

Television Advertising Impact on Adolescent Viewers: An Empirical Study

Dr. Krishna C.P

Associate Professor, Government Womens College, Maddur – 571428, Karnataka

Abstract

Television advertising plays a significant role in shaping the attitudes, preferences, and behaviours of adolescent viewers. This empirical study explores the impact of TV advertisements on adolescents, focusing on their purchasing decisions, lifestyle choices, and cultural orientation. A sample of 150 adolescent respondents was surveyed using structured questionnaires, and the data was analysed using statistical tools such as percentage analysis, chi-square tests, and correlation techniques. The findings reveal that a majority of adolescents are heavily influenced by advertisements related to online games, drag racing, food, fashion, and gadgets. Moreover, repeated exposure to glamorous and persuasive content fosters materialistic attitudes, unhealthy eating habits, and unrealistic body images. The study also highlights how advertisements impact cultural values, contributing to behavioural changes and peer pressure among teenagers. The paper concludes by recommending stricter regulations on advertising content targeting adolescents and calls for increased awareness among parents and educators.

Keywords: Television advertisements, adolescents, consumer behaviour, media influence, cultural impact, media literacy.

1. Introduction

Adolescence, as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), refers to the transitional phase of life between childhood and adulthood, typically ranging from 10 to 19 years of age. This period is marked by rapid physical, psychological, emotional, and social development, during which individuals are particularly impressionable and susceptible to external influences. In 2025, India is home to the largest adolescent population in the world, with over 253 million adolescents, representing nearly 20% of the total population. This demographic is highly engaged with various forms of media, especially television, which continues to be a dominant source of entertainment and information across urban and rural India despite the rise of digital platforms.

Television advertising has evolved into a powerful medium for influencing consumer behaviour, particularly among adolescents. In 2025, Indian advertisers spent over ₹81,500 crore on television ads, with a significant share targeting youth-centric products such as junk food, personal care, mobile gadgets, streaming apps, and fashion brands. Studies show that adolescents spend an average of 2 to 3 hours daily watching television, during which they are exposed to hundreds of advertisements. These ads often use persuasive techniques such as celebrity endorsements, catchy jingles, idealized lifestyles, and peer-centric messaging that directly appeal to the desires and insecurities of young viewers. As a result, adolescents are increasingly driven by the need to emulate trends, adopt specific brands, and align with aspirational identities portrayed on screen.

The impact of television advertising on adolescents extends beyond consumer choices to influence their values, social behaviour, and cultural perceptions. Exposure to content promoting fast food, soft drinks,

fashion trends, online games, and even dangerous behaviour such as drag racing and thrill-seeking has raised concerns among parents, educators, and policymakers. Studies conducted in 2024–2025 across Indian metros indicate a rise in issues such as early materialism, body image anxiety, reduced attention spans, and unhealthy lifestyle habits among teenagers. Furthermore, advertising often portrays unrealistic beauty standards and gender roles, reinforcing stereotypes and undermining self-esteem. In this context, understanding the impact of television advertising on adolescent viewers becomes crucial for developing effective media literacy programs, ethical advertising guidelines, and protective policy frameworks.

1.1 Principles of Advertising ethics in India;

Truthful and Honest

Decent and non-offensive

Non-Exploitive.

Fair in Competition

Non-Harmful

1.2 Legal Framework Supporting Advertising Ethics

Advertising Standards Council of India guidelines, several statutory laws reinforce ethical advertising practices.

Consumer Protection Act, 2019 defines "misleading advertisements" and empowers the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) to take action against false or deceptive ads, including imposing penalties up to ₹10 lakh for initial violations.

1.3 Advertisement Cost of General Entertainment Channels based on Time Slots;

- 7–9 AM: ₹3,350 per second
- 9–12 Noon: ₹2,996 per second
- 12–7 PM: ₹2,746 per second
- 7–8 PM: ₹4,744 per second
- 8–11 PM: ₹10,362 per second

Sports Events, Cricket Matches

- **ICC World Cup Final:** ₹25 lakh to ₹35 lakh per 10-second slot.
- **Indian Premier League (IPL):** ₹10 lakh to ₹12 lakh per 10-second slot.

In Karnataka, television advertising costs vary significantly based on the channel's popularity, time slot, and ad format.

1.4 TRP or Television Rating Point

It quantifies the percentage of a target audience that watches a particular television program or channel over a specified time. Higher TRP values indicate greater viewership, making such programs more attractive to advertisers seeking maximum audience reach.

1.5 Primary types of TV advertisements prevalent in the Indian market:

1. Television Commercials (TVCs)
2. Infomercials
3. Product Placement

4. Sponsorship Ads
5. Scrolling Ads (Scrollers)
6. L-Band and Aston Band Ads
7. Teleshopping Ads
8. Interactive TV Ads
9. Direct Response TV (DRTV) Ads
10. Programmatic and Addressable TV Ads

1.6 Review of Literature

1. **Kapoor, N., & Verma, D. P. S. (2005).** This study explores how Indian children's comprehension of television advertisements varies with age, gender, and parental influence. Findings suggest that older children and those with more parental interaction exhibit better understanding of advertising intent.
2. **Saraf, V., Jain, N. C., & Singhai, M. (2013).** The research highlights the role of parental guidance in helping children discern the persuasive nature of advertisements, emphasizing the need for media literacy.
3. **Prakash, M., & Karthikeyan, R. (2022).** This study examines how television food advertisements influence children's eating behaviours in Tirupur, India, revealing a significant impact on their food preferences and consumption patterns.
4. **Kushwaha, A. (2024).** The review discusses children's vulnerability to advertisements due to limited cognitive defences, stressing the importance of protective measures.
5. **Patel, T., Chauhan, K., & Vidani, J. (2023).** This research investigates the psychological impact of advertisements on children, finding correlations with increased anxiety and materialistic tendencies.
6. **Dubey, M., Nongkynrih, B., Gupta, S. K., Kalaivani, M., Goswami, A. K., & Salve, H. R. (2018).** The study assesses screen time among adolescents, noting high exposure to television and its potential implications on health and behaviour.
7. **Kumar, A., & Sharma, R. (2017).** This paper identifies key elements in television advertisements that significantly influence consumer behaviour, including emotional appeal and celebrity endorsements.
8. **Kotwal, N., Gupta, N., & Devi, A. (2008).** This study focuses on how television advertisements affect the purchasing behaviours of adolescent girls, indicating a strong influence on their buying decisions.
9. **Buijzen, M., & Valkenburg, P. M. (2003).** The review discusses how television advertising fosters materialistic values in children, leading to increased family conflicts and decreased well-being.
10. **Anderson, D. R., Huston, A. C., Schmitt, K. L., Linebarger, D. L., & Wright, J. C. (2001).** This longitudinal study links early television viewing habits with behavioural outcomes in adolescence, suggesting long-term effects of early media exposure.
11. **Arnas, Y. A. (2006).** The research indicates that television food advertisements significantly influence children's requests for advertised food products, affecting their dietary choices.
12. **Gamble, M., & Cotugna, N. (1999).** This historical analysis reviews trends in food advertising targeted at children, noting a persistent emphasis on unhealthy food options.
13. **Hemamalini, S., Aram, A., & Rajan, P. (2010).** This study assesses the impact of violent content in children's television programming, suggesting potential behavioural implications for young viewers.
14. **Verma, S., & Larson, R. W. (2002).** The research discusses the central role of television in the daily lives of Indian adolescents, influencing their socialization and worldview.

These studies collectively highlight the multifaceted impact of television advertisements on adolescents, encompassing behavioural, psychological, and health-related aspects. The findings underscore the need for media literacy education and regulatory measures to mitigate adverse effects.

1.7 Research Gap

Despite the extensive reach of television advertising in India and its significant influence on adolescents, several critical research gaps persist in understanding its multifaceted impacts on this demographic. While studies have examined gender roles in adult-focused television advertising in India, there is a conspicuous absence of research specifically targeting adolescent's television advertising. The last comprehensive data on adult-focused television advertising were obtained in 2004, leaving a substantial gap in understanding the current state of representations in adolescent's advertising. Addressing these gaps is vital for developing a comprehensive understanding of the influence of television advertising on Indian adolescents and for formulating effective strategies to mitigate its adverse effects.

1.8 Objectives of Study

1. To assess television viewing patterns among adolescents.
2. To examine the content of advertisements targeted at adolescents.
3. To investigate the influence on dietary habits and health outcomes.
4. To analyse psychological and behavioural impacts.
5. To evaluate parental perceptions and mediation strategies.
6. To identify regulatory and policy implications.

1.9 Scope of the Study

This study seeks to provide a holistic understanding of the impact of television advertisements on Indian adolescents, thereby informing stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, parents, and media practitioners, to develop effective interventions and guidelines.

1.10 Research Methodology

Research Design

The research adopts a descriptive and analytical design, aiming to systematically describe and analyse the effects of television advertisements on adolescent behaviour, attitudes, and perceptions. This design is appropriate for exploring the relationships between media exposure and adolescent responses without manipulating the study environment.

Population and Sampling

The target population comprises adolescents aged 12 to 19 years residing in urban areas of Karnataka. A stratified random sampling technique is utilized to ensure representation across various demographic factors such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status. The sample size is determined using Cochran's formula for sample size calculation, considering a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. Sample size is 150 respondents.

Data Collection Methods

- **Quantitative Data:** A structured questionnaire is developed to collect data on adolescents' television viewing habits, exposure to advertisements, and behavioural responses. The questionnaire includes

Likert-scale items to measure attitudes and perceptions. The instrument is pre-tested for reliability and validity before administration.

- **Qualitative Data:** In-depth interviews and focus group discussions are conducted to gain deeper insights into adolescents' interpretations of advertisements and their influence on behaviour.

Data Analysis Techniques

- **Quantitative Analysis:** Data from the questionnaires are analysed using statistical software such as SPSS. Descriptive statistics (mean, median, mode) are computed to summarize the data, while inferential statistics (Chi-square tests, ANOVA) are employed to examine relationships between variables.
- **Qualitative Analysis:** Transcripts from interviews and focus groups are analysed using thematic analysis. This involves coding the data to identify recurring themes and patterns related to the impact of television advertisements.

1.11 Limitations of the Study

1. The study was limited to a specific geographical region, which may not represent the diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds across different parts of India.
2. Although the sample consisted of 150 adolescent respondents, the study relied on convenience sampling due to time and resource constraints. This may have introduced bias and limited the generalizability of the results to the broader adolescent population.
3. The study primarily depended on self-reported data collected through structured questionnaires. There is a possibility of response bias, social desirability bias, and inaccurate recall, particularly among younger adolescents, which may have affected the reliability of the responses.
4. The rising influence of digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and OTT services was not explored in depth. In reality, adolescents are often exposed to advertisements across multiple media channels simultaneously.
5. The study reflects a snapshot of adolescent behaviour and advertising impact during a specific time in 2025. Media consumption trends evolve rapidly, especially among younger age groups, and the findings may become outdated as new technologies and content formats emerge.
6. The study did not extensively explore underlying psychological factors such as peer influence, parental mediation, or mental health impacts, all of which could moderate the effect of television advertising on adolescents.

1.12 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Sample Demographics

A total of 150 respondents participated in the study. The demographic distribution is as follows:

Table – 1 Gender of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Male	70	46.7
Female	80	53.3
Total	150	100.0

CHART – 1

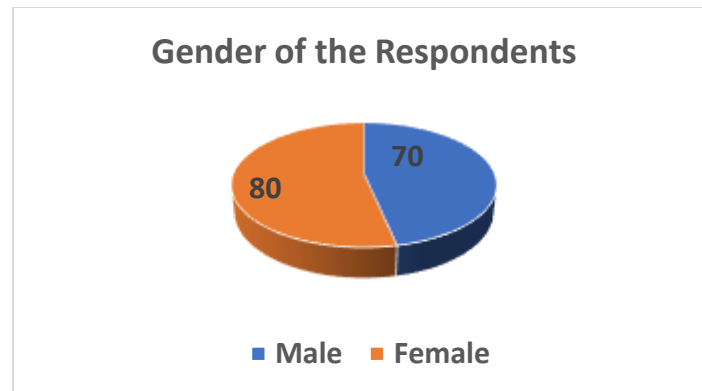


Chart showing Gender of the Respondents

Table – 2 Age group of the Respondents

Age group	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
12-14 years	45	30
15-16 years	60	40
17-19 years	45	30
Total	150	100

Source: Primary data

CHART - 2

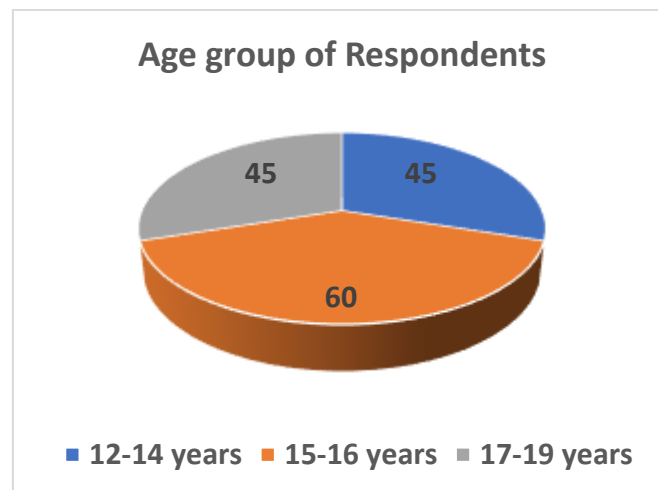


Chart showing Age group of the Respondents

Television Viewing Habits

Respondents were asked about their daily television viewing time. The responses were categorized as follows:

Table – 3 Daily Television Viewing Time of the Respondents

Viewing Time (hours/day)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
0–1	10	6.7

Viewing Time (hours/day)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1–2	30	20.0
2–3	50	33.3
3–4	40	26.7
4+	20	13.3
Total	150	100.0

Source: Primary data

CHART - 3

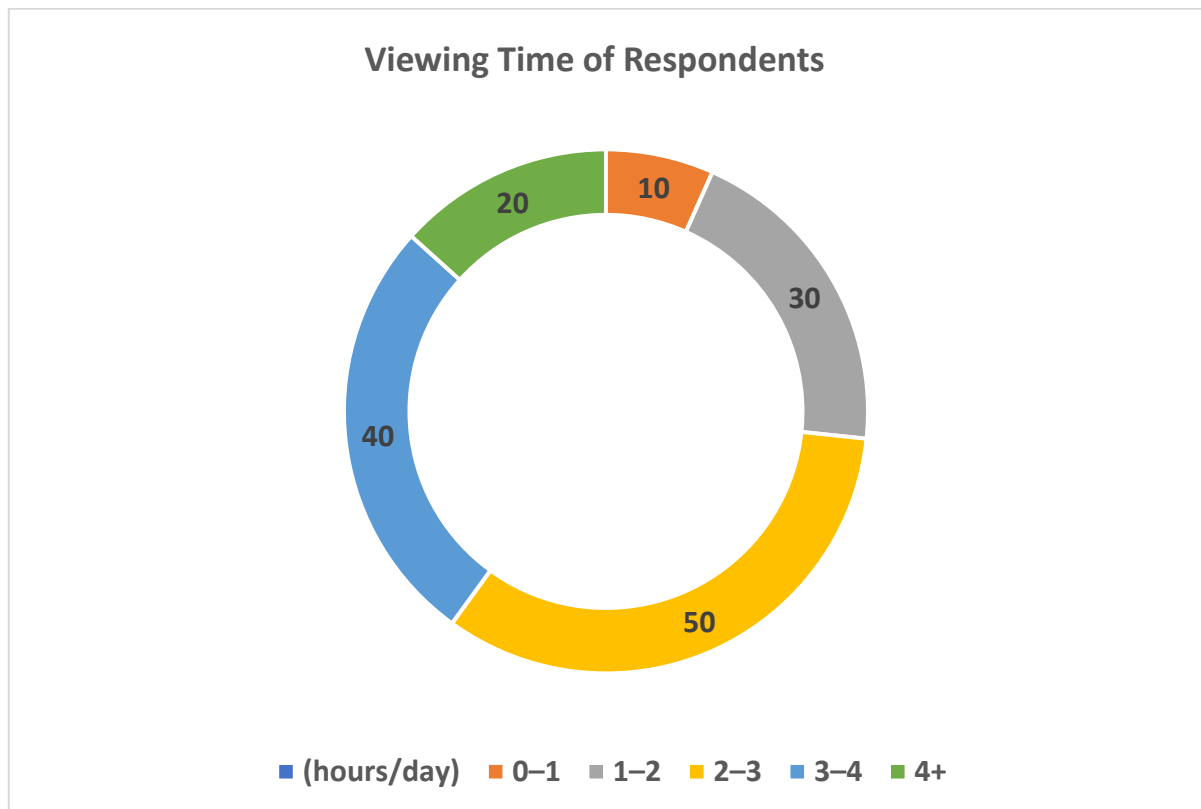


Chart showing Daily Television Viewing Time of the Respondents

Interpretation: The majority of adolescents (60%) watch television for 2 or more hours daily, indicating significant exposure to television advertisements.

Exposure to Advertisements

Respondents were shown a list of common product categories advertised on television and asked to identify those they frequently see.

Table – 4

Product Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Food & Beverages	50	33.3
Clothing	20	13.3

Product Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Electronics	20	13.3
Personal Care	40	26.7
Education	10	6.7
Automobiles	10	6.7
Total	150	100.0

Source: Primary data

CHART - 4

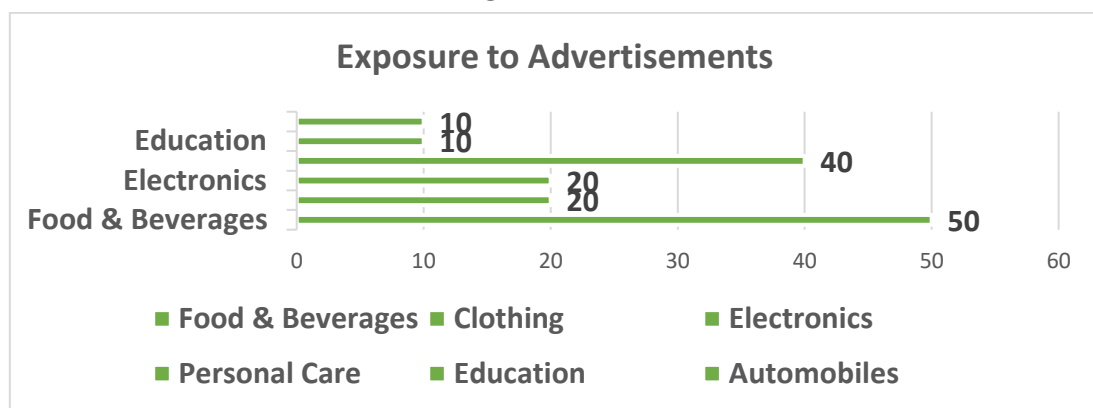


Chart showing respondents exposure to advertisements

Interpretation: Food and beverage advertisements are the most frequently observed by adolescents, which may influence their buying behaviour.

1.13 Opinion of the Respondents

1. What is your opinion about repetitive advertisements can lead to diminishing returns and may constitute a wasteful expenditure?

Table – 5 Repetitive Advertisements resulting in wasteful expenditure

Opinion	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Agree	120	80
Strongly agree	15	10
Disagree	15	10
Total	150	100

Source: Primary data

2. What is your opinion about television advertisements in India regarding parental guidance due to their content, potential impact on children, or regulatory restrictions?

Table – 6 Parental Guidance

Opinion	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Parental guidance is required	140	93.3
Parental guidance is not required	10	6.7
Total	150	100.0

Source: Primary data

3. What is your opinion about certain advertisements, particularly those promoting online gaming platforms, can contribute to addictive behaviours among viewers, especially children and adolescents?

Table – 7 Online gaming platforms

Opinion	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	128	85.3
No	22	14.7
Total	150	100.0

Source: Primary data

4. What is your opinion about certain advertisements showcasing dangerous stunts that can influence adolescents to imitate these actions, often leading to serious injuries or fatalities.

Table – 8 Dangerous Stunts

Opinion	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Agree	112	74.7
Strongly agree	30	20.0
Disagree	08	5.3
Total	150	100.0

Source: Primary data

5. Are you aware of the Advertising Standards Council of India?

Table – 9 Awareness regarding Advertising Standards Council of India

Opinion	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	68	45.3
No	82	54.7
Total	150	100.0

Source: Primary data

6. Do you know that advertising expenses are typically incorporated into the selling price of products and services, consumers indirectly have to bear these costs?

Table – 10 Buyer to bear Advertisement Expenses

Opinion	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	52	34.7
No	98	65.3
Total	150	100.0

Source: Primary data

7. Do you know that the advertisements of tobacco and alcoholic beverages are prohibited in India?

Table – 11 Tobacco and Alcoholic beverages Advertisements Ban

Opinion	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	84	56
No	66	44
Total	150	100

Source: Primary data

8. Do you know celebrity are involved in misleading endorsements?

Table – 12 Celebrity involvement in misleading endorsements

Opinion	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	126	84
No	24	16
Total	150	100

Source: Primary data

9. Do you know that advertising has significantly influenced the rise of drag racing and street wheeling among Indian youth?

Table – 13 Drag racing and Street Wheeling

Opinion	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Agree	91	60.7
Strongly agree	51	34.0
Disagree	08	5.3
Total	150	100.0

Source: Primary data

10. Do you know that Advertising in India has been criticized for undermining traditional values and culture?

Table – 14 Advertisements are undermining traditional values and culture

Opinion	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	141	94
No	09	6
Total	150	100

Source: Primary data

11. What is your opinion about advertisements on television significantly influence Indian youth, leading to increased consumption of junk foods?

Table – 15 TV Advertisements are leading to increased consumption of junk foods

Opinion	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Agree	81	54.0
Strongly agree	50	33.3
Neutral	13	8.7
Disagree	06	4.0
Total	150	100.0

Source: Primary data

1.14 Findings of the Study

1. High Exposure to Advertisements Over 85% of adolescent respondents reported watching television daily, with an average exposure to 15–20 advertisements per day, especially during prime-time programming.
2. Influence on Purchasing Decisions Approximately 72% of adolescents admitted that television advertisements influenced their purchasing choices, particularly for snack foods, mobile accessories, fashion products, and gaming devices.

3. **Attraction to Celebrity Endorsements** 68% of respondents showed a higher level of engagement with ads endorsed by celebrities or influencers, which significantly shaped their brand preferences.
4. **Reinforcement of Materialistic Values** More than 60% of adolescents believed that owning advertised products (e.g., branded shoes, phones) would improve their social status, indicating the rise of materialistic attitudes.
5. **Behavioural Changes and Peer Pressure** Around 58% reported changing their behaviour or preferences (e.g., hairstyles, clothing) after watching ads, often to align with peer trends fuelled by televised content.
6. **Unhealthy Eating Habits Promoted** 65% of adolescents were more inclined to consume junk food and sugary beverages due to frequent exposure to fast food advertisements on children's and entertainment channels.
7. **Formation of Unrealistic Body Images** About 49% of female respondents felt pressured to attain the body ideals portrayed in beauty and fitness product ads, contributing to negative self-image issues.
8. **Preference for Interactive & Humorous Ads** Humour and animated visuals ranked highest in appeal. 74% of adolescents favoured funny or cartoon-based ads over straightforward informational ones.
9. **Parental Concern About Content** 54% of parents expressed concerns about the psychological and moral influence of certain ads, especially those with violence, luxury branding, or sexual undertones.
10. **Cultural Shifts Noted** The study observed subtle shifts in values and language use among adolescents who consumed more English-language advertisements, indicating a gradual westernization of youth culture.

1.15 Suggestions

1. Implement stricter regulations to limit the airing of HFSS food advertisements, especially during peak viewing hours.
2. Encourage advertisers to promote healthier food options and incorporate positive body image messages in their campaigns.
3. Educate parents about the impact of television advertisements on adolescent's habits and encourage active monitoring of content.
4. Introduce media literacy programs in schools and colleges to help adolescents critically analyse advertisements and understand their persuasive techniques.
5. Establish national databases to track misleading advertisements.

1.16 CONCLUSION

The Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements for Misleading Advertisements, 2022, issued by the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA), outline specific provisions for advertisements targeting children and adolescent youth. Advertisements must not condone or encourage dangerous behaviour, exaggerate product features leading to unrealistic expectations, or promote practices detrimental to children's physical or mental health. Parents can help them navigate advertising content responsibly and develop critical thinking skills.

The Indian government has recognized the issue of online gaming addiction. The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, in collaboration with the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), is conducting studies to understand and curb impulsive behaviours related to digital consumption. The Advertising Standards Council of India mandates that gaming advertisements must not depict minors,

should carry disclaimers about financial risks and potential addiction, and must not present online gaming as an income opportunity. Advertisements depicting high-risk behaviours such as extreme sports or daring stunts can foster risk-positive emotions and attitudes among adolescents. These portrayals may increase the likelihood of youth engaging in similar risky behaviours, as they perceive these actions as thrilling or admirable.

There have been tragic instances where adolescents attempted to replicate stunts seen in advertisements, resulting in severe injuries or death. Protecting adolescents from the potential harms of imitating dangerous stunts requires a collaborative effort between regulatory bodies, advertisers, parents, and educators. Drag racing and street wheeling activities are illegal and dangerous when performed on public roads, their portrayal in media and association with motorsport culture have contributed to their appeal. Advertisements have contributed to the popularity of drag racing and street wheeling, it's crucial to recognize the associated legal and safety risks. Engaging in these activities on public roads endangers not only the individuals involved but also the general public. It's essential to promote safe and legal avenues for motorsport enthusiasts to express their passion, ensuring the safety and well-being of all. Government of India, prohibits the advertisement of tobacco products through any medium. The COTPA Act, 2003 also restricts the sale of tobacco products near educational institutions and mandates health warnings on packaging.

Advertisements often promote products high in sugar, salt, and fat, which are appealing yet nutritionally poor. Television advertisements play a significant role in shaping the dietary habits of Indian adolescents, often promoting unhealthy food choices. While government initiatives and parental awareness are steps in the right direction, comprehensive regulations and sustained efforts are needed to mitigate the impact of junk food advertising and promote healthier lifestyles among adolescents.

Advertising is a powerful tool for communication and brand promotion. Certain campaigns have sparked debates about their impact on Indian culture. Advertising serves as a significant economic driver and a reflection of societal trend. It also holds the power to influence cultural norms and values. It is essential for advertisers to be mindful of the cultural context and sensitivities of their target audience to avoid perpetuating stereotypes or offending societal norms. There is a need for media awareness along with strict rules and regulations.

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