



Use of Child Actors in Advertisements and Its Impact on Children's Behaviour

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of child actors in advertisements on the consumption patterns of children in the audiences. A mixed-method research design that combines content analysis and questionnaire surveys is employed. A total of 100 responses were recorded from parents and guardians of children who belong to the age group of 5 to 12 years. The results indicate that advertising starring child actors has a considerable impact on children's emotional responses, preferences, and behaviors. The study reveals that child actors play an important role in attracting the attention and interest of the young audience. The predominance of active participation with commercials among youngsters, particularly on sites such as YouTube, demonstrates the changing media consumption environment. The data indicates that advertisements featuring child actors have a significant impact on the emotional responses and preferences of children. Recognizing the multidimensional influence of kid actors in ads is critical for supporting ethical advertising methods that promote the well-being and development of young customers. Parents and guardians should be aware of the possible impact of advertising on children's consumption patterns and should discuss with their children how to make educated purchase decisions.

Keywords: Advertising, Consumer Behaviour, Children ads, Influencer, Consumption pattern

Introduction

Advertising is, at its core, a communicative tactic used within the market environment to promote products, services, or causes. Its major goal is to engage with people who are most likely interested in a company's services. Advertisements have grown prevalent in today's environment, frequently penetrating our surroundings unknowingly. Advertising efficiently disseminates its message across all accessible media platforms. Television, printed materials (newspapers, journals, magazines, etc.), radio, press, the web, direct marketing, billboards, personal mailers, contests, sponsorships, banners, apparel, events, colors, audio-visual aspects, and even persons through endorsements are examples of such outlets.

Today's commercials are aimed at a wide range of demographic groupings, with children being the most vulnerable audience. As a result, children are a big target demographic for advertising. The advertising industry for children and teenagers has grown into a multibillion-dollar business. Although young consumers do not have a direct buying power, they have a huge impact on their parents' shopping preferences. Children's advertising may be found in conventional media such as radio, television, and print, along with growing digital platforms such as the web and other digital platforms. Packaging, in-store advertisements, event sponsorships, or marketing campaigns are all commonly used. The influence of advertisements on children varies based on a variety of characteristics such as their age, degree of education, and previous exposure to promotional messages.

Objectives

- To explore the use of child actors or models in Indian advertisements.

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- To study parental observations regarding the behavioral responses of their children when exposed to advertisements featuring child actors.

Literature Review

Children are a popular target demographic for advertisers. Advertisers appeal to children using a variety of techniques, including child protagonists, music, and humor. In addition, celebrities as well as social media influencers are frequently used to promote products to children.

An increasing amount of studies on the effects of advertising on kids is available. According to this study, children are especially susceptible to the compelling effects of advertising. This is because children's critical thinking skills are still developing and they are far more likely to trust what they see and hear.

Children's advertising has long been a source of societal concern and public policy debate. Questions concerning the justice and ethics of targeting children, the possible impact of advertising on their consumption patterns, and the amplification of difficulties connected to items that may include violence are at the center of this concern. Furthermore, there is a discussion about marketers' responsibilities in promoting advertisements that feature situations or content that are inappropriate for children. Advertisements showing children have spread across a wide range of product categories, including home appliances, food, beverages, toys, and even luxury products, demonstrating a growing acknowledgment of the importance of children within the family unit.

Advertisers view children as an especially susceptible audience. Their intellectual growth is still in its early stages, and they are more susceptible to persuasive messaging than adults. Advertisers frequently use children's emotions, such as the need to be loved and accepted by their friends, to make a profit on these vulnerabilities.

Youngsters are continuously targeted by advertisements. It provides a direct route of communication to children inside their homes, and while parental management might restrict exposure, children increasingly have autonomous access to different media. The pervasiveness of advertising in children's lives emphasizes the need to study its impacts.

According to authors like Liebert (1986); Greenberg & Brand (1993); Pollay, (1986); Wulfemeyer & Mueller (1992), advertising promotes materialism as it strives to stir up desires for items that wouldn't otherwise be prominent. Advertising promotes the idea that material goods are essential and that desirable qualities like beauty, success, and happiness can only be obtained through material things. (Pollay, 1986; Wulfemeyer & Mueller, 1992).

Advertising has had a significant impact on children's consumption habits. In the opinion of Anderson et al. (2001), getting confronted with advertising increases the likelihood of children asking their parents for advertised goods. According to Bergler, R. (1999), advertising is ubiquitous and noticeable; one is affected through it and can only avoid it to a limited extent. The abundance and intensity of stimuli results in automatic responses of empathy or antipathy: the topic covered by the mainstream media decides both the important political as well as private debate. This demonstrates how advertisements influence children's preferences.

The influence of advertising on children goes beyond their purchasing habits. Kunkel et al. (1999) discovered a link between increased exposure to television advertising, materialism, and body dissatisfaction in children. Buijzen as well as Valkenburg (2003) discovered that children who were exposed to more advertising were far more likely to experience spending problems. These negative consequences highlight the importance of investigating the wider impact of advertising on the health of kids and behavior.

The understanding of advertising by children is critical. The majority of kids do not fully understand the persuasive purpose of advertisements until they are around the age of 7 or 8. Because they are unaware, they are more vulnerable to incorrect knowledge and exaggerated assertions in advertisements. In addition, the use of production methods and formal elements in children's advertisements exacerbates the problem.

Sample

To choose participants for this research study from the wide range of parents and guardians living in Delhi who are actively working in their professions, a random sample technique was used. The sample frame was made up of people with a range of professional backgrounds. The final sample size was of 100 parents and

guardians from Delhi who were working professionals. A voluntary invitation to participate was extended to participants, with a focus on maintaining the privacy and anonymity of their answers.

Throughout the sample process, ethical guidelines, such as informed consent and privacy protections, were scrupulously followed. By using this analytical technique, the findings will be more valid and broadly applicable, allowing working parents in Delhi to have a better understanding of how their children react to commercials that feature child actors.

Sample Size

The research shall include 100 parents and guardians of children who belong to the age group of 5 to 12 years.

Methodology

To investigate the use of children in advertisements and its effect on the consumption patterns of children in the audience, this study employs a mixed-method research design that combines content analysis and questionnaire surveys. A questionnaire survey is conducted to gather data from parents about the impact of children's advertisements on their children, while content analysis is used to analyze the content and narrative of advertisements.

Content analysis is a useful research tool for investigating the occurrence of particular phrases, topics, or ideas within qualitative data, particularly textual content. In this research, content evaluation is used to determine the suitability of hiring children for specific advertisements. Advertisements in different kinds of text, such as ads on television, print advertisements, and online advertisements are sources of information for content analysis. The content is scrutinized in order to identify subjects, narratives, as well as the context within which kids are represented in advertising. The aim is to quantify and evaluate the existence, significance, and connections of words, themes, as well as concepts utilized in these advertisements through content analysis.

The advertisements selected for content analysis are:

- Flipkart Fashion Ad Campaign (2017)
- Colgate #DaantStrongToh MainStrong (2021)
- Kinder Joy Iss Mein Kuch Khaas Hai (2023)
- Amazon.in Raksha Bandhan #DeliverTheLove (2023)
- Urban Company Full Home Cleaning Ganesh (2023)

To assess the impact of children-targeted advertisements on their children's consumption patterns, a questionnaire survey is used to collect data from parents. Questionnaires are a type of written interview that provides an efficient way of gathering information from a large number of respondents. The questionnaire is designed to be cost-effective and time-efficient, making it ideal for gathering information from a large and diverse group of parents.

The questionnaire is made up of ten closed-ended questions designed to elicit specific responses from parents about their perceptions and observations of the impact of children's advertisements on their children. The questions are designed to assess a variety of factors, including changes in children's preferences, behaviors, and requests for advertised products.

Analysis of Advertisements With Child Actors

Child models are increasingly appearing in advertisements in today's consumer society. These advertisements frequently capitalize on the attractiveness of young innocence and charm, using children to support a wide range of products and services. Analyzing a sample of these advertisements becomes necessary in order to grasp the nature of their portrayal. We can acquire insights into the underlying messaging, ethical considerations, and the possible influence on children's self-perception and worldview by evaluating the representation of kid models in various advertising. This analytical method enables customers to make educated decisions and helps to the continuing debate over the proper use of kid models in advertising.

Hence, five advertisements were selected to understand the representation of children in them.

Flipkart Fashion Ad Campaign (2017)

Flipkart, a well-known Indian e-commerce platform, launched an advertising campaign in 2017 to advertise its fashion products. Children dressed as adults model the latest fashion trends in the campaign.

Companies frequently use this type of advertising to target children because it is more persuasive than conventional advertising that features grown-ups.

Marketers use children for their campaigns for a variety of reasons. For starters, children are frequently perceived as more unassuming as well as trustworthy than adults. This increases their effectiveness in persuading customers to buy products. Secondly, children are more susceptible to peer influence. This implies that if they observe other kids wearing a product, they are more likely to want to wear it as well.

Third, children have a great deal of say over their parents' spending patterns. This implies that if kids see a product in an advertisement that they like, they are more likely to urge their parents to buy it for them.

While there are several advantages to utilizing children in advertising, there are also some disadvantages. When children see other children in advertising who are well groomed and clothed in costly clothes, they may begin to believe that in order to be accepted, they must appear the same way.

Colgate #DaantStrongToh MainStrong (2021)

Colgate, a well-known toothpaste brand, frequently includes children in its advertising. This is due to the fact that children are a primary target population for toothpaste products. Colgate's advertising often depicts happy, healthy youngsters with healthy teeth and bright grins. This is meant to convey to caregivers that using toothpaste from Colgate can assist their children in maintaining good dental health.

The "Colgate #DaantStrongTohMainStrong" campaign is one example of a Colgate advertising that features youngsters. This commercial shows kids cleaning their teeth and discussing how having teeth that are strong helps them be healthy and strong. The youngsters are shown participating in sports, eating healthy foods, and smiling proudly. The commercial campaign does an excellent job of emphasizing the significance of dental hygiene for youngsters and demonstrating

The use of children in Colgate's advertisements is effective because it can appeal to both children and parents. Children are more likely to be persuaded to use a product if they see other children using it and enjoying it. Parents are more likely to buy a product for their children if they believe that it is good for their health and well-being.

However, there are also some potential risks associated with using children in advertising. One concern is that it can lead to children developing unrealistic expectations about their appearance and body image. When children see other children in advertisements who have perfect teeth, they may start to feel like they need to have perfect teeth too. This can lead to feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem.

Another issue is that utilizing children in advertisements may lead to them establishing bad consumption habits. When youngsters are continuously assaulted with images of toothpaste products, they may begin to assume that in order to have healthy teeth, they must use a lot of toothpaste. This might lead to their overusing toothpaste, which is bad for their health.

Overall, the usage of children in Colgate advertising promotes oral hygiene. However, it is critical to be mindful of the possible dangers of utilizing children in advertising. Advertisers should avoid utilizing children in ways that may lead to inaccurate expectations about their beauty and body image, as well as harmful eating practices.

Kinder Joy Iss Mein Kuch Khaas Hai (2023)

Kinder Joy is a renowned chocolate treat for kids, and its advertising frequently shows kids enjoying the food and being delighted by the surprise toys inside. One such commercial depicts a bunch of toddlers devouring Kinder Joy eggs as well as rejoicing as they find the toys inside. The youngsters are seen laughing, playing, and enjoying a good time, and they all appear to be really interested in their toys.

This advertising works because it connects with the viewer through emotional appeal. The children's excitement and enthusiasm are contagious, and spectators are bound to feel happy feelings when they witness them having fun. The advertising also employs aspirational appeal, since it depicts youngsters enjoying and being delighted, something many parents find appealing.

Amazon.in Raksha Bandhan #DeliverTheLove (2023)

The "Deliver the Love" campaign from Amazon India depicts the narrative of a little kid who collects Amazon boxes and builds a train out of them as a Raksha Bandhan present for his sister. The advertisement

opens with the youngster painstakingly assembling the train out of Amazon boxes. On Raksha Bandhan, his sister is pleased and shocked when she receives the present. The two siblings then embrace and hug.

This advertising is effective because it connects with the viewer through emotional appeal. The boy's compassion and inventiveness in crafting a gift for his sister out of Amazon boxes is wonderful, and viewers are sure to feel happy when they witness the sister's reaction to the gift. As shown in the advertising, aspirational appeal is used.

Urban Company Full Home Cleaning Ganesh (2023)

Urban Company is a home services company that offers a variety of services, including house cleaning. One of its advertisements shows a mother and daughter getting their house cleaned by Urban Company professionals. The advertisement begins with a mother telling her daughter that God would visit us only when the house is clean while making a rangoli. They call the Urban Company home cleaning professionals to clean the house. After the professionals leave, the daughter asks her mother that the house has been cleaned, when will God visit us. The next scene shows the mom looking at the footprints of her daughter in the house in red from the rangoli colors. The mother tells the daughter that God has already visited us, looking at the footprints that signify the footprints of the Indian Goddess of wealth and prosperity- Goddess Lakshmi.

This advertising is effective because it connects with the viewer through emotional appeal. Many viewers will identify with the mother and daughter's worry and overwhelm, and watching them become comfortable and joyful after the Urban Company specialists clean their house is likely to elicit good feelings. The advertising also employs aspirational appeal, depicting a mother and daughter enjoying their time together after the Urban Company personnel have completed the cleaning.

Result

The results of the present study i.e., ‘Use of Child Actors in Advertisements and Its Impact on the Consumption Patterns of the Children in the Audiences’ deals with the preliminary questions covering the objective of this study. As a part of the study, a survey was conducted for a month by circulating google forms via various social media platforms. In totality, 100 responses were recorded from the parents and guardians of children in Delhi. The results helped the researcher and as well as the readers to assess and analyze the impact of child actors in advertisements on the consumption patterns of children in the audiences.

Children’s Advertisement Consumption Patterns

Parameter	Percentage/Count
Children actively watching advertisements	77.4%
Children not actively watching advertisements	13.2%
Not sure about children watching advertisements	9.4%

Table 1

Majority of children watched advertisements. Table 1 Only 13.2% of respondents stated that their children were not actively watching advertisements. A very less percentage of people, that is 9.4% of the respondents were unsure about their children watching advertisements.

Media Platforms for Watching Advertisements

Media Platforms	Percentage
Television	64.2%
Newspaper	18.9%
Magazine	5.7%

YouTube	71.1%
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Table 2

Table 2 shows the various media through which viewers watch advertisements. These media or platforms include television, newspaper, magazine and YouTube. The percentage of viewers who watch advertisements on television are 64.2%. The percentage of children who watch advertisements in newspapers is 18.9%, in magazines is 5.7% , and on YouTube is 71.7%. This clearly shows that the majority of participants watch advertisements on YouTube.

Likability of Advertisements with Child Actors

Response	Percentage/Count
Yes	60.4%
No	17%
Maybe	22.6%

Table 3

Table 3 shows the percentage of children who like watching advertisements with child actors in them. 60.4% of parents and guardians of the children answered yes for this question. 22.6% of people voted in favor of ‘maybe’ suggesting that they were unsure about their child’s liking towards advertisements with child actors. A very small percentage of people , 17% of people answered ‘no’ for the question.

Emotional Reactions Towards Advertisements with Child Actors

Emotional Reaction	Percentage/Count
Expressed Emotions	54.7%
No emotions	24.5%
Not sure	20.8%

Table 4

This table shows the responses of the parents or guardians about their emotional reactions towards advertisements with child actors. Maximum number of parents and guardians said that their child expressed some kinds of emotions while watching advertisements with child actors in them. Only 24.5% of parents and guardians did not think that their child showed any emotions while watching such advertisements. A very less percentage of respondents were not sure about their child’s reaction to such advertisements.

Happiness and Excitement After Watching Advertisements with Child Actors

Parameter	Percentage/Count
Showed excitement/happiness	58.5%
Did not show excitement/happiness	18.9%
Not sure	22.6%

Table 5

Table 5 shows the results of the question about the feeling of happiness and excitement observed in the children after watching advertisements with child actors. 58.5% of participants agreed that their child showed some kind of excitement or happiness after watching advertisements with child actors in them. 18.9% of participants disagreed about it while 22.6% of the respondents were unsure about it.

Peer Pressure or Desire to Own Advertised Products

Response	Percentage/Count
Showed signs of peer pressure	56.6%
Did not show signs of peer pressure	22.6%
Not sure	20.8%

Table 6

This table represents the number of children who express signs of peer pressure or desire to own the products that are shown in the advertisements with child actors. 56.6% of participants agreed that their children showed the signs of peer pressure or a desire to own the product. 22.6% of the respondents said that their child did not show any such signs. The remaining percentage of the participants were not sure about such signs or desires of their child.

Discussion of Advertisements with Peers

Response	Percentage/Count
Yes	37.7%
Maybe	32.1%
No	30.2%

Table 7

Table 7 is the representation of the number of children who discuss advertisements featuring child actors with their peers. The number of participants who voted 'yes' were close to the percentages of other responses. Only 37.7% of people thought that their children discussed these advertisements with their friends or peers. A very close percentage was of the other answers as well. The percentage of people who voted 'Maybe' and 'No' were 32.1% and 30.1% respectively.

Impact on Desire to Own or Use Advertised Products

Impact	Percentage/Count
Moderate	50.9%
High	18.9%
Low	17%

Table 8

Table 8 shows the impact of advertisements with child actors on the child's desire to own or use the products shown in such advertisements. A large number of respondents said that there was a moderate impact of the advertisements on their children. The percentage of people who answered 'Yes' and 'No' were 17% and 18.9% respectively.

Expression of Negative Emotions After Watching Advertisements With Child Actors

Expression	Percentage/Count
Disagreed	50.9%
Agreed	26.4%

Not sure	22.6%
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Table 9

In the above table, 50.9% disagreed with the fact that their child expressed any negative emotions, such as jealousy or dissatisfaction after watching advertisements with child actors. 26.4% of participants agreed with the same. The remaining 22.6% of participants were unsure about it.

Likelihood of Children Requesting Advertised Products

Likelihood	Percentage/Count
Somewhat Likely	64.2%
Highly Likely	20.8%
Not Likely	15.1%

Table 10

According to table 10, 64.2% of people said that their child was somewhat likely to request the products seen in the advertisements with child actors. 20.8% of participants answered that their child was highly likely to demand products after watching such advertisements. The remaining 15.1% of participants said that their child was not likely to request products like this.

Recreation of Scenes or Actions from Advertisements with Child Actors

Parameter	Percentage/Count
Yes	64.2%
No	26.4%
Not Sure	9.4%

Table 11

The above table represents the number of children who recreate scenes or actions from the advertisements with child actors. 64.2% of respondents said that their children would recreate scenes from advertisements with child actors. 26.4% of parents and guardians said that their child would not do so. Only 9.4% of participants said that they were unsure about it.

Discussion

The study provides subtle insights into the influence of kid actors in advertising on the consumption behaviors of children in audiences. The predominance of active participation with commercials among youngsters, particularly on sites such as YouTube, demonstrates the changing media consumption environment. The positive response to advertising starring kid actors confirming children's delight, demonstrates the potential impact of such content.

The study reveals that child performers play an important role in attracting the attention and interest of the young audience. This positive involvement is emphasized further by the observed emotional responses, as more than half of the parents report their children expressing excitement or happiness when watching these adverts.

However, the survey draws attention to possible issues, particularly symptoms of social pressure or a desire to purchase things depicted in commercials, which are identified by the majority of parents. This discovery highlights the considerable power of advertising on influencing children's preferences and aspirations, raising ethical concerns about the influence on consumer behavior.

The study among youngsters regarding these adverts reveals the multifaceted nature of the influence. While only reported by a minority of respondents, the study emphasizes the need of recognizing the varying

effect on children, suggesting that not all engage in post-viewing talks. This knowledge adds to a better understanding of the many ways in which youngsters interact with and respond to advertising information.

Furthermore, the survey addressed concerns regarding potential negative emotions, indicating that a slim majority of parents dispute that their children display feelings such as jealousy or displeasure after seeing advertising starring youngsters. This discovery reveals a range of emotional responses in youngsters and underlines the significance of identifying individual variances in their responses.

The data on the likelihood of youngsters requesting things shown in advertising and mimicking or reproducing scenarios from these advertisements demonstrate a clear behavioral influence. This implies that kid actors not only impact preferences but may also alter children's actions and demands, emphasizing the importance of ethical advertising techniques.

The data indicates that advertising starring child actors has a considerable impact on children's emotional responses, preferences, and behaviors. While there is good reception and possible peer pressure, the nuanced nature of the influence, as indicated in diverse emotional reactions and discussions among youngsters, emphasizes the relationship's complexity. Advertisers, parents, and politicians should examine these subtle interactions when developing strategies and measures to ensure responsible and ethical advertising practices that correspond with young customers' well-being. Recognizing the multidimensional influence of child actors in ads is critical for supporting ethical advertising methods that promote the well-being and development of young customers.

Recommendations

- Advertisers should avoid utilizing persuasive strategies that may exploit children's vulnerabilities, such as generating a feeling of urgency or leveraging peer pressure.
- Advertisers should be aware of the possibility of youngsters misinterpreting commercials' contents and should take precautions to guarantee that their advertising is honest and genuine.
- Parents and guardians should be aware of the possible impact of advertising on children's consumption patterns and should discuss with their children how to make educated purchase decisions.
- To safeguard children from possible damage, policymakers should consider restricting the use of child actors in advertising.

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