

# PAKISTANI CHILDRENS' VIEWS OF TV ADVERTISING

## MIŠLJENJA PAKISTANSKE DJECE O TV OGLAŠAVANJU

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### SAŽETAK

Ova kvalitativna studija istražuje mišljenja pakistanske djece o televizijskom oglašavanju te navodi čimbenike utjecaja na izbor marke tzv. snack proizvoda. Namjernim uzorkovanjem odabrano je tridesetšestero djece iz triju škola, u kojima su putem fokus grupa prikupljeni kvali-

### ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores Pakistani children's views regarding TV advertising and outlines the factors impacting their choice of snack brands. Thirty-six children from three schools were selected purposefully and qualitative data was collected through focus group sessions held

tativni podaci. Nalazi istraživanja upućuju na to da djeca razumiju namjere sadržane u porukama oglašivača snack proizvoda. Različiti oblici pojedinih maraka usmjereni na elemente vezane i nevezane uz proizvod smatraju se nužnima i pridonose namjeri kupovine. Djeca identificiraju marke kroz jinglove i crtane likove te su svjesna logike TV oglašavanja. Istraživanje je pokazalo da su ona dobro obaviještena, iskrena, da vole zabavu i racionalni su potrošači, što ima važne implikacije za marketinške stručnjake u prehrambenoj industriji. Ovaj je rad izvoran doprinos u području socijalizacije potrošača i nastoji pomoći čitateljima pri razumijevanju stavova djece prema TV oglašavanju putem identifikaciju nekih elemenata koji pridonose izboru marke snack proizvoda među djecom.

in schools. Findings suggest that children understand the intended message of snack brand advertisers. Different variants of brands focusing on some product- and non-product related elements are considered imperative, contributing towards purchase. Children identify brands through jingles and cartoon characters and are well-aware of the logic behind TV advertising. This study highlighted children as knowledgeable, straightforward, fun-loving and rational consumers, all of which have some important implications for food marketers. The research is an original contribution to the work in the field of consumer socialization; it is intended to help the readers understand children's attitude with regard to TV advertising, and identify some of the elements contributing to the choice of snack brands among children.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Brand messages are communicated through various tools, collectively known as the communication mix. A strong and positive relationship has been found to exist among various elements of the communication mix, especially advertisements and their impact on brand recognition and recall by consumers. At the same time, consumers also expect entertainment through advertising.<sup>1</sup> Products such as toys, confectionery items, fast food and snacks are usually promoted through television (TV) advertisements, targeting children as a segment. However, only TV ads that are full of excitement and fascination were found to affect children's motivation enough to want specific brands.<sup>2</sup> More specifically, it has been shown through empirical research that the marketing of food items affects children's food buying behavior.<sup>3</sup>

Children are considered to be a unique market segment for food marketing as they usually consume snacks during meals or in a variety of ways, depending on different cultural settings.<sup>4</sup> Children in Asia consume fewer dairy products compared with their European counterparts. Children consume snacks daily and it helps them gain 9 to 22 percent of their routine energy consumption, depending on the quality and quantity consumed.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, it is important for food producers to understand children's preferences for snacks in order to depict appropriate images on television.<sup>6</sup>

It is estimated that 60 percent of Pakistan's population consists of children and teenagers.<sup>7</sup> Advertising agencies in Pakistan target children differently, typically by sharing fantasy stories through cartoon characters. Leading companies in a number of sectors, such as Safeguard Brand in the soap industry, Cocomo Brand in the biscuit industry, Fany Brand in the confectionery industry, Kids Zone by McDonalds and Jazz brand for kids in the telecom sector, are considering different ways of communicating to influence children. There is enough evidence to hypothesize

that companies in Pakistan have also begun to recognize children as an attractive segment.

The major issue of this paper is to recognize the role and effect of the attitude to advertisements on brand/product preferences among children. Attitude is affected through cognitive and affective factors, which are engendered by the advertisers. When a child is exposed to advertisements, his/her background, personality, ability to process information and experience plays a significant role.<sup>8</sup> There is a notable contribution of Panwar and Agnihotri,<sup>9</sup> highlighting the impact of English medium education and vernacular medium education on the children's ability to process and interpret advertisements. High-growth population patterns in Pakistan have resulted in a significant increase in TV advertisements targeted at a younger population. Out of 50–75% of advertisements during children-targeted TV programs, the time for food brand promotion per hour of Pakistani TV channels was 6 to 9 minutes. Some 77% of children watch ads to update their brand awareness, 78% believe that ads are necessary and 73% say they love watching TV ads.<sup>10</sup>

In view of the population growth in Asia in general and in Pakistan in particular, a wide variety of snacks brands advertising targeted at children<sup>11</sup> and the absence of detailed and focused evidence of investigating children's buying behavior and preferences,<sup>12</sup> this paper aims at reporting the Pakistani children's views of TV advertisements. The paper will further document children's perceptions of TV advertisements by exploring the factors contributing to the selection of different brands in the snacks category.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Children's choice behavior

McNeal<sup>13</sup> presented some specific reasons for children to be considered a separate market seg-

ment: (a) They are the primary target market as customers since they decide, buy and dispose of goods in a way which satisfies them, (b) They are strong reference group members for parents and family in deciding on which products to buy and consume, (c) They are a growing segment and, once loyal to some brands, will remain attached to them through different extended products under the same brand umbrella. Marketers around the world are trying to investigate the extent of the impact that TV advertisements have on children's buying behavior. It is interesting to note here that children are influenced by advertisements starting from the age of 8 years on.<sup>14</sup> It has also been noted that a child makes his first brand choice in the school canteen at the age of 5, and this also reinforces the need to consider children as an attractive buying segment.<sup>15</sup> The paper further promotes the idea of the necessity to understand the logic behind a child's choice decisions so that advertising messages can be designed accordingly. Another factor promoting children as the focus of advertisements lies in the fact that a number of advertising messages targeted towards adults are broadcast on children-centered TV channels since they influence greater purchases.<sup>16</sup> There is vital evidence showing that children imitate what they experience during watching television; however, there has been little research investigating the kind of advertisements that affect children's buying behavior.<sup>17</sup>

Children may not be active buyers but they have a 'voice', which influences the purchase of products targeted at a younger population. Their voice is a product of the children's keen interest in noticing advertising messages, and it is evident that they notice advertisements comprehensively.<sup>18</sup> Children notice music, jingles, food item color and overall packaging of the brands. The insight into children's awareness of advertisements has gained popularity to some extent through the work of John,<sup>19</sup> where it was found that young children in the 7–11 year age bracket understand the message intent of TV advertising. Their cognitive assessment of TV advertising increases with age, and as a child is exposed to

more and more impressions of advertisements over time. However, cognitive arousal and brand recall in children are subject to reinforcement ads. It is also notable through this work, that children need detailed guidance to make them act in a certain way, desired by advertisers. Children's learning and attainment of specific product/brand knowledge makes them informed consumers at their level. The notice of advertising message works as an external stimulus to children so they start persuading or convincing their parents and caretakers to buy their desired products. To explain this phenomenon, marketers popularized a term 'pester power'<sup>20</sup> across the globe. It illustrates that children do not have complete knowledge about the product but they still try to persuade their parents to get desired products, with this type of behavior increasing as children grow older.<sup>21</sup> Another type of behavior has also been observed among children who do not force their parents into buying the desired product but rather remain calm, depicting a behavior which tends towards purchase, instead of demanding specific products.<sup>22</sup>

## 2.2. Children's brand knowledge and TV advertising

Brand knowledge is based on two dimensions; brand awareness and brand image.<sup>23</sup> Brand awareness is the extent of recognition and recall consumers have about a brand's elements while brand image is measured through the associations consumers have about any brand. Marketers use various brand-related characters to instill brand awareness and image in the mind of consumers; these characters are significant when promoting brands targeted at children.<sup>24</sup> Brand characters help in developing children's various abilities, especially their cognitive capacity. This is why packaging color, size, characters and product placing on the shelf space attracts children more than any other marketing stimulus.<sup>25</sup> Characterizing brand also enables a transfer of the 'exact' brand meanings in the minds of chil-

dren.<sup>26</sup> Recognizing the fact that TV advertising is a great source of children's learning and entertainment, experts have criticized it for exploiting children as consumers. The criticism is linked mainly to the fact that children are innocent and lack the ability to differentiate between highly nutritious and tasty products.<sup>27</sup> Others believe that advertisers hide some useful product information in their TV advertising and rely on being deceptive. It is also argued that advertisements targeted at children are not perceived as 'truthful', especially when trying to persuade consumers to buy products. These results are the product of different qualitative studies, focusing on children and conducted in various parts of the world; Marshall, O'Donohoe and Kline<sup>28</sup> in New Zealand and Folta, Bourbeau and Goldberg<sup>29</sup> in the U.S. There were some social and cultural differences regarding product choice and consumption patterns; however, the criticism discussed above was common. There are many other social and ethical considerations concerning advertising to children that have been recognized through academic literature, such as obesity and cultural pollution affecting the child's socialization process. This is mainly due to the fact that children as young as age four start to be influenced by TV advertising and other promotional activities.<sup>30</sup>

### 2.3. Asian perspectives on TV advertising and snacking amongst children

Much has been said about children and TV advertising in the West. However, few notable contributions exist from an Asian perspective.<sup>31</sup> Ward et al.<sup>32</sup> conducted a study on kindergarteners and found that most kids are unable to explain why advertisers lie through TV commercials. However it was also found that the ability to detect deception increases with an increase in the object's age. Bever et al.<sup>33</sup> also conducted a similar type of study and found that seven to 10-year-old children face difficulties in understanding the logic of TV commercials. However, children aged between 11 and 12 included in their study

understood the rationale of advertising through manner, language and voice. Chan<sup>34</sup> conducted a study on younger children and found that an element of 'truthfulness' in TV advertising is judged through the advertising content and inner feelings. There is another interesting study of Chan & McNeal,<sup>35</sup> where children perceived a commercial to be true as close to 'being real'. Another significant work in China revealed the fact that the majority of children like the ads which they feel to be 'true' and 'real'.<sup>36</sup> There have been some research studies mediating the relationship between a positive attitude with regard to advertising and brand choice,<sup>37</sup> which also moderates the obesity amongst children, consuming the snacks and related food items. Some studies from China suggest the popularity of snacks amongst all age groups; however, children consume snacks more heavily than adults do.<sup>38</sup> This has resulted in overweight and obese people in China, with the rates double those recorded in 1991 statistics.<sup>39</sup> There are, however, several theories which explain the relationship between TV commercial exposure and snacking. McGuire<sup>40</sup> explained that 'focus and attention' is very important in creating a persuasive impact of advertising and, later, this persuasive impact will result in developing a positive attitude towards brand choice. However, in some cases, exposure to TV commercials might develop a child's positive attitude with regard to buying that specific brand. There is another notable theoretical proposition developed by Schachter<sup>41</sup> and named 'external eating'. He proposed that food cues in the surroundings play a significant role in brand choice, and that these cues will lead people to consuming more food whether they are hungry or not. This can be easily applied to TV advertising targeted at children, where sufficient food cues are provided to children and they will respond more favorably to snack advertising while watching TV commercials.

The debate addressing the issues related to TV advertising directed towards children has included parents, politicians, industry people and health officials.<sup>42</sup> However, 'voice and opinions' of children are badly missing, especially in the

developing country context.<sup>43</sup> Current research is aimed at exploring young Pakistani children's opinions about snack advertising messages on television. The motivation and intention to bring this study to life has many facets: an increasing trend toward new product developments in food business, focusing on children as a target market in Pakistan; the inability of children to differentiate between healthy and tasty snacks;<sup>44</sup> and the absence of qualitative methods used to investigate the children's views of TV advertising.<sup>45</sup> There has been empirical evidence of investigations into children's views conducted through in-depth interviews with children between 7 and 11 years of age.<sup>46</sup> The research team assumes children to be a qualified unit of analysis<sup>47</sup> whose opinions would definitely be important to officials and policy makers, particularly in shaping the future of TV advertising in developing countries such as Pakistan.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. Research methodology

Researchers are keen to investigate child psychology; their learning and life time experiences as well as the acculturation process in children from different social and ethnic backgrounds.<sup>48</sup> The methodology employed in this research was qualitative; it was conducted through focus groups sessions to obtain children's opinions on snack advertising on Pakistani TV channels. The focus group approach was preferred over interviewing children, considering the fact that focus groups are less formal than individual interviews. Focus groups help children to communicate their beliefs about a construct easily, and such an approach fits with the children's style of communicating amongst themselves.<sup>49</sup> Focus groups also help children relax and calm their nerves and, therefore, foster a better understanding of the questions and more accurate responses to them.<sup>50</sup> The research team organized structured focus group sessions, in which participation from every individual respondent was ensured. The re-

search team consisted of six members: five final year undergraduate students and an experienced faculty member.

### 3.2. Sampling

A total of 36 children, aged between 8 and 12 years, were selected from three high schools located in the city of Gujranwala, Pakistan. The schools were chosen based on the suggestion of a research team member to make sure the collection of data would suffice as this process is usually very difficult and time-consuming in Pakistan. Children of other age groups were also available; however, the research team selected the group of 8-12 year-olds as qualified, considering the fact that children in this age group have attained a better cognitive understanding of TV commercials.<sup>51</sup> The principals of the selected schools were formally asked by the faculty member to allow team members to conduct focus group sessions with the children. One teacher from each class assisted the research team in conducting focus group sessions with students, ensuring maximum student participation. The research team briefed the children about the importance and objectives of the research, and an effort was made to select only those who volunteered and who had some understanding of snack advertising on TV in Pakistan. After the session, the research team distributed light snacks to all the participants and shared some useful thoughts on children as informed consumers while also acknowledging their participation. These snacks were not visible to children during focus group sessions, ensuring their responses would be unbiased and focused. This way of acknowledging the participants is noted in previously conducted qualitative research.<sup>52</sup>

### 3.3. Data collection

The research was cross-sectional, conducted through three focus group sessions in each school consisting of four students in every ses-

sion. The school management was asked to arrange a dedicated room for these sessions and each session lasted for 45–60 minutes. At the beginning of each session, respondents were briefed about the purpose of research, the tools applied in data collection and the importance of their opinions in contributing to the construct development. The research team provided some light snacks and water to the children during the sessions; this caused some physical movements within the room, helping to calm the children’s nerves. The data collection employed a semi-structured questionnaire, with the questions asked of the respondents provided in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Focus group

Focus group	School	Age group	Gender - Male (M) Female (F)	Number of children
A	1	9-11	2M, 2F	4(A1-4)
B	1	9-11	2M, 2F	4(B5-8)
C	1	9-11	4M	4(C9-12)
D	2	8-12	2M, 2F	4(D13-16)
E	2	8-12	2M, 2F	4(E17-20)
F	2	8-12	2M, 2F	4(F21-24)
G	3	9-12	2M, 2F	4(G25-28)
H	3	9-12	2M, 2F	4(H29-32)
I	3	9-12	2M, 2F	4(I33-36)

### 3.4. Reliability and validity

The research team was not allowed to audio tape focus group sessions but a diary method was employed instead, so the children’s responses were written down comprehensively. This method is preferred in qualitative studies due to its reliability and time-saving while also allowing the respondents to express their views freely.<sup>53</sup> Given the type of data collected for this study, content analysis was performed to unearth all the themes. To ensure the credibility of qualitative data, the research team discussed the findings in detail several times and the results were

cross-checked before an analysis was performed. To ensure result validity, the content validity of the research tool was tested.<sup>54</sup> The research tools were discussed with two senior professors who teach marketing and advertising as well as with two professionals from the advertising and branding industry. They reviewed the tools and techniques to be used for the purpose of study and approved them such as they were, with no further improvements. The focus groups used a semi-structured interview (See Table 2) schedule to explore how children experience and respond to snack advertising on the Pakistani television.

**Table 2:** Semi-structured interview questions (adopted from: Mehta et al., 2010)

No.	Questions
1.	Context, “What TV programs do you watch?”
2.	Recognition, “What are your favorite commercials on TV?”
3.	Appeal of commercials, “What do you like or dislike about commercials?”
4.	Understanding of intent, “Why do you think they make commercials?”
5.	Credibility, “Do you think commercials tell you everything about the product?”
6.	Response to commercials, “What do you do if you see a commercial?”
7.	Food commercials and health, “Are food commercials helpful in any way?”

## 4. FINDINGS

This qualitative research is the first of its type, presenting children’s views of snack advertisements in the Pakistani context. The data was collected through focus groups with young students between 8 and 12 years of age, enrolled in three different schools. Results are presented narratively in quotes, highlighting different themes concerning advertising literacy and its effects on children’s purchase behavior. For the purpose of privacy, brand names have not been disclosed and are represented as ‘Brand A’, ‘Brand B’ etc.

## 4.1. Favorite ads on Pakistani TV channels

The children were asked to recall some TV commercials of their favorite brands. They were quite open in expressing their views about TV advertisements, and the majority (n=30) said they favored the ads which depict cartoon characters and show children performing physical activities. Snacks and biscuit ads were amongst the product categories most liked by children.

“Brand A uses Tom and Jerry characters and I like little cute Jerry the most and then Tom. I really like it when they both quarrel with each other in search of different items.”

“Tiger is my favorite icon and I love the ads showing the tiger eating biscuits and getting stronger and stronger. I also want to be as strong as a tiger...”

Snack brands were found to be more appealing to children (n=27), who were found to consume these items in greater quantities. It has also been well-documented in literature that confectionery items are consumed by younger children all across the globe.<sup>55</sup>

There was some snack advertising which children did not really like, citing disliked music, repetition and unwanted sounds (n=21) as the most important reasons for their dislike, alongside some commercials that do not exhibit energy (n=12).

“I dislike Brand X commercials which waste my time, are so boring and always try to persuade me to buy their ugly looking snack item.”

“Brand Y does not use my type of music, which should not only be interesting but also must instill energy and an urge to make me react in a certain way.”

“I hate TV commercials when they appear again and again. Most of cartoon time is wasted by the repetition of ads and it is very frustrating.”

## 4.2. TV program preferences

When children were asked about their favorite TV channels, it was found that the majority of respondents (n=33) like Cartoon Network (CN) and few (n=3) like Nick Channel. On the other hand, they were asked to cite the reasons for their liking, which they explained in terms of some cartoon series telecast on those channels. The famous cartoons series which children watch include Tom & Jerry, Dragon Balls, Ben-10, Justice League, Avatar, Dora the Explorer and SpongeBob. The research team was unable to measure the percentage of liking of these cartoon series due to two reasons. The first reason was the ‘excitement’ among children while sharing the views of their favorite programs (and most of them like cartoon series). Almost all of them started to speak at once, telling about their favorite TV program although the question was repeated twice and they were requested to speak each in their turn. Secondly, repeating a question can cause annoyance to children, just like a TV commercial which they dislike due to its repetition and similar content.

“My favorite cartoon is telecast on the Cartoon Network. CN’s selection of cartoon series is good and, when I am free from the studies, I watches cartoons.”

“CN is the only channel to watch the cartoons. My sister and I like this channel and once we are done with our homework, we start watching cartoons.”

“My favorite cartoon plays on Nick Channel: ‘Dora the Explorer’.”

## 4.3. Advertising logic

Children were asked to identify the reasons and the logic behind the TV advertising of snacks items. To the research team’s surprise, they understood the logic behind it to a great extent. Most of the children were of the view that be-



cause children are the brand users, advertisers want to increase their market share (n=30), so they run TV commercials to raise the awareness by the target market of their current and new market offerings. They also explained the logic behind promoting brands on the channels such as the Cartoon Network in that it is mostly children who watch these TV channels, so it is best to reach the snacks' target consumers through these channels (n=25).

"Managers want to boost the sales of their snack brands, and that is the major reason they advertise on TV."

"The marketing managers of snacks are well-aware that children can best be contacted through TV channels like the Cartoon Network, and that is why they run their promotional campaigns on these channels."

"TV channels collect money from companies and earn profit but they do not think of consumers."

"The purpose of using characters is to attract kids who love the cartoon characters which make children feel happy and excited."

#### 4.4. Extent of truth in TV commercials

Advertisers are heavily criticized for hiding a lot of useful information from their prospective consumers and lacking the element of 'truthfulness' in TV advertising. When children were confronted with these questions, we received one titled response 'no'. Two major themes emerged: exaggeration and fictitious ads. Children argued that advertisers 'exaggerate' mostly while promoting the taste (n=19) of the snack brand, and that they show children performing fictitious acts which are far from real life (n=14).

"Commercials depict only one view of the products, especially in food advertising. They always talk about the taste and forget the nutrition element, which is also important."

"These commercials look like fairy tales. For example, Brand X shows the children eating the biscuits who become so strong that they can fight with stronger people and get whatever they think of getting in the commercial....unbelievable."

#### 4.5. Attitude with regard to TV advertising

When asked whether they believed there must be TV advertising targeted at children, the majority of children said 'yes' due to several reasons. One of the highlighted reasons was the ability of ads to create fun and entertainment for kids (n=14) during the cartoon series, then providing information about new product launches to the customers (n=12) and being representative of children and their childhood (n=6).

"TV commercials are very interesting because they show children dancing and performing different actions in them."

"We are better able to share with our parents which brand we love to buy and consume."

"I like to share and discuss the TV commercials of my favorite brands with friends and family. It is great fun and excitement because we discuss them for a long time."

"When I watch Brand C (a chewing gum brand) commercials, it reminds me of my early childhood years and I still love the cat, its song and dance."

"Brand D (a brand of biscuits) commercials are very exciting. I love its characters, the way they dance and sing songs. I also want to be like that, after eating these biscuits."

#### 4.6. Responding to TV ads

There were different other themes that emerged during the focus group sessions with children

when they were asked the question: "What would you normally do after watching an commercial of your favorite brand?". Most respondents (n=29) said that they would start making buying requests to their parents and a grandfather, who is available at home the whole day.

"After watching the TV commercial of my favorite biscuit, I would like to buy it as early as possible."

"Most often, after watching a TV commercial of Brand E, I ask my grandfather to buy a packet of biscuits for me. I make this request soon after watching it and do not like to wait for getting my biscuit."

Asked what they would like to buy after watching TV commercials, children gave different responses: potato chips (n=14), slanties (n=10) and biscuits (n=10).

"I love Brand B and would like to get it anyway. At times, however, it is hard to convince my father to let me buy one."

"Brand E (potato chips brand) is my favorite brand and my parents let me buy it, after some resistance from them."

The responses to this question confirm the notion that children nag their parents and others in order to make them buy some snack items. This phenomenon is referred to as 'pester power' where, by pestering or nagging, children force their caretakers to buy their desired products.<sup>56</sup>

## 5. DISCUSSION

This section will highlight the responses of this study and their relationship with previous academic work conducted in the area of advertising to children on TV. The motivation and intention behind this study lies in a growing trend towards new product developments in snacks food businesses, focusing on children as their target market in Pakistan, the inability of children to differ-

entiate between healthy as opposed to tasty snacks,<sup>57</sup> and the absence of qualitative methods that might be used to investigate children's views of TV advertising.<sup>58</sup> The unit of analysis for this research work is children, with the focus group employed as a research technique to collect data. Children actively engage themselves with TV advertising while perceiving and experiencing commercials comprehensively. This is also evident through the work of Gorn & Goldberg<sup>59</sup> and Moore & Lutz<sup>60</sup>. Considering children as consumers, they were quite blunt with their views of what they liked and disliked about ads.

Brand recognition and recall are the hallmarks of successful branding; this is equally true of the branding efforts targeted at children. The results of this study show that children recognize snack brands through colors, jingles and, especially, through cartoon characters used to promote such brands. The importance of brand awareness and image has been examined thoroughly in the work of Lutz.<sup>61</sup> In addition, the use of jingles, cartoon characters and vibrant colors has also been found to help children interpret the true brand meaning.<sup>62</sup> Previous literature also highlighted the importance of depicting 'truth' in TV ads, as an element which results in positive attitudes among children having with regard to buying the respective brands.<sup>63</sup> The results of this study confirm that children exhibit a positive brand attitude when it comes to the brand commercials which include a 'close to reality' element and do not look fictitious. However, it has been observed that most snack brand commercials show children performing unbelievable or 'in-human' acts, and this is an alarming scenario for snack advertisers in Pakistan.

The children involved in this research understood comprehensively the logic and the objectives behind brand promotions on television networks. During the interviews, they argued the intent of advertisers: selling the products aimed at children as targeted consumers. They also pointed out that all such commercial lack truthfulness, and that the majority of advertis-

ers hide much of the useful product-related information. This is truly in line with the results of focus group studies conducted for the same purpose and addressing the same age group in other countries, for instance those by Marshall, O'Donohoe and Kline<sup>64</sup> in New Zealand and Folta, Bourbeau and Goldberg<sup>65</sup> in the U.S. These results also support certain 'advertising literacy' theories,<sup>66</sup> suggesting that even young children, those between the age of 7 and 11, clearly understand the intent of advertising messages. However, a condition implied in these theories is that children do not use these literacy skills unless they are repetitively reminded to act accordingly.

The Pakistani children exhibited numerous differences in their pre-purchase attitude and post-ad behaviors when they explained that the majority of them understand there is deception involved in TV commercials; but once an impression is generated, they start nagging their parents and other senior family members to get their desired products. This 'pester power' has been well documented in literature, and children in all parts of the world use it to convince their elder counterparts while making purchase decisions. Experts believe that this skill of persuasion is positively correlated with the age of children.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, there are some 'silent protesters', who are not involved with any specific brands or category but who will even demonstrate a positive behavior towards some products.<sup>68</sup>

It is important to note here that advertisers were exposed to a sort of criticism during the course of this study. This is also in line with the work of Moore & Lutz,<sup>69</sup> where a focus group study was conducted with children aged between 10 and 12. The results could be of great use to both public policy-makers and marketers, in finding new ways to promote TV advertising messages. When children were asked to comment on the type of products they would like to buy after watching commercials, it was found that they wanted potato chips and other related snacks, which is in line with the results of some previous studies.<sup>70</sup>

## 6. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study provide important guidelines to marketers in shaping the future of TV advertising and branding strategies for the brands directed at children. Children are open and blunt while talking about advertising and branding practices by snack marketers exhibited through TV advertising. They are knowledgeable as consumers, and understand the logic behind developing and broadcasting ads on TV. This implies that, in delivering their brand messages through TV commercials, advertisers must recognize and respect children as consumers whose likes and dislikes must be considered. Cartoon characters, colors and jingles play an important role in brand recognition and recall. That in turn implies that this aspect of branding must be more 'customized' and 'tailored' to the taste of children. An important implication for advertisers is to avoid depicting children as performing fictitious activities in the commercials because such advertising is not considered truthful and can definitely result in poor brand image. Not only parents but grandparents also play a vital role in buying snacks for children and should be considered a strong reference source in convincing children to buy.

## 7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Focus group sessions with children are considered a limitation of this study. However, the quality of data collected and rich information yielded through this research study demands an acknowledgement of children as respondents. There is some theoretical evidence available which points to the influence of peers, the relationship between a child and a researcher and the children's understanding of questions posed as likely to reduce the accuracy of data collected.<sup>71</sup> The research team made every ef-

fort to avoid the factors which can cause inaccuracy of data. The respondents' demographic information was not analyzed. The collected data is presented through dominant themes that were discussed with them because this type of data analysis is highly recommended

in qualitative studies directed at children.<sup>72</sup> This research, using qualitative methods, is pioneer work from a developing country; however, it is highly recommended that future studies also include parents and policy-makers as units of analysis.

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