the name of the programme, list of credits, a familiarity with the programmes, and the use of different people and characters in each. They also know about the commercial nature of advertising intent.

Joseph & Ahmad (2015) in their research found that there is a positive relation between the parents influence on children and understanding of television advertisements by the children.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A survey had been conducted on parents from 6 selected cities with the aid of structured questionnaire with a sample size of 3600 to find the children's understanding about television advertisements. Children age group was 7 to 11 years. From each city total of ten schools were selected through convenience sampling. Internal consistency of the constructs were measured through the Cronbach's alpha value and found acceptable with a value greater than 0.7. ANOVA statistical technique was applied to find the relationship between the demographic factors and children's understanding about television advertisements. Using the children's understanding about television advertisements reported by the parents as the dependent variable, the possible relationships with diverse demographic variables of the families were investigated.

Total sample size = 6 (cities) X 10 (Number of schools) X 5 (Number of classes) X 12 (Parent's of the students)
= 3600 parents

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

Out of 3600 distributed questionnaires, 3108 questionnaires were found to be fully filled, and the rest 492 questionnaires were discarded due to incomplete information. Demographic profile of parents and children is shown in Table 1.



Table 1: Demographic profile of parents and children

Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
Parent's age	26-32 years	824	26.52
	33-39 years	1495	48.10
	40 years or more	789	25.38
Type of family structure	Nuclear family	2241	72.10
	Joint family	867	27.90
Education – Mother	SSC/Intermediate	761	24.48
	Graduate	1722	55.41
	Post Graduate	625	20.11
Education – Father	SSC/Intermediate	584	18.78
	Graduate	1212	39.00
	Post Graduate	1312	42.22
Parent's employment status	Both employed	1371	44.12
	Only father employed	1737	55.88
Total family monthly income	Less than Rs.20,000	613	19.73
	Rs.20,001 to 40,000	1682	54.13
	Rs. 40,001 or higher	813	26.14
Child age group	7-9 years	1884	60.63
	10-11 years	1224	39.37
Child's gender	Boy	1682	54.13
	Girl	1426	45.87
Number of siblings	Single child	1340	43.12
	With siblings	1768	56.88

Through Table 2 it is concluded that except type of family structure and gender of the child all other demographic factors shown significant differences with respect to the children's understanding about television advertisements.

Table 2: Relationship between the demographic factors and children's understanding about television advertisements using ANOVA statistical technique.

Variable Name	Variable group	Group mean	F value	df	p-value
Parent's age	26-32 years	4.16	1.471	3	0.018*
	33-39 years	3.89			
	40 years or more	3.67			
Type of family structure	Nuclear family	2.001	1.733	2	0.09**
	Joint family	1.195			
Education – Mother	SSC/Intermediate	3.11	3.415	3	0.003*



	Graduate	3.29			
	Post Graduate	3.31			
Education – Father	SSC/Intermediate	2.45	1.211	3	0.023*
	Graduate	2.66			
	Post Graduate	2.70			
Parents employment status	Both employed	2.66	7.145	2	0.004*
	Only father employed	2.06			
Total family monthly income	Less than Rs.20,000	3.61	4.166	3	0.002*
	Rs.20,001 to 40,000	3.70			
	Rs. 40,001 or higher	3.96			
Child age group	7-9 years	2.68	1.852	2	0.008*
	10-11 years	3.01			
Gender of the child	Boy	3.23	2.615	2	0.08**
	Girl	3.35			
Number of siblings	Single child	2.61	3.415	2	0.003*
	With siblings	3.46			

* The mean difference was significant at $p < 0.05$

** The mean difference was not significant at $p > 0.05$

V. DISCUSSION

Demographic variables play important role in deciding the consumer behavior towards the advertised products or services. Children have their own choice and mindset. Diverse demographic factors like where the children are living, their culture, social class, and income levels influence the children consumer behavior. Marketers need to understand about the demographic factors that influence the consumer behavior for developing effective marketing strategies.

Parent’s age: Frequent interactions by the parents with children about television advertisements will have positive effect on children’s understanding of television advertisements. In this study it is found that children from the young age group parents found better abilities in understanding television advertisements.

Type of family structure: There is no difference in understanding abilities about television advertisements by the children from two types of family structures namely nuclear family and joint family. This is reflecting the changing family values in joint families on par with the nuclear families.

Mother education: Children from higher educated mother’s group have better abilities in understanding the television advertisements. This may be due to the mother’s explanations against the children queries with respect to the television advertisements.

Father education: Similar to mother’s education children from higher educated father’s group has better abilities in understanding the television advertisements. Similar to mother’s education, explanation with respect to the television advertisements made by the father’s produced the differences in understanding about television advertisements by the children.



Parent's employment: Children belong to the both parents employed category found better understanding abilities in television advertisements than the children's belong to the families where father only employed. As more interactions takes between the children and mother at home where only father was employed, it is found significant differences exist in understanding the television advertisements by the children.

Total family monthly income: Children belong to the higher income group families have better abilities in understanding television advertisements than the children from lower income group families. Significant differences existing among the children in understanding the television advertisements due to the better learning and consumer socialization opportunities available in high income earning families.

Child age group: Due to higher cognitive abilities children from higher age group shown better understanding abilities in understanding the television advertisements than the younger age group children.

Child's gender: There were no differences in understanding the television advertisements by the children related to male and female gender groups. This is reflecting the changing trend of equal opportunities exposure to the children by the parents in India.

Number of siblings: Children having siblings shown better understanding abilities in understanding the television advertisements than the children who do not have siblings. This could be due to the interactions with the elder siblings which provides opportunities to learn about the television advertisements.

Significant differences existing among the groups based on demographic factors with respect to children's understanding about television advertisements. Hence there is a need to develop consumer segmentation and profiling based on the demographic variables by the marketers, which help in designing effective marketing communications. Only demographic factors were included in the present study. Future studies can be conducted by including the factors from cultural, personal, psychological, and behavioral segments to gain more insights about the children's consumer behavior.

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