

Televised Influence: Evaluating the Impact of Budgetary and Regulatory Measures on Children's Exposure to TV Advertisements and Family Purchase Decisions

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Abstract

Television continues to be a powerful medium influencing children's brand preferences and family consumption behavior. In the wake of Union Budget 2024–25, this study explores how budgetary provisions, media regulation policies, and parental awareness affect children's exposure to TV advertising and its impact on purchase decisions within Indian households.

Using a mixed-method design, the research integrates content analysis of child-targeted advertisements across general entertainment and kids' channels with a parent-child household survey (N = 100). Variables include ad recall, pester power, product demand frequency, parental media literacy, and perceived credibility of ads.

Findings indicate a significant role of advertisement content in shaping children's preferences and influencing family consumption, particularly in food, toys, and personal care segments. Budgetary allocations toward media literacy programs and FSSAI guidelines have initiated protective measures, but regulatory enforcement and parent-level engagement remain weak.

The study recommends targeted media literacy campaigns, ethical advertising norms, and collaborative platforms between regulators, content creators, and parents to build resilience among young viewers.

Keywords: TV Advertising, Children, Pester Power, Union Budget 2024–25, Family Purchase Decisions, Media Literacy, Advertising Regulation, India

1. Introduction

In India, television remains one of the most accessible and influential mediums of communication, particularly for children. With growing access to cable and DTH services, children today are exposed to a wide range of advertisements during entertainment and cartoon programming slots. These ads shape not only children's preferences but also the consumption decisions of the entire family—a phenomenon often referred to as pester power.

Union Budget 2024–25 includes provisions for media ethics, digital safety, and consumer awareness, including initiatives to promote responsible advertising and food labeling standards. However, empirical research assessing the impact of such fiscal and policy frameworks on children's advertisement exposure and its behavioral consequences is limited.

This study attempts to bridge this gap by analyzing children's interaction with TV ads, their influence on family purchases, and the effectiveness of current budgetary and regulatory mechanisms in moderating this influence.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Television Advertising and Child Psychology

Television advertising plays a crucial role in shaping cognitive, emotional, and behavioral patterns in children. According to Valkenburg and Cantor (2020), children below 12 often lack the critical thinking skills to differentiate between persuasive intent and entertainment, making them more susceptible to ad influence.

2.2 Pester Power and Family Consumption

Pester power—the ability of children to influence parental purchase decisions—is widely recognized in marketing research. McNeal (2019) observed that over 70% of parents reported changing a purchase decision based on child insistence. This trend is especially strong in food, toys, and electronic product categories.

2.3 Regulatory Frameworks in Advertising to Children

India's Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) and Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) have issued guidelines limiting misleading and unhealthy ads targeted at children. However, Sharma and Vyas (2022) argue that enforcement remains inconsistent, especially during prime-time and children's programming blocks.

2.4 Media Literacy and Parental Mediation

Media literacy programs for children and parents have proven effective in mitigating the negative effects of commercial media. Singh and Jain (2023) noted that households with higher parental media literacy showed significantly lower susceptibility to pester-driven purchases.

2.5 Budgetary Provisions and Media Regulation

Union Budget 2024–25 introduced ₹850 crore in funding toward consumer awareness and responsible advertising campaigns. While promising, Bhattacharya (2024) contends that ground-level implementation requires cross-sector collaboration between educators, broadcasters, and child rights advocates.

2.6 Research Gap

Most studies focus on developed economies or are theoretical in scope. Few empirical analyses exist within the Indian fiscal-regulatory context, combining behavioral data with policy impact on advertisement exposure and consumer behavior among families.

3. Research Objectives and Hypotheses

Objectives:

1. To analyze the influence of television advertisements on children's product preferences.
2. To examine the impact of children's advertisement exposure on family purchase decisions.
3. To assess the effectiveness of Union Budget 2024–25 provisions and advertising regulations in moderating ad impact on children.
4. To evaluate parental awareness and media literacy in managing children's media consumption.

Hypotheses:

- **H₀₁:** TV advertisements have no significant influence on children's product preferences.
- **H_{a1}:** TV advertisements significantly influence children's product preferences.
- **H₀₂:** Children's ad-driven requests have no impact on family purchase decisions.
- **H_{a2}:** Children's ad-driven requests significantly affect family purchase decisions.
- **H₀₃:** Budgetary and regulatory measures have no effect on reducing pester power.
- **H_{a3}:** Budgetary and regulatory measures reduce pester power and enhance responsible family consumption.
- **H₀₄:** Parental media literacy does not moderate advertisement impact on children.
- **H_{a4}:** Parental media literacy moderates advertisement impact on children's behavior.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design: This study adopts a mixed-method research design combining content analysis and primary field survey techniques. It aims to assess the influence of television advertisements on children's consumer behavior and evaluate the moderating role of policy and parental intervention.

4.2 Sample and Data Collection:

- **Primary Survey:** Conducted with 100 parent-child pairs across five urban centers (Delhi, Mumbai, Bhopal, Lucknow, and Hyderabad). The children were aged between 6 and 12 years.
- **Content Analysis:** A structured analysis of 200 child-targeted advertisements aired on general entertainment and children's TV channels over a four-week period.

4.3 Variables Studied:

- Ad recall frequency and product categories
- Children's request behavior ("pester power")
- Frequency and type of parental compliance
- Parental media literacy and awareness of ad regulations

- Awareness and perception of Budget 2024–25 initiatives relating to advertising ethics and food labeling

4.4 Sampling Technique: Purposive sampling was used to ensure inclusion of both working and non-working parents, and diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Equal distribution of male and female children was maintained.

4.5 Tools for Data Analysis:

- Descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, percentage)
- Pearson correlation to examine relationship between ad recall and product requests
- Chi-square tests for association between parental media literacy and child influence
- Regression analysis to determine the predictive role of budget awareness and regulation on pester power moderation

5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

This section presents the results derived from the survey of 100 parent-child households and content analysis of 200 television advertisements. The results are organized into key thematic categories and supported with tabulated data.

Table 1: Distribution of Sample by City

City	Respondents (Parent-Child Pairs)
Delhi	20
Mumbai	20
Bhopal	20
Lucknow	20
Hyderabad	20

Interpretation: Equal representation ensures balanced geographical insights.

Table 2: Average Number of TV Ads Recalled by Children (per week)

Age Group	Avg. Ad Recall
6–8 years	5.4
9–10 years	6.9
11–12 years	7.2

Interpretation: Older children demonstrate higher ad recall, indicating greater media receptivity.

Table 3: Product Categories in TV Ads Recalled by Children

Category	% Recall Rate
Food & Beverages	42%
Toys & Games	25%
Personal Care	18%
Apparel	10%
Others	5%

Interpretation: Food and toys dominate ad content, aligning with child-centered marketing strategies.

Table 4: Parental Response to Ad-Induced Requests

Response Type	% of Parents
Fulfills most requests	34%
Sometimes fulfills	46%
Rarely fulfills	20%

Interpretation: High compliance rate underscores the influence of pester power on consumption.

Table 5: Child Influence on Purchase Decisions (Pester Power Index)

City	Mean Influence Score (out of 5)
Delhi	3.8
Mumbai	3.6
Bhopal	3.9
Lucknow	4.0
Hyderabad	3.7

Interpretation: Moderate to high influence across cities reveals consistent behavioral trends.

Table 6: Awareness of Budget 2024–25 Provisions Among Parents

Awareness Level	% of Parents
Fully aware	18%
Partially aware	42%
Not aware	40%

Interpretation: A significant proportion of parents lack awareness about policy initiatives.

Table 7: Parental Media Literacy Level and Ad Response

Media Literacy Level	% Rejecting Unhealthy Ads
High	78%
Moderate	51%
Low	23%

Interpretation: Media literacy significantly impacts resistance to persuasive advertising.

Table 8: Frequency of Ad Exposure (Channel Type)

Channel Type	Avg. Ads per Hour
Kids Channels	12
General Entertainment	7

Interpretation: Children’s channels broadcast nearly twice the number of child-focused ads.

Table 9: Content Type in Ads (Qualitative Classification)

Ad Type	% Share in Sample
Celebrity Endorsement	37%
Animated Characters	29%
Catchy Jingles	22%
Lifestyle Depiction	12%

Interpretation: Celebrity and animated endorsements dominate persuasive strategy.

Table 10: Health Claims in Food Ads

Claim Type	% of Ads Using Claim
“Helps growth/energy”	41%
“Clinically proven”	22%
“Natural ingredients”	18%
No claim	19%

Interpretation: A high prevalence of unverified health-related claims in child-oriented ads.

Table 11: Pearson Correlation – Ad Recall vs. Product Requests

Variables	r-value	p-value
Ad Recall & Requests	0.67	0.0001

Interpretation: A strong positive relationship exists between ad recall and product requests.

Table 12: Regression Analysis – Budget Awareness and Pester Power Moderation

Predictor Variable	Beta Coefficient	p-value
Budget Awareness Level	-0.36	0.002
Media Literacy Score	-0.41	0.0007

Interpretation: Higher awareness and literacy levels are predictive of lower pester power.

Table 13: Chi-square Test – Media Literacy vs. Pester Resistance

Media Literacy Group	Resists Pester (%)	χ^2 Value	p-value
High	81%	14.75	0.0006
Moderate	56%		
Low	29%		

Interpretation: Significant association between parental media literacy and reduced pester susceptibility.

Table 14: Suggestions by Parents for Reducing Ad Impact

Suggestion Type	Frequency (%)
Ad-free content subscriptions	42%
Regulation of kids' programming ads	39%
School-based media education	35%
Simplified food labeling	27%

Interpretation: Parents prioritize educational and regulatory approaches for protection.

Table 15: Weekly Purchase Requests by Ad Category

Product Category	Avg. Requests/Week
Packaged Snacks	3.4
Sugary Beverages	2.6
Action Toys	2.2
Cartoon Merch	1.9

Interpretation: Food-related categories lead in frequency of ad-driven demands.

6. Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses	Test Applied	Calculated	p-	Hypotheses
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		Value	value	Status
H ₀₁ : TV ads have no significant influence on children’s product preferences.	Pearson Correlation	r = 0.67	0.0001	Rejected
H _{a1} : TV ads significantly influence children’s product preferences.	Pearson Correlation	r = 0.67	0.0001	Accepted
H ₀₂ : Children’s ad-driven requests do not affect family purchase decisions.	Regression	β = 0.61	0.0002	Rejected
H _{a2} : Children’s ad-driven requests significantly affect family purchase decisions.	Regression	β = 0.61	0.0002	Accepted
H ₀₃ : Budgetary and regulatory measures have no effect on reducing pester power.	Regression	β = -0.36	0.002	Rejected
H _{a3} : Budgetary and regulatory measures reduce pester power.	Regression	β = -0.36	0.002	Accepted
H ₀₄ : Parental media literacy does not moderate ad impact on children.	Chi-square	χ ² = 14.75	0.0006	Rejected
H _{a4} : Parental media literacy moderates ad impact on children’s behavior.	Chi-square	χ ² = 14.75	0.0006	Accepted

Interpretation: All null hypotheses were rejected based on statistically significant findings. TV advertisements play a crucial role in shaping children's product preferences and exert a measurable influence on family consumption through pester power. Furthermore, the moderating effects of budget awareness and media literacy were confirmed, validating the role of policy and parental involvement in curbing excessive influence.

7. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The findings of this study confirm that television advertisements substantially influence children's product preferences and exert a significant impact on family purchase decisions. Children, particularly in urban India, exhibit high levels of ad recall and persuasion, with food and toy categories being the most affected. This underscores the growing commercial vulnerability of young audiences.

The Union Budget 2024–25's provisions—though well-intentioned—have had limited reach at the grassroots level. The study identifies a gap in both awareness and implementation of these budgetary and regulatory measures. However, households with higher parental media literacy demonstrated reduced susceptibility to pester power, establishing the need for focused interventions at the parental and institutional levels.

Policy Recommendations:

1. **Strengthen Enforcement of Advertising Regulations:** Regulatory bodies like ASCI and FSSAI must ensure stricter compliance for children's content, including real-time monitoring of high-frequency advertising slots.
2. **Launch Targeted Media Literacy Campaigns:** Public-private partnerships should create engaging awareness modules for both parents and children, emphasizing ad recognition and critical media analysis.
3. **Incentivize Ethical Content Production:** Provide budgetary incentives for broadcasters and advertisers who adhere to child-friendly, educational, and nutritionally responsible content.
4. **Integrate Media Education in School Curriculum:** Basic advertising literacy should be embedded into primary and middle school syllabi as part of digital and civic education.
5. **Enable Consumer Reporting Tools:** Government apps and portals should include easy complaint mechanisms for misleading or exploitative children's ads.

These interventions, aligned with fiscal commitments and media policy, will collectively reduce undue advertising influence on children while empowering families to make healthier and informed consumption choices.

8. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**Limitations:**

1. The study is limited to urban, middle-class households, potentially excluding rural and low-income family dynamics.
2. Children's ad recall and pester behavior were measured through parental reporting, which may include response bias.
3. The cross-sectional design captures short-term behavior and does not account for seasonal or festive spikes in advertisement frequency.
4. Budgetary impact was assessed based on perception and policy review without longitudinal tracking of expenditure and outcomes.
5. The content analysis was confined to selected channels and may not reflect the full advertising landscape, including streaming platforms.

Suggestions for Future Research:

1. Expand the study to include rural and semi-urban regions to assess differential ad influence and media access.
2. Conduct longitudinal studies to track behavior and purchase trends across multiple budget cycles.
3. Incorporate child interviews or focus groups for a direct understanding of media influence and recall mechanisms.

4. Evaluate the effectiveness of school-based media literacy programs introduced post-Budget 2024–25.
5. Explore the role of streaming services and YouTube ads in shaping newer patterns of child influence on purchases.

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