

## **ADVERTISING TO CHILDREN: A STUDY OF THE CHILDREN IN SRINAGAR AND JAMMU CITIES OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR, INDIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The paper examines the individual and interactive impact of age, gender, amount of media exposure and area of living on the remembrance and understanding of advertisements using questionnaires. The sample consisted of 100 children in the age group of 8-15 years taken from different areas of Srinagar and Jammu cities of Jammu and Kashmir. The sample consisted of equal number of boys and girls. The sample was drawn from different schools using stratified random sampling. The analysis of data was done through tests like MANOVA, t-test in SPSS 16. The analysis revealed that the individual impact of media exposure is significant only for remembrance while as age is significant for both understanding and remembrance. The interactive impact of media exposure\* age\*gender\* area of living is significant only for remembrance while as interactive influence of amount of media exposure\*age\*area of living is significant only for understanding. Further, t-test revealed that there is no difference in remembrance of advertisements between children of Srinagar and Jammu.*

**Keywords:** Advertising, Age, Gender, Remembrance, Understanding

### **INTRODUCTION**

Children are becoming the cash cows of the Indian Corporate houses. In the present age, the children are burdened with information and entertainment options. There is a strong impact of television advertising on children. They may not pay attention to a programme but will necessary pay attention to the advertisements, as advertising for them is largely colourful, vital, alive and mesmerizing. The ultimate purpose of a thirty second worth of information contained in a advertisement must be to manipulate the child to desire, want and need for product (Peggy Charren, founder and president of ACT, cited in Libert and Sprafkin, 1988). The most gruesome victims of advertising are children. Its effects on children are universal in nature but the extent varies from child to child depending upon factors like age, gender, area of residence, viewing pattern.

The impact of advertising on children remembrance and behaviour has been the major topic of discussion all over the world. The understanding of the advertising is a significant issue to

look into both from the parent's point of view as understanding may prevent harmful influences on the well being of children and from the view point of advertisers as it will vary the effectiveness of their advertisements. Advertisers target children because of their high disposable income, their influence on parental purchases, their early establishment of loyalty towards certain brands and a conventional perception that they buy products on impulse (Fox 1996, McNeal 1999). Advertising influences the life and patterns of a child's life. The main demonstration of its influence is believed to be "pester power". Pester power is simply defined as repetitive asking/requests for a specific product or service by a children. A number of researchers in foreign countries have called for public policy changes to reduce the impact of advertisements on preferences of children (Borzekowski and Robinson 2001, Grier 2001, Smith and Stutts 1999). As a result of this many countries have formulated rules and regulations for advertising to children but India as such does not have specific rules for advertising to children.

### **OBJECTIVES**

- To study the individual and interactive impact of age, gender, amount of media exposure and area of living on remembrance and understanding of advertisements.
- To study whether the children of two cities differ in remembrance of advertisements.

### **HYPOTHESIS**

1. There is significant individual and interactive impact of age, gender, amount of media exposure and area of living on remembrance of advertisements.
2. Children of two cities do not differ in remembrance of advertisements.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The marketers and marketing researchers have given children an extraordinary level of attention (Goodman and Dretzin, 2001; Schneider, 1987, cited in Kline, 1993, p. 18). Advertising to children is a heated debate all over the world. The success of an advertising campaign on TV depends upon the level of a child's logical thinking and understanding. Gunter et al (2003) states that Piaget's model of children's development of logical thinking is most often used in literature regarding children's understanding of advertisement. The model consists of four stages; sensorimotor, pre-operational, concrete operational and formal operational stage. These stages explain different levels of understanding that a child reaches with its growth.

**Sensorimotor Stage:** This stage starts when a child is born. According to Gunter et al. (2003) the stage consists of the child's development from the birth and premature understanding such as independent thought and problem solving. The child remains in this stage up to age of two years. Gunter et al. (2003) further add that "nonetheless, children's limited language and cognitive development in this period precludes any possibility of understanding advertisement".

**Pre-Operational Stage:** This stage starts from the age of two years and ends at the age of seven years. This stage is called as preoperational stage because Piaget thought that young children had limited reasoning ability at this age. The children in this stage will likely have trouble in understanding the persuasive meaning of the advertisements because of the low level of understanding of other's view point than their own.

**Concrete Operational Stage:** The range of this stage is from seven to eleven years and in this stage the children can reason logically in situations that are problem solving (Gunter et al. 2003). The theory while connecting this stage to understanding of advertisements sees two aspects. On one side it sees the child's developed ability of reasoning for better understanding of advertisements. The other side is the child's ability to reason is only better in concrete situations (which they can manipulate and experience at the same time). Gunter et al. (2003) say "without direct experience, we might expect children's reasoning about television to be less well developed than their reasoning in other domains that involve more opportunities for interacting with stimuli".

**Formal Operational Stage:** This stage starts from the age of eleven years. This stage combines all sides of abstract, hypothetical reasoning that can be used for problem solving. During this stage we can assume that children in this age group have same understanding of advertisements as of adults (Gunter et al. 2003).

The researchers from time to time have proved that children are able to distinguish between advertisements and programmes. The social science research of the 1970s claimed that young children have trouble in separating programming from commercials (Seiter, 1993). On the other hand, Liebert and Sprafkin (1988) refer to a study in which preschoolers were asked to recognize programmes and commercials in a sequence of short television segments. It was found that 5 year- olds were significantly more accurate than 4 or 3 year- olds, but the percentage of correct identifications was relatively high for all the three groups. In addition, it was found that the average correct figure is even higher: 80%, when children's accuracy in grouping child- oriented commercials only was examined. In a similar study conducted by Gains and Esserman (1981) found that 90% of 4- to -5 year- olds and 100% of 6- to 8- year- olds were correctly able to recognize commercial as separate from the programme in which it was embedded. Ward et al. (1977) also reported a study which shows that children as young as 5 or 6 are able to make a distinction between television programmes and commercials, but as predicted from developmental theory, these children are likely to base the distinction largely on perceptual cues. Young (1990) found that children aged between 5 and 7 could not make a distinction between commercials and programmes, and were able to identify commercials only 53% of the time.

Ward et al (1972) found age as a major factor in perception and learning from the advertisement and the behavioral transformation is more likely to crop up in older children than younger ones. The results of several studies appear to indicate that huge majority of children below the age of 6, cannot articulate the selling intention of advertising (Robertson and Rossiter, 1974; Ward et al., 1977; Donohue et al., 1978). Age is a significant factor in a child's understanding and studies involving non verbal measures of understanding have revealed that children can have a rough sense of commercial's selling intent as young as age 4 ( Gains and Esserman, 1981). Despite these findings, it is essential to apprehend that a child who says or indicates that advertisements want us to buy things, may still not be able to fully understand the persuasive nature of advertising (Signorielli, 1991). Ward et al (1977) in a survey of kindergarten- aged children estimated that between one tenth and one half of children understand that advertising is trying to sell them products. During this survey, they found that 22% reported that commercials strive to get them to purchase the products. When the kindergartners were shown commercials and then interviewed, the percentage rose up to roughly one- half. Similar findings were reported by Gains and Esserman (1981). They reported that children as little as age 4 can exhibit understanding of commercial intention,

but under particular presentation circumstances. The understanding of persuasive intent and selling intent apparently develops as children grow older. Ward et al. (1977) set the age of attainment of understanding as young as kindergarten age, others set it as 8 years or older (Robertson and Rossiter, 1974; Atkin 1979). Therefore, children at least under the age of 8 years cannot be wary of advertising messages (Palmer and Dorr, 1980).

Robertson and Rossiter (1974) advanced the research in this area by differentiating two types of attribution of intent: assistive and persuasive. Assistive means that advertisements are viewed as providing information, while persuasive refers to situations in which the advertisements are viewed as trying to sell something. With the growth of child, the view usually shifts from assistive to persuasive. The study further divulges that by age 10 or 11, almost all children are able to attribute persuasive intent to advertisements. Martin (1997) pointed that non verbal judgment is most significant among younger children. In addition, the understanding of advertising intention is more constant across different age levels among children. The difference between assistive/ informational and persuasive/ selling intention is imperative. For children informational intent is easy to grasp while selling intent may create confusion. A child may find it more difficult to grasp the selling intent of an advertisement in isolation than if he/she watches it in intermingle of children programmes and advertisements with separator plans. The research carried out so far seems to disclose that there are certainly age related differences in children's understating of the selling intent of advertisements. In general, children below the age of 6 are unable to know a commercial's selling intent (Robertson and Rossiter, 1974; Ward et al., 1977; Donohue et al., 1978; Macklin, 1983). The children up to this age believed that commercials existed to provide information to people. At the age of 6 or 7, a child begins to understand that commercials are trying to sell products. When a child reaches the pre- adolescent age of 11 or 12, he/she is aware of, and can recognize and fully grasp the selling intention behind the existence of commercials.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in twin cities of Srinagar and Jammu of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The study targeted the children of the age group of 8-15 years as respondents. The sample size consisted of 100 respondents with 50 each from Srinagar and Jammu. The sample consists of equal number of boys and girls. The sample was drawn from different schools using stratified random sampling technique. The data collected was analysed by using tests like MANOVA, t-test in SPSS 16.

## ANALYSIS

### MANOVA

**Table 1.** Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	Remembrance	46.602 <sup>a</sup>	22	2.118	8.983	.000
	Understanding	39.982 <sup>b</sup>	22	1.817	3.744	.000
Intercept	Remembrance	410.266	1	410.266	174.083	.000
	Understanding	185.257	1	185.257	381.635	.000
Amount of Media Exposure	Remembrance	4.549	2	2.274	9.645	.000
	Understanding	2.331	2	1.165	2.401	.097
Age	Remembrance	12.234	3	4.078	17.293	.000
	Understanding	7.814	3	2.605	5.366	.002

**Table 1.** Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (Contd....)

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Gender	Remembrance	.039	1	.039	.166	.685
	Understanding	.860	1	.860	1.772	.187
Area of living	Remembrance	.279	1	.279	1.181	.281
	Understanding	1.297	1	1.297	2.671	.106
Amount of Media Exposure * Age	Remembrance	1.723	2	.862	3.654	.030
	Understanding	2.722	2	1.361	2.803	.067
Amount of Media Exposure * Gender	Remembrance	.031	1	.031	.130	.720
	Understanding	277.35	1	277.35	.000	.994
Amount of Media Exposure * Area of living	Remembrance	.042	1	.042	.178	.674
	Understanding	.157	1	.157	.323	.571
Age * Gender	Remembrance	.353	2	.176	.748	.477
	Understanding	1.725	2	.863	1.777	.176
Age * Area of living	Remembrance	.067	1	.067	.283	.596
	Understanding	1.251	1	1.251	2.577	.113
Gender * Area of living	Remembrance	1.354	1	1.354	5.744	.019
	Understanding	.130	1	.130	.267	.607
Amount of Media Exposure * Age * Gender	Remembrance	.000	1	.000	.000	.983
	Understanding	.106	1	.106	.218	.642
Amount of Media Exposure * Age * Area of living	Remembrance	.001	1	.001	.006	.938
	Understanding	1.932	1	1.932	3.980	.050
Amount of Media Exposure * Gender * Area of living	Remembrance	.016	1	.016	.068	.796
	Understanding	.139	1	.139	.287	.594
Age * Gender * Area of living	Remembrance	.094	1	.094	.398	.530
	Understanding	.069	1	.069	.142	.708
Amount of Media Exposure * Age * Gender * Area of living	Remembrance	.000	0	.	.	.
	Understanding	.000	0	.	.	.
Error	Remembrance	18.158	77	.236		
	Understanding	37.378	77	.485		
Total	Remembrance	1812.000	100			
	Understanding	930.000	100			
Corrected Total	Remembrance	64.760	99			
	Understanding	77.360	99			

**Note:** a. R Squared = .720 (Adjusted R Squared = .640)

b. R Squared = .517 (Adjusted R Squared = .379)

MANOVA was applied to study the individual and interactive impact of amount of media exposure, age, gender and area of living.

The F value for amount of media exposure on remembrance is 9.645 and significance is 0.000( $p < 0.01$ ). The F value for understanding is 2.401 and significance is 0.097( $p > 0.05$ ). Hence the individual influence is significant only for remembrance.

The F value for age on remembrance is 17.293 and significance is 0.000( $p < 0.01$ ). The F value for understanding is 5.366 and significance is 0.002( $p < 0.05$ ). Hence the individual influence is significant both for remembrance and understanding.

The F value for gender on remembrance is 0.166 and significance is 0.685( $p > 0.05$ ). The F value for understanding is 1.772 and significance is 0.187( $p > 0.05$ ). Hence the individual influence is not significant both for remembrance and understanding.

The F value for area of living on remembrance is 1.181 and significance is 0.281( $p > 0.05$ ). The F value for understanding is 2.671 and significance is 0.106( $p > 0.05$ ). Hence the individual influence is not significant both for remembrance and understanding.

The F value for interactive impact of amount of media exposure\*age on remembrance of advertisements is 3.654 and significance is 0.030 ( $p < 0.05$ ). The F value for understanding is 2.803 and significance is 0.067 ( $p > 0.05$ ). Hence the interactive influence of both amount of media exposure\*age is significant only for remembrance.

The F value for interactive impact of amount of media exposure\*gender on remembrance of advertisements is 0.130 and significance is 0.720 ( $p > 0.05$ ). The F value for understanding is 0.000 and significance is 0.994 ( $p > 0.05$ ). Hence the interactive influence of both amount of media exposure\*gender is not significant for both remembrance and understanding.

The F value for interactive impact of amount of media exposure\*area of living on remembrance of advertisements is 0.178 and significance is 0.674 ( $p > 0.05$ ). The F value for understanding is 0.323 and significance is 0.571 ( $p > 0.05$ ). Hence the interactive influence of both amount of media exposure\*area of living is not significant for both remembrance and understanding.

The F value for interactive impact of age\*gender on remembrance of advertisements is 0.748 and significance is 0.477 ( $p > 0.05$ ). The F value for understanding is 1.777 and significance is 0.176 ( $p > 0.05$ ). Hence the interactive influence of both age\*gender of living is not significant for both remembrance and understanding.

The F value for interactive impact of age\*area of living on remembrance of advertisements is 0.283 and significance is 0.596 ( $p > 0.05$ ). The F value for understanding is 2.577 and significance is 0.133 ( $p > 0.05$ ). Hence the interactive influence of both amount age\*area of living is not significant for both remembrance and understanding.

The F value for interactive impact of gender\*area of living on remembrance of advertisements is 5.744 and significance is 0.019 ( $p < 0.05$ ). The F value for understanding is 0.267 and significance is 0.607 ( $p > 0.05$ ). Hence the interactive influence of gender\*area of living is significant only for remembrance.

The F value for interactive impact of amount of media exposure\*age\*gender on remembrance of advertisements is 0.000 and significance is 0.983 ( $p > 0.05$ ). The F value for understanding is 0.218 and significance is 0.643 ( $p > 0.05$ ). Hence the interactive influence of



amount of media exposure\*age\*gender is not significant for both remembrance and understanding.

The F value for interactive impact of amount of media exposure\*age\*area of living on remembrance of advertisements is 0.006 and significance is 0.938 (p>0.05). The F value for understanding is 3.980 and significance is 0.050 (p=0.05). Hence the interactive influence of amount of media exposure\*age\*area of living is significant only for understanding.

The F value for interactive impact of amount of media exposure\*gender\*area of living on remembrance of advertisements is 0.068 and significance is 0.796 (p>0.05). The F value for understanding is 0.287 and significance is 0.594 (p>0.05). Hence the interactive influence of amount of media exposure\*gender\*area of living is not significant for both remembrance and understanding.

The F value for interactive impact of age\*gender\*area of living on remembrance of advertisements is 0.398 and significance is 0.530 (p>0.05). The F value for understanding is 0.142 and significance is 0.708 (p>0.05). Hence the interactive influence of age\*gender\*area of living is not significant for both remembrance and understanding.

The interactive influence of amount of media exposure\*age\*gender\*area of living is not totally significant for both remembrance and understanding.

**T- Test**

**Table 2.** Group Statistics

	Area of Living	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Remembrance	Srinagar	50	4.0400	.85619	.12108
	Jammu	50	4.3200	.74066	.10474

**Table 3.** Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Remembrance	Equal variances assumed	.545	.462	-1.749	98	.083	-.28000	.16010	-.59772	.03772
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.749	96.011	.084	-.28000	.16010	-.59780	.03780

T test was applied to determine the impact of residential area on the remembrance of advertisements by the children. The SPSS output revealed that there is no difference between

children of Srinagar and Jammu in remembrance of advertisements as mean difference between Srinagar and Jammu is insignificant ( $t=-1.749$ ,  $p>0.05$ , table 3).

## CONCLUSION

The individual impact of media exposure is significant only for remembrance while as age is significant for both understanding and remembrance. The gender and the area of living do not have significant amount of impact on both understanding and remembrance. The interactive impact of media exposure\* age \* gender\* area of living are significant only for remembrance while as interactive influence of amount of media exposure\*age\*area of living is significant only for understanding. Further, t-test revealed that there is no difference in remembrance of advertisements between children of Srinagar and Jammu as mean difference is insignificant as shown by table 3.

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