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## ROLE OF TELEVISION ON SHIFT IN FOOD CULTURE AMONG EARLY ADOLESCENTS: ISSUES AND CONCERNS

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**Abstract:-**The present study was intended to study the television viewing behaviour and the dietary pattern of school going children. The study thus conceived was carried out among the urban school going children of Puducherry belonging to both government and private schools. It was a cross-sectional study. About five hundred and seventy one samples (N=571) belonging to the age group of 12-15 years comprising of both boys and girls were selected for the study. Data was collected through self administered questionnaire consisting of two parts namely socio-economic, cultural and demographic aspects related to the study, television viewing behaviour and its influence on their dietary pattern. The entire study was spread over a period of eight months from January 2012 to August 2012. The data collected was analysed and percentages and illustrations were mostly used. Statistical tests such as chi-square test and Mann-Whitney U test were done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 11.5). It was found that children are more interested in consuming the foods shown by the celebrities on televisions rather than the foods provided at home. The advertisements related to food, health drink and carbonated beverages had a remarkable impact on the consumption behaviour. It was found to be directly proportional to the consumption pattern. The results showed that television advertisements had an effective impact on the eating behaviour of school going children. The importance of consuming balanced diet at this stage of life need to be emphasized. Both the children and the parents should have a broader knowledge of the benefits of consuming vegetables, fruits, etc and should understand the ill effects of the junk foods and its implications on their health.

**Keywords:** Food culture, Early adolescents .

### INTRODUCTION:

Television is one of the mass media with the highest reachability both in urban and rural areas. It plays a major role in influencing the attitude, behaviour, and values of viewers. Although television is a powerful tool and medium to educate people on nutrition, physical exercise, and a wide variety of health related issues, it can also have a negative impact on viewers through images and advertisements which influence people to make poor food choices or to over eat. Adolescents constitute one-fifth of the total population. Adolescence is the transitional phase of life from childhood to adulthood, during which period, growth spurt with rapid increase in height and weight, psychological and sexual maturity with cognitive development are observed among adolescents. Peer pressure, parents' dietary habits and media exposure influence the dietary intake of this age group (Rao et al., 2007). Due to these changes in dietary and lifestyle patterns, chronic Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) including obesity, diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular disease (CVD), hypertension and stroke, and some types of cancer are becoming increasingly significant causes of disability and premature death in both developing and developed countries. Increased consumption of diets high in fat, particularly saturated fat and low in refined carbohydrates, and physical inactivity is the result of the progressive shift of lifestyle towards more sedentary patterns, in developing countries as much as in industrialized ones. Advertisers have traditionally used techniques to which children and adolescents are more susceptible, such as product placements in movies and TV shows. Advertising has a persuasive and pervasive influence on children and adolescents. Young people view more than 40 000 advertisements per year on television alone and are increasingly being exposed to advertising on the Internet, in magazines, and in schools. This exposure may contribute significantly to childhood and adolescent obesity and also poor nutrition (Strasburger, 2006).

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Advertisers have traditionally used techniques to which children and adolescents are more susceptible, such as, product placement in movies and TV shows, tie-ins between movies and fast food restaurants, tie-ins between TV shows and cartoon figures or other products, kids clubs that are linked to popular shows and celebrity endorsements (Strasburger, 2006). Advertising for food and beverages communicates potentially powerful food consumption cues including images of attractive models eating, snacking at non-meal times and positive emotions linked to food consumption. The messages presented in food advertisements especially in visual media, similarly have the power to act as real world primes and lead to corresponding eating behaviours. The types of foods promoted in food advertising with emphasis on so called benefits of a particular food item, beverage or snacks leads the gullible target group to be mentally prepared for consuming unhealthy foods and beverages (Harris et al., 2009).

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study were:

- To study the TV viewing behaviour of school going children.
- To analyse if TV viewing behaviour has an impact on food preferences

METHODOLOGY

The present study was carried out in Puducherry which is the capital city of the Union Territory of Puducherry. Five hundred and seventy one students (N=571) comprising of both boys and girls in the age group of 12-14 years were selected from both government and private schools through stratified random sampling method. The schools were carefully selected from different areas within the town as it includes students from all strata of the society. The study utilized questionnaire for data collection.

The study was conducted in 3 phases for a period of 7 months. A pre-test was done with a small number of samples. The questionnaire was then modified based on the results obtained from the pre-test to make the tool more efficient in collecting the data. The modified tool was administered for 50 samples who did not make part of the main study but belonged to the same age group to have an overview of the result. Permission for conducting the study was obtained well in advance from the authorities of the schools concerned. The modified questionnaire after pretesting was used for the main study to obtain data from the respondents. The period of study was from January 2012 to July 2012. The data collected from the samples were analysed and statistically tested. Percentages and illustrations were mostly used for a wide variety of variables. Statistical interpretation was done for a few identified variables using chi-square test and Mann-Whitney U test with the help of SPSS Package.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected from the study is discussed below:

The television viewing pattern of the respondents is discussed in the following table 1.1

Table 1.1 TV viewing behaviour

VARIABLES	N= 571	PERCENTAGE
Type of channel		
Tamil	456	80
English	203	36
Hindi	36	6
Others	30	5
TV watching duration		
>7 hours	114	20
4-6 hours	119	21
2-4 hours	132	23
1-2 hours	109	19
<1 hour	97	17

Reaction during advertisements		
Watch & listen	316	55
Change channel	116	20
Mute audio & watch	139	24
Type of advertisement		
Foods	243	42
Cosmetics	141	25
Others	92	16

The table depicts that about 86% of the respondents are interested in watching Tamil channels, 36% English channels, 6% Hindi and about 5% of the respondents watch other channels such as Kannada, Malayalam etc. It can be seen that there is no significant deviation in the duration of watching between the various groups. About 23% of the respondents watch television for about 2-4 hours during weekends,21% for 4-6 hours,20% for more than seven hours, during weekends. With respect to advertisements 55% of the respondents watch and listen to advertisements, 20% change the channel and 24% of the samples mute audio and watch only the content of the advertisement. It can also be stated that 42% of the respondents have an affinity for advertisements related to foods, 25% for cosmetics and 16% of the respondents are interested in advertisements related to mobile, two wheelers, and the like.

Preference for foods in hotel

This deals with the preference of the respondents for eating pizza & burger, non vegetarian foods, vegetarian and other types of foods such as soups, milkshakes, ice creams etc. in a hotel. The percentages are given in the following table 1.2

Table 1.2 Preference for food in hotel/food joints

VARIABLES	N=571	PERCENTAGE
Pizza & burger ( Veg & Non-veg)	418	73
Non- vegetarian	292	51
Vegetarian	180	32
Others	88	15

From the table 1.2, it can be concluded that 73% of the respondents like consuming pizza and burger both of vegetarian and non vegetarian source, 51% like eating non-vegetarian foods, 32% like vegetarian and only 15% like consuming other types of foods such as ice creams, crispies and other types of snacks. Preferring pizza and burger in restaurants can be due to the advertisements and also influence of the peer groups.

IMPACT OF TELEVISION ON THE DIETARY HABITS OF RESPONDENTS

This section deals with the changes in dietary habits of the respondents with respect to advertisements on TV, preference for advertisements.

Food choice

It helps to establish whether their choice of food is driven by the advertisements, their liking for a particular brand, their interest in exploring the new food item when it is shown on TV and their level of satisfaction of their choice of foods.It was observed that 56% of the respondents made their food choice based on the advertisements. Advertisements motivate 68% of the samples at times for buying foods whereas 9% are always motivated by the advertisements for buying food products. The reasons for motivation are cited as celebrity and brand value, by 12% and 13% respectively, 12% cite popularity and

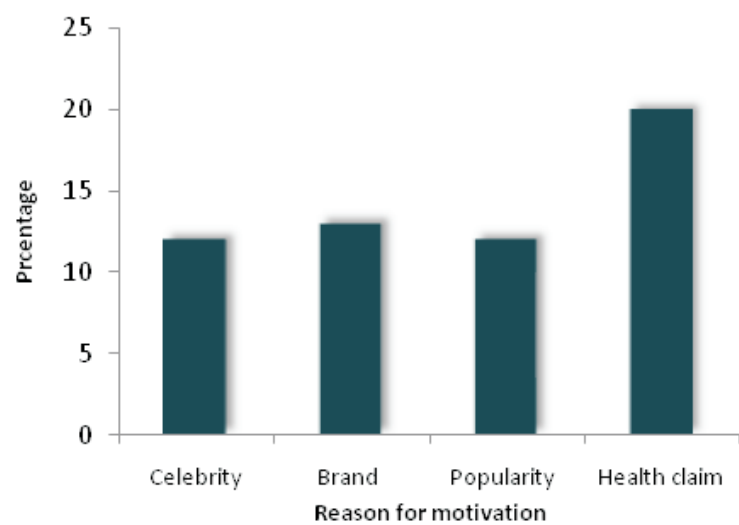


Figure 2  
REASON FOR MOTIVATION BY ADVERTISEMENTS

20% are being lured by the health claims for buying a particular food product and 49% of the samples are satisfied with their food choice made from advertisements. About 40% of the samples have a liking for a particular brand irrespective of the cost of the food/snack item such as Maggi, Dairy Milk, Five Star, Lays, etc. A total of about 63% of the samples were interested in exploring a new food item shown in TV.

Preference for advertisements

The liking for advertisements of various snack foods and beverages such as whether they developed a fondness for the particular product and did they start eating it after watching the advertisement was identified and is computed in the following table 1.3.

H<sub>0</sub>1: There is no association between opinion about advertisements and the impact of advertisement.

Table 1.3 Opinion on advertisement Vs Impact of advertisements

Advertisement related to food and beverage	Watched		Opinion on advertisement		After watching did you start eating		X <sup>2</sup> value
	Yes (%)	No (%)	Like (%)	Dislike (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)	
Tiger cream biscuits	88	11	69	19	62	26	0.000
Center fresh	91	8	75	14	67	21	0.000
Mentos	88	10	76	10	68	18	0.000
Perk	92	6	85	6	77	13	0.000
Dairy milk	96	3	93	2	84	10	0.000
Oreo	92	6	78	13	74	17	0.000
Knorr (soupy noodles)	84	13	67	17	59	23	0.000
Bourn vita	86	12	68	16	60	23	0.000
Complan	91	7	70	19	66	23	0.000
Mirinda / 7 up/ Appy fizz, etc.	94	5	84	8	78	15	0.000

From the above table it is clearly evident that almost all kinds of food and beverage advertisements are being watched by the samples and also a majority of the sample size started eating them as a result of the advertisements. Of the total samples, 84% of the samples started eating Dairy Milk after watching the advertisements, 78% drank carbonated beverages such as Mirinda, 7up and Appy fizz, 77% opted for Perk, 74% for Oreo, 68% for Mentos, 67% for Center Fresh, 66% for Complian, 61% for Tiger biscuits, 60% for Bournvita and 59% for Knorr soupy noodles. It is found from the above table that children, when exposed to food related advertisements have a remarkable change in their habits of eating. There is also a statistical significance of (p<0.05) and hence the null hypothesis is rejected and there exists a strong association between the opinion on the advertisements and the impact of advertisement.

Consumption of types of food as a result of advertisement

This section helps in figuring out the association frequencies of consuming food items such as pizza, noodles, ice creams, etc.

H<sub>0</sub>2: There is no association between frequency of consuming pizza and the reason for consumption

Table 1.4 Frequency of consumption Vs Reason for Consumption -Pizza

Frequency of consumption	Reason for consumption								Total		*X <sup>2</sup> value
	TV advertisement		Parent's advice		Friend's advice		Others		N	(%)	0.013
	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)			
Daily	8	1	3	0.5	9	1	0	-	20	3	
Alternate days	19	3	15	3	14	2	5	1	53	9	
Weekly	41	7	32	6	26	4	10	2	109	19	
Occasionally	30	5	25	4	43	7	14	2	112	20	
Rarely	44	8	18	3	48	8	26	4	136	24	
Total	142	25	93	16	140	24	55	10	430	75	

N = 571

The table describes the relation between the frequency of consuming pizza and the reasons for consumption such as due to advertisements on television, advice from parents, friends and as a result of personal liking. It can be concluded that a total of 75% of the samples consume pizza and 25% consume it as a result of advertisements on television, 16% due to parent's advice and 24% due to peer group influence. A total sample from a range of about 19% - 25% consumes pizzas weekly, occasionally and rarely. It was also found to be statistically significant and (p<0.05). The null hypothesis was thus rejected and there is an association between the frequency of consuming pizza and the various reasons causing the consumption.

Ho3: There is no association between frequency of consuming noodles and the reason for consumption.

Table 1.5 Frequency of consumption Vs Reason for Consumption -Noodles

N = 571

Frequency of consumption	Reason for consumption								Total		X <sup>2</sup> value
	TV advertisement		Parent's advice		Friend's advice		Others				0.015
	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	
Daily	46	8	22	4	19	3	3	0.5	90	16	
Alternate days	102	18	52	9	33	6	9	1	196	34	
Weekly	62	11	54	9	24	4	17	3	157	27	
Occasionally	17	3	15	3	12	2	7	1	51	9	
Rarely	13	2	9	1	10	2	6	1	38	7	
Total	240	42	152	27	98	17	42	7	532	93	

The table 5.20 describes the relation between the frequency of consuming noodles and the reasons for consumption. It



can be seen that almost all the respondents (93%) consume noodles of which 34% eat noodles on alternate days, a weekly consumption by about 27% and 16% consume noodles daily. The highest percentage (42%) consumes noodles as a result of advertisements on television, 27% due to parent's advice and 17% as a result of peer group influence. It is statistically significant and the value of  $p < 0.05$ . The null hypothesis gets rejected there exists a relevance between the frequency of consuming noodles and the reasons facilitating the consumption.

Table 1.6 Frequency of consumption Vs Reason for consumption:carbonated drinks

Frequency of consumption	Reason for consumption								Total	
	TV advertisement		Parent's advice		Friend's advice		Others			
	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)
Daily	0	-	3	0.5	2	0.3	1	0.1	6	1
Alternate days	15	3	9	1	6	1	5	1	35	6
Weekly	66	11	42	7	30	5	15	3	153	27
Occasionally	73	13	46	8	46	8	5	1	170	30
Rarely	32	6	20	3	25	4	13	2	90	16
Total	186	32	120	21	109	19	39	7	454	79

N = 571

The table 1.6 describes the relation between the frequency of consuming carbonated beverages and the reasons for consumption and is seen that a total of about 79% respondents are used to taking carbonated beverages of which 6% consume the aerated drinks on alternate days, 27% show a weekly consuming pattern and 30% have an occasional consumption. The reasons for consumption was found to be much higher for TV advertisements leading to about 32% consumption, 21% due to parent's advice and 19% as a result of peer group influence and also as a result of individual preference.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FINDINGS:

More than half of the respondents (68%) are motivated by the advertisements at times and 9% of the samples have their food choice always based on advertisements. About 63% of the respondents are fascinated by the advertisements and are keen in exploring the food items shown on televisions. It can also be seen that only 78% of the parents suggest their children's choice of food and 22% of them are not given attention about their food habits from parents which can be due to the employability of both parents which gives the children an opportunity to afford almost all kinds of food products available in the market. The advertisements shown on television employing celebrities does not fail to have an impact on the eating behaviour amounting to about sixty five percentage. The children without understanding the motivation behind such advertisements are mesmerized by their celebrities and go ahead in buying the food/snack leading to a variety of health problems ranging from vomiting, stomach ache, irritability predisposing to disorders of health such as obesity in later life. Pizzas and burgers are found to be consumed by more than two thirds of the sample group. Noodles which are touted to be ready to cook is said to be coated with wax to prevent it from sticking and it takes three or four days for the body to excrete the wax causing a serious concern. The carbonated beverages having various acids which are harmful to the body are shown on television as energy boosters motivating the younger generation to consume more of such products. The advertisements related to food, health drink and carbonated beverages had a direct link on the consumption behaviour. It was found to be directly proportional to the consumption pattern. It was found that almost 90% of the respondents had a liking for the advertisements related to food and beverages and more than 75% of them have started consumption after watching them on television.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that advertisements have an impact on the eating pattern of the school going children since they are in the beginning of their teen age and also due to peer group influence which also plays an equal role. The policy makers and the authorities concerned have to make a serious note of this malaise and should help to inculcate a healthy eating pattern in the younger generation, by taking necessary steps and can also formulate new regulations for advertisements related to food products and also keep a check by periodical monitoring of the advertisements to reduce the ill effects which indirectly helps in minimizing the health hazards.



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