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FOOD HABITS OF SCHOOL GOING CHILDREN : INFLUENCE OF TELEVISION ADVERTISEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Children spend a huge volume of time watching television. As a result, everyday our children come under an increasing exposure to a large number of food and beverage advertisements. With the growing use of animation techniques, these advertisements are posing highly attractive to children.

Researchers associate Television watching with unhealthy food consumption habits among children. The previous studies give sufficient evidence how TV advertisements influence the food preferences, purchase requests and diets of children under the age of 12 years. Companies use advertisements as a strong instrument to attract the so called new segment in the market. i.e. children segment. Since advertisements easily influence the food consumption behavior of small children, they become the easiest target for companies' food promotional activities.

This paper aims to explore how the children's food habits are being influenced by the television advertisements. The study has been conducted around the children from selected private schools of Udaipur City as not much study and work has been done on private school children.

No doubt, the degree of impact of advertising on adults is problematic but the outcome is devastating for children. Thus, it becomes imperative to examine the extent to which Television viewing and TV food advertising negatively influence current and future eating behaviors among children. The study has been conducted in two parts. In the first part, content of the television advertisements watched by children during child programs has been examined. The second part of the study focused on children's behaviors while watching television advertisements and their purchasing requests during shopping, in children aged 10–12 years old.

Keywords : Advertisements, Food Preferences, Purchase, Request.

INTRODUCTION

Advertising is a means through which the producers promote their products and also convey their messages to the customers. Advertising assists an organization in stimulating its sales and profits. Advertising comes in different forms such as television, print, radio and Internet and using such different forms of communicating devices the products are advertised to the so-called new segment in the market. Generally, companies enter into contracts with advertising agencies who take the responsibility of promoting the products of such companies.

Experimental studies supported the causal relationship of food advertising on children's eating behaviors, demonstrating that immediately following the food commercials young children were more likely to increase their caloric intake and snack foods.

TELEVISION FOOD ADVERTISEMENT

Advertisers have an option to promote their products on numerous platforms viz. TV channels, radio station, newspaper, magazines etc. But they prefer to advertise their products through television, as it is still the most popular medium of advertisement.

At a very early age children become attracted to television, the medium most capable of portraying life styles, value and social patterns to us. Indeed many of today's children can not avoid the clutches of television programming. TV shows without commercials are an exception & companies prefer to advertise their products mostly at the time when children's favorite TV show is telecasted.

There are ample empirical evidences that such advertising content often leads to healthier food choices. A deep study and research also identifies the

direct impact of exposure to food advertising on children's food consumption habits like increase in overall calorie consumption, lower intake of fruits and vegetables and higher rates of obesity.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A study by David Jobber and John Fahy, (2012, p41), reveals that many a times children prefer to buy a food product because of the attraction of cartoons that appear in advertisements and packaging.

Goldberg, Gorn, and Gibson conducted a research (1978) on selected children. For the purpose of examination of children's food habits & choices, all the children were divided into three groups –Children watching cartoons with a series of commercials for highly sweetened snack and breakfast foods, Children watching only some public service announcements (PSAs) promoting nutritious food and Children comprising of a control group that did not watch television.

All the children were subsequently asked to choose several snacks and breakfast food items from a series of images of sugared and healthier options. The findings revealed that children watching commercials regularly selected significantly more sugared foods than children who watched the PSAs or did not watch television at all.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study will be conducted on the basis of following objectives:

BROAD OBJECTIVE

- To evaluate the influence of food advertisement on food habits of children.
- To assess how far the advertisements change the buying behavior of children.

- To identify the popular television channels among 10-12 years old children.
- To investigate the association between television food advertising and children's food choices and preferences.

Hypothesis 1

H₀₁ : There is no significant relationship between favourite food related television advertisement and food habits of the children.

H_{a1} : There is a significant relationship between favourite food related television advertisement and food habits of the children.

Hypothesis 2

H₀₂ : There is no significant relationship between food advertisement and buying behavior of the children.

H_{a2} : There is a significant relationship between food advertisement and buying behavior of the children.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT : For the purpose of study, two well structured questionnaires, (one for children and one for the parents) have been constructed to collect data on the research variables.

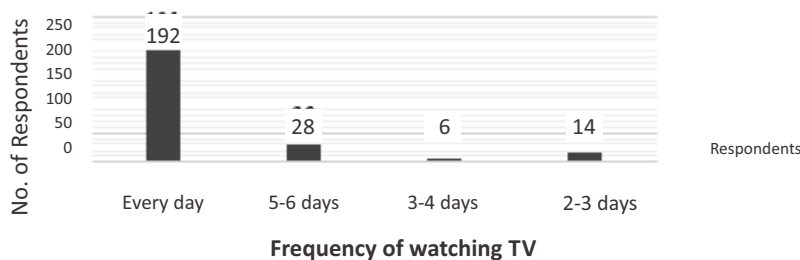
QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN: The questionnaires have been divided into two parts:

- The first section comprises of questions about demographic characteristics such as name, gender, location, Age, occupation, income.

The second section contains questions to measure the influence of television food advertisement on food habits of the children.

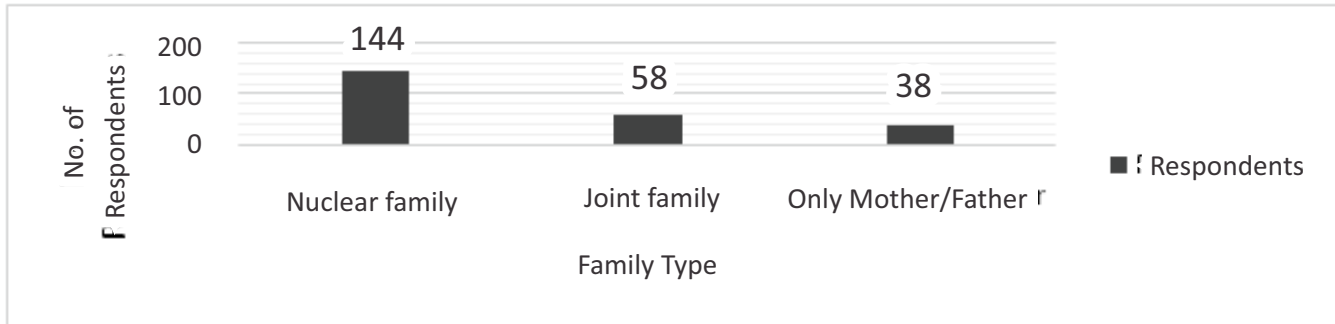
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Fig 1.1: Frequency of TV Watching by the Children in a Week



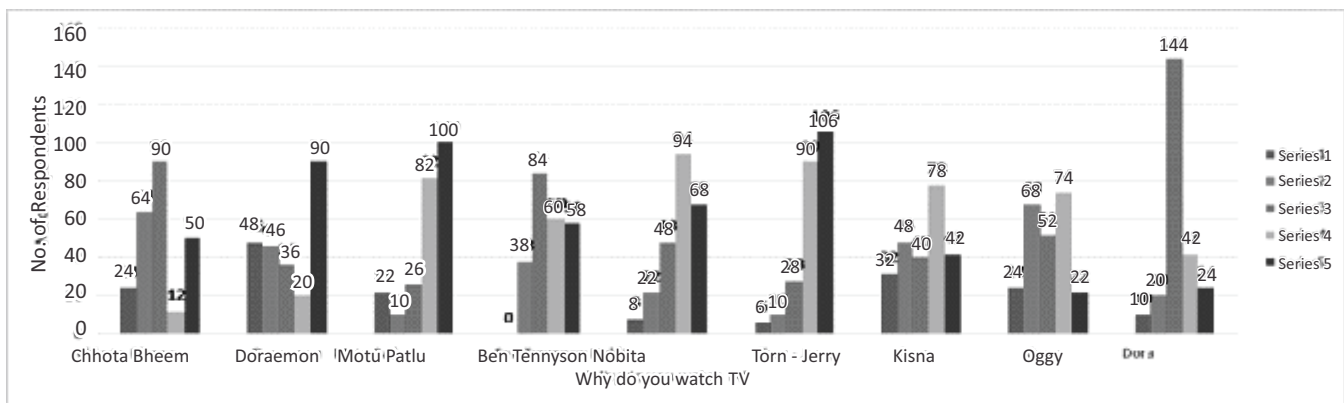
Television addiction of children was the most vulnerable and parents were really concerned about this. When it was asked to children about how frequently they watch television, it was amazing that almost 80 % of them watched TV daily. Only very few of them were watching TV for 2-3 days.

Fig 1.2: Family Type of the children



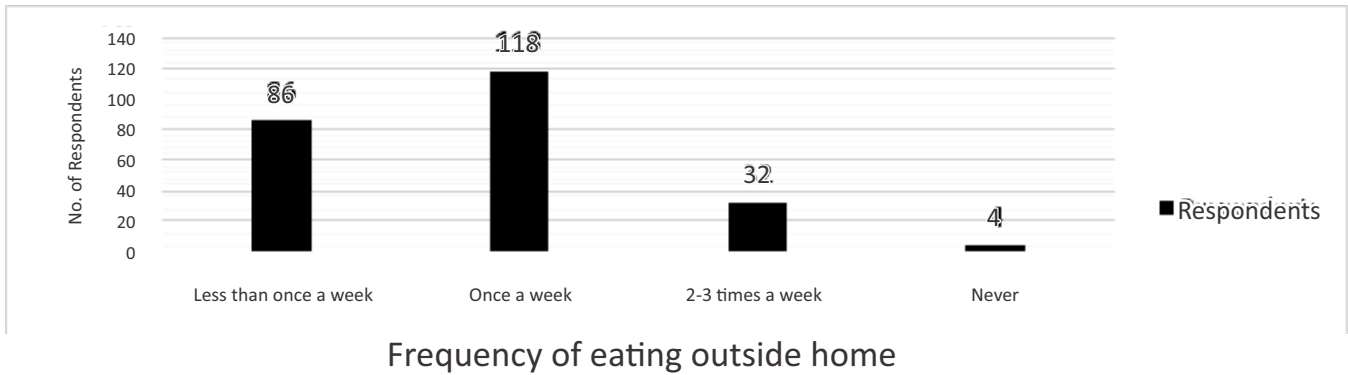
The family type i.e nuclear family or joint family also influences the food habits and other behavior of the children. Majority (60%) of the children live in nuclear family and only 24 % live in joint families with their grandparents and cousins.

Fig. 1.3 Favourite cartoon character of the children



The analysis reveals that the most preferred cartoon character which was favourite of the maximum sample respondent was Tom and Jerry, Nobita, Doraemon and Chhota Bheem.

Fig.1.4 Frequency of eating outside home



Eating outside is always found to be a bit unhealthy as compared to routine home food. In the same sequence it was enquired that whether children eat out or not and if yes at what frequency. And the result found was really alarming that maximum of them 118 respondents generally prefers to eat outside once a week. And only 1.4% don't ever go for eating outside.

Fig 1.5: Kind of Food Children Prefer to Eat Out

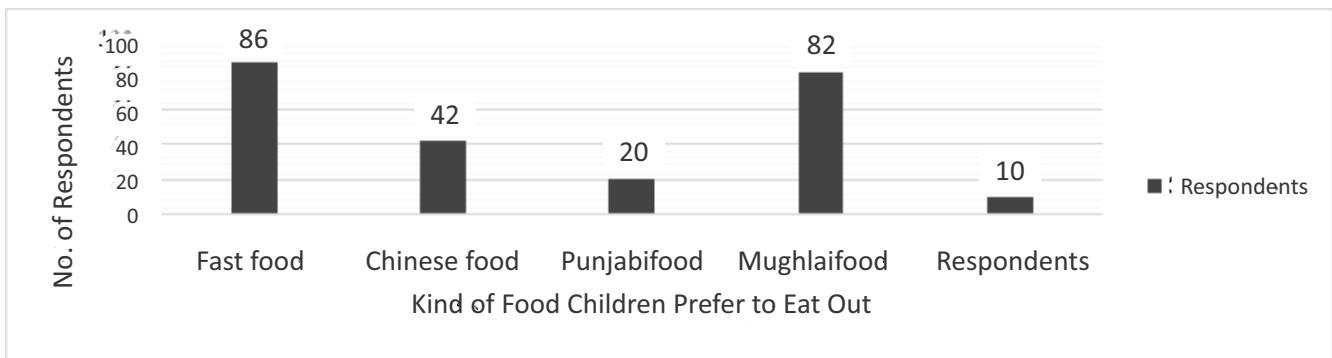
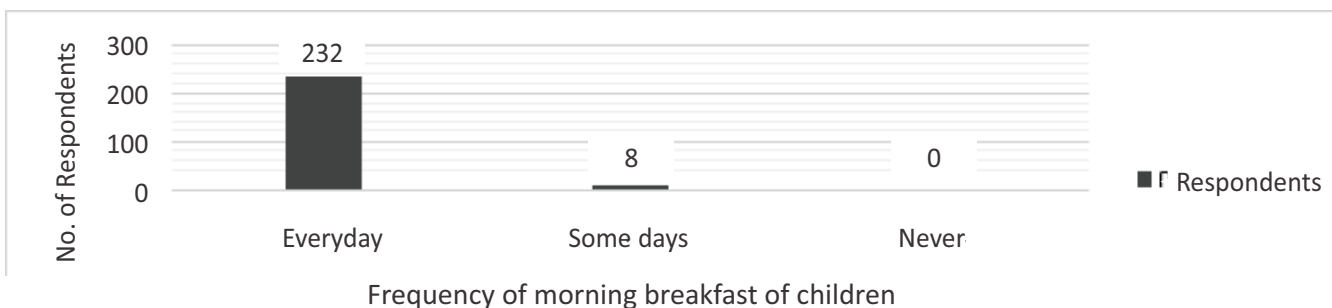


Fig.1.6: Frequency of morning breakfast of children



Correlation between favourite food related television advertisement and food habits of the children.

	Food Habits
Pearson Correlation	.583
Sig.(2-tailed)	0.00
N	240

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level(2-tailed)

Correlation between favourite food related television advertisement and buying behavior of the children.

	Food Habits
Pearson Correlation	Sig.(2-tailed)
N	.769
	0.00
	240

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level(2-tailed)

Table 1.1 : Factors affecting eating habits of children due to Advertisement

Factors affecting eating habits of children due to Advertisement		Rating					Total
S.No	Questions	Strongly agree	agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
1	I Like to watch the food advertisement.	80	119	26	13	2	240
2	I watch the food advertisement repeatedly.	22	102	68	27	21	240
3	I buy the food products after watching TV advertisement.	118	98	8	10	6	240
4	I like to eat the food products after watching TV advertisement.	33	62	51	44	50	240
5	I enforce my parents to purchase the food after watching the food advertisement.	12	66	106	20	36	240
6	I spend most of my pocket money on advertised food.	98	62	56	20	4	240
7	I feel happy when I purchase the advertised food.	60	90	65	15	10	240
8	I also purchase a food product which is not advertised	44	93	69	27	7	240
9	I use elder members of my home to make purchases for me.	23	78	68	37	34	240
10	I use tantrums to purchase the food products.	12	94	70	44	20	240
11	I ask my friends to do it for me.	2	16	56	98	68	240
12	I Plead, Implore or Nag.	4	41	101	44	50	240
13	I black mail my parents emotionally.	8	98	78	32	24	240
14	I talk sweetly, and behave unexpectedly nice.	22	40	103	44	31	240
15	I wait for my parents to get in good mood & then ask.	78	97	39	22	4	240
16	I fall sick if I don't get it	0	2	202	13	23	240
17	I Show silent resentment.	33	92	66	35	14	240
18	I ask for another request for an agreeable option?	11	109	66	33	21	240
19	I get depressed if I don't get the food item.	33	103	65	29	10	240

Table 1.2: Frequency of consumption of following food items:

S. No.	Food Items	Daily	3 Times A Week	Weekly	Occasionally	Never	Total
1.	Bakery Items	2	106	98	34	0	240
2.	Soft Drinks	98	73	46	17	6	240
3.	Chocolate	176	41	23	0	0	240
4.	Sweets	31	51	88	62	8	240
5.	Ice Cream	54	96	68	22	0	240
6.	Chinese Food Item	0	44	146	39	11	240
7.	Gujarati Food Items	0	21	78	103	38	240
8.	Mughlai Food Items	0	11	97	46	86	240
9.	North Indian Foods	0	24	22	186	8	240
10.	South Indian Foods	0	98	102	19	21	240
11.	Street Food Items	0	100	117	21	2	240

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

- 1 When the children were asked about the purpose of watching television, maximum children (73%) replied that they watch TV only for entertainment purpose and only 14.17% of them replied that they watch the television for the learning ability.
- 2 The sample respondents were also asked about the kind of food they prefer to eat during an outing. Majority children preferred fast food and Mughlai food while Chinese, Punjabi and other food varieties were preferred by only remaining 30% of the children.
- 3 When inquired about the most frequent item children usually prefer to eat, an outright answer was chocolates that too having it on daily basis. The second most preferred was cold drinks either aerated or not. These food items are definitely injurious to children's health as these all items are flavored and not the real one.
- 4 When the respondents were asked about their daily habit to do exercise, 37% of the respondents replied that they do exercise one hour daily to stay healthy and 25% do it for half an hour. While a comparatively larger section of about 38% were found to be the one who never gets involve in doing exercise.
- 5 **A Pearson product** – moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between television food advertisement and food habits. There was a positive correlation between the two variables, $r=0.583$, $n=240$, $p=0.00$. Overall there was a moderate, positive correlation between television food advertisement and food habits. Thus null hypothesis H_01 is rejected.
- 6 **A Pearson product** – moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between television food advertisement and buying behavior of the children. There was a positive correlation between the two variables, $r=0.769$, $n=240$, $p=0.00$. Overall there was a strong, positive correlation between television food advertisement and buying behavior of the children. Thus null hypothesis H_02 is rejected.

CONCLUSION

The major purpose of the present study was to explain that one segment of the society particularly affected by Television food advertisements is children & as such they need to be guided and protected from such advertisements. The study was conducted on children of Udaipur studying in various private schools. Two variables were analyzed in this study- Television

Advertising and Children's food habits where advertising was considered as the independent variable and Children's food preferences were considered as the dependent variable. The variables were statistically computed by calculating mean and correlation. The research identified that there is a positive relationship between television advertisement and food habits of children and television advertising has a significant influence on the children's food decisions.

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