

## LITERATURE REVIEW ON VISUAL EXAGGERATION IN TELEVISION ADVERTISEMENTS: INFLUENCING PURCHASING HABITS AND SELF- IDENTITY FORMATION AMONG TEENAGERS

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### ABSTRACT

This research paper delves into the extent of television advertising literacy among young media consumers in urban areas of India. By conducting group discussions with approximately 12-year-old children, the study discovered that although young audiences enjoy watching and discussing advertisements, their ability to discern hidden intentions or grasp underlying messages is still limited or driven by illogical reasoning. The findings also revealed a clear manifestation of the cultivation and cross-association of images from various media sources into real-world contexts. It was evident that the younger generation is cautious about the deceptive tactics used in advertising, emphasizing the importance of advertising literacy to empower modern consumers, particularly in countering misleading claims and sexual imagery. Animation, being a fusion of visuals and words, not only communicates messages effectively but also possesses the potential to reshape perspectives and attitudes towards various subjects.

**Keywords:** Advertising literacy, Deceptive advertising, Tweens, Intertextuality

### Introduction

This study delves into the extent of television advertising literacy among young media consumers residing in urban areas of India. By conducting group discussions with approximately 12-year-old children, it was observed that although young viewers enjoy watching and discussing advertisements, their ability to discern underlying intentions or comprehend hidden meanings remains limited or driven by illogical interpretations. The cultivation and interconnection of imagery from various media sources and its manifestation in the real world were visibly apparent. The younger generation is cautious about the cunning tactics employed in advertisements, highlighting the importance of advertising literacy to empower modern consumers, particularly when it comes to countering deceptive claims and sexualized imagery in advertising. The impact of exaggerated animated television advertisements in India serves as a vivid illustration of the famous English idiom "A picture is worth a thousand words." This adage implies that a complex idea can be effectively conveyed to consumers through a single static image, surpassing the effectiveness of a descriptive explanation. Thus, animation, being a blend of images and words, not only conveys messages effectively but also possesses the potential to reshape perspectives and attitudes towards any given subject.

### Animation

According to the FICCI-EY Report (2018), the Indian cartoon industry experienced substantial growth, with its value increasing from 39.7 million INR in 2013 to 17 billion INR in 2017. This represents a 13 percent increase compared to the previous year. Furthermore, the report predicts that the industry will continue to expand at an annual rate of 11 percent until 2020.

The Indian animation business caters to various sectors and employs diverse animation mediums, including e-learning, 2D and 3D animated feature films, visual effects (VFX), television broadcasting, direct-to-DVD releases, and more. Notably, there has been a notable trend in the animation industry, with Western companies that previously outsourced work to India establishing subsidiaries within the country. This shift is attributed to India's abundant pool of skilled animators and cost-effective production capabilities (Barathi, C., Balaji, C. D., & Meitei, C. I., 2011). For instance, Sony Entertainment has set up Picture Works in Chennai, focusing on VFX and character-based animation projects. India's larger animation studios have been successful in securing a significant portion of outsourced jobs while simultaneously providing smaller studios with less complex assignments, thus fostering their growth.

According to a NASSCOM survey report (2006), the cost of producing half an hour of animated content is significantly lower in India compared to the United States, Canada, Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines. In India, the production cost is estimated to be around \$60,000, offering a cost advantage to international clients. Animation plays a crucial role in India's advertising industry. Although currently accounting for less than 5 percent of all commercials, animated advertisements are steadily increasing in popularity. The advent of digital marketing, including banners and videos, has provided opportunities for the digital reinvention of traditional ads. VFX has emerged as a significant aspect of advertising, providing cost-effective solutions for marketers. By incorporating animation and visual effects, the overall production cost of advertisements can be reduced. For example, the FICCI-EY Report (2018) highlights that while a standard advertisement typically costs around INR 3.5 million, effective utilization of animation and VFX can bring down the cost to approximately INR 2.4 million. The Indian animation industry has witnessed substantial growth, attracting international clients due to its skilled workforce and cost advantages. The industry caters to various sectors and has also made significant contributions to the advertising domain, with animation and VFX offering cost-effective solutions for marketers.

### **Types of animation**

Throughout the evolution of animation, numerous types and styles have emerged. However, not all of them are considered distinct styles or mediums of animation. In the industry today, five main types of animation are commonly practiced and popularized: 2D animation, 3D animation, stop motion animation, animation combined with live action, and motion graphics animation (Callcott & Lee, 1994; Chunawalla & Sethia, 2006).

**2D Animation:** This type of animation involves creating the illusion of movement using two-dimensional drawings or images. It typically involves traditional hand-drawn animation or computer-generated techniques, where characters and backgrounds are designed on a flat surface (Bai, et al., 2016).

**3D Animation:** 3D animation utilizes computer-generated graphics to create lifelike three-dimensional objects and characters. It involves modeling, texturing, rigging, and animating objects in a virtual 3D space, providing depth, realism, and dynamic movement (Lake et al., 2000).

**Stop Motion Animation:** Stop motion animation involves capturing individual frames of physical objects or models and then arranging them in a sequence to create the illusion of movement. This process requires meticulous frame-by-frame manipulation of objects, which can include clay, puppets, or objects (Brostow, & Essa, 2001).

**Animation plus Live Action Combined:** This type of animation involves integrating animated elements or characters with live-action footage. It combines real-world actors or scenes with animated components, creating a blended visual experience (Rupkalvis & Gillen, 2008).

**Motion Graphics Animation:** Motion graphics animation focuses on creating visually engaging and dynamic designs through the use of animated graphics, text, and other visual elements. It is often used in commercials, title sequences, and explainer videos to convey information or enhance visual storytelling (Shir & Asadollahi, 2014).

### **Television advertising in India**

Over the past two decades, there has been a significant increase in the number of people watching television in India. A study conducted by Ahluwalia and Singh (2011) revealed that urban youngsters in Punjab, India, spend an average of about two hours per day watching television. It was observed that boys tend to engage in this activity more frequently than girls.

Furthermore, research findings by Soni and Upadhyay (2007) indicated that children of all age groups show a keen interest in television commercials. However, tweens (ages 9-14) have a greater influence on the purchasing decisions of their parents and other adults. In the field of marketing, tweens are classified as children between the ages of 10 and 12, primarily due to their familiarity with the internet and their growing awareness of their social and personal identities.

Additionally, teenagers of Indian descent demonstrate a strong desire to be part of a community. Sheehan, in his article titled "Controversies in Contemporary Advertising," refers to the Social Identity theory, which explains this longing for group membership (p. 80). When belonging to a particular group, they establish a binary opposition in their cultural identity, distinguishing between "in-groups" and "out-groups." This inclination prompts them to adopt behaviors and perceptions similar to those of their identified social class, whether it be classmates, residents of a residential colony, or members of an extracurricular society.

The research highlights the increasing television viewership among urban youngsters in India, the influential role of tweens in purchasing decisions, and the significance of social identity in shaping the behavior and perceptions of teenagers within their respective communities.

### **Television advertising, young media consumers and focus groups**

Television commercials play a crucial role in the media landscape, as they are more persuasive visually compared to audiobooks or static forms of media like newspapers (Hodge & Tripp, 1986). Research conducted by Uusitalo and Takala (1993) focused on young media consumers, specifically children aged 11 and older who are in the formal operational stage of cognitive development. The study revealed that these children demonstrate a high level of accuracy in recognizing and paying attention to advertisements, particularly the "stories" and emotional appeals conveyed within them. Many studies investigating the advertising literacy of young media consumers have utilized focus groups. Donohoe and Tynan (1998) conducted focus groups with young adults and found that they possessed a high level of advertising literacy. They were able to deconstruct advertisements, establish associations, and even adopt the role of advertisers themselves to explore the production aspects of advertising. In contrast, focus group discussions conducted by Oates, Gunter, and Don (2003) with children aged 6 to 14 revealed a lack of understanding regarding the purpose of advertisements and the differentiation between the marketer and TV channels as the source of the advertisements. These children struggled to comprehend why advertisements were inserted between programming segments. Lawlor and Pothero (2007) conducted focus group discussions (FGDs) and found that children did not desire an advertisement-free television experience. Instead, they viewed advertisements as valuable sources of information about products. The children perceived ads as "helpful" in providing additional details through the combined use of visuals and words. Overall, these research findings underscore the importance of television commercials in influencing young media consumers. While young adults demonstrate higher levels of advertising literacy, children may struggle to grasp the purpose and origin of advertisements. Nevertheless, children generally view advertisements as informative and beneficial in their pursuit of product knowledge, appreciating the combination of visuals and words in conveying information.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. The objective of this study is to conduct a comprehensive literature review on the topic of visual exaggeration in television advertisements and its impact on influencing purchasing habits and self-identity formation among teenagers.
2. The study aims to explore existing research, theories, and empirical evidence related to visual exaggeration in television advertisements and its specific effects on teenagers' consumer behavior and self-perception.
3. By synthesizing and analyzing relevant literature, the study seeks to gain a deeper understanding of how visual exaggeration techniques used in television advertisements can shape teenagers' purchasing decisions and contribute to the formation of their self-identity.

### **Review and Literature**

Children become cynical as they begin to understand the underlying persuasive messages of advertisements. The sixth and eighth graders understand more about commercial practices, such as using celebrity endorsements, are more cynical about the products. Even so, children who are repeatedly exposed to attractive messages about "fun" products still want them, even if they are aware of advertiser selling techniques (Boush & Rose, 2000). Children become cynical as they begin to understand the underlying persuasive messages of advertisements. The sixth and eighth graders understand more about commercial practices, such as using celebrity endorsements, are more cynical about the products. Even so, children who are repeatedly exposed to attractive messages about "fun" products still want them, even if they are aware of advertiser selling techniques (Boush & Rose, 2000). Researchers studied the significant impact of exaggerated animated television commercials in India on viewers. Their findings support the well-known English adage "a picture is worth a thousand words." This concept suggests that complex ideas can be effectively conveyed to an audience through a single moving image, surpassing the effectiveness of mere descriptions in capturing the essence and meaning of the subject matter. Consequently, animation can be understood as a powerful amalgamation of visual elements and textual content, enabling the transmission of messages in a compelling manner while also shaping individuals' perceptions and attitudes towards various topics (Naik et al. 2021).

Images hold significant importance in advertising due to their ability to convey messages more effectively than words alone. They serve as attention-grabbing elements that immediately captivate consumers. Images have the power to evoke emotions, reminding us of real-life situations or creating aspirations for things we desire. From the literature review, several key points emerge. Firstly, both real-life and animated characters are successful in capturing children's attention in television advertisements. Secondly, celebrity endorsements have a strong influence on children's desire to possess a particular product. Thirdly, the presence of music and jingles plays a

significant role in the decision-making process of tweens when it comes to purchasing. Moreover, the visual appeal of advertisements enhances children's readiness to buy the advertised products. Building upon this literature review, the current study aims to explore additional factors such as free gifts and premiums, the use of child artists, and humor, which may further enhance the appeal and influence the purchasing habits of tweens (Stark, 2018).

The television advertisements have both positive and negative impacts on children. It highlighted the adverse effects of media on various aspects of healthy development, including weight gain, violent emotions, consumerism, and social isolation. However, the study also acknowledged that media can have positive effects on children's health. The research emphasized the need to optimize the role of media in our culture by leveraging their beneficial characteristics and minimizing their adverse effects. The ultimate goal is to deliver positive messages to the youth. The study suggested that instead of countering the media, it should be embraced as an effective tool in shaping the behavior of children and adolescents. It emphasized the importance of parents making their children more aware of their environment so that they can make informed and logical choices. The study also highlighted the significance of government intervention in introducing appropriate food laws and integrating different laws into a unified framework (Sathya, 2016).

Another researchers analyzed 793 food ads that were aired for a total duration of 20,260 seconds over a period of seven days on two television channels. The findings of the study revealed that nutrient content claims, which focus on specific nutrient components such as "low in fat," were the most commonly used claims. This was followed by general nutrition claims, structure/functional claims, and healthy claims. The category of health claims, which link the advertised food to a reduced risk of disease or health problem, was the least used. The analysis indicated that healthy foods are not advertised as frequently as unhealthy foods, which poses a significant public health concern. The study highlights the need for marketing promotions that prioritize healthier food options, particularly when targeting vulnerable populations such as children. This suggests the importance of promoting and advertising nutritious foods to children in order to address the prevalence of unhealthy food choices and their associated health risks (Maheshwar et al. 2014).

Few researchers aimed to determine whether TV advertising has an effect on the buying behavior of young individuals. The study concluded that TV advertising does indeed influence the purchasing behavior of children. The findings highlight the importance for marketers to understand the psychological factors and preferences of children before launching any advertisement campaign. The study emphasizes that advertisers should not overlook the significance of children as they are an integral part of the target audience for many products and services. The study suggests that TV advertisements have a notable influence on children's attitudes and their decision-making process when it comes to purchasing goods and services. Marketers should take this into consideration and tailor their advertising strategies to effectively engage and resonate with children (Khan, Syed 2014).

The researchers examined the perceptions of 30 children towards TV commercials of different brands, considering age as a critical factor. The findings of the study suggest that TV advertisements have the ability to create lasting images of products and brand logos in the minds of children. The advertisements play a significant role in shaping children's perceptions of various brands. The study also revealed an interesting age-related difference in children's perception and decision-making. Older children were found to have developed their own perceptions and were capable of making independent decisions based on their understanding and evaluation of the advertisements. In contrast, younger children were more dependent on someone else's perception or guidance in forming their own opinions about the brands. These findings highlight the impact of TV advertising on children's brand perception and the developmental differences in how children interpret and respond to advertisements based on their age. Marketers and advertisers should consider these age-related factors and tailor their advertising strategies accordingly to effectively target and engage different age groups (Sibińska, Łódzki 2013).

How children in Mumbai perceive TV ads and their attitudes towards them were also studied. The findings of the study indicate that TV commercials have played a role in the social maturity of young individuals, and they demonstrate an understanding and liking for advertising. This positive perception of advertising among children in Mumbai can be attributed to factors such as education, family upbringing, and the modern lifestyle prevalent in the city. The results suggest that children in the age range of 9-10 years, who are in Piaget's formal operational stage, have the ability to think abstractly and understand the concept of advertising. They recognize the benefits of TV advertising in their modern lives. These findings have implications for policy-making, indicating the need for better protection of younger children from marketing influences. It suggests that measures should be taken to safeguard younger children who may be more vulnerable to the persuasive tactics of advertising. Overall, the



study provides insights into children's perception of TV advertisements in Mumbai and highlights the importance of considering the developmental stage of children when addressing advertising and marketing practices aimed at them (Sarkar, 2013).

Some researchers argue that advertisements employ various strategies, including perceptual effects, to impact customers without their conscious awareness. One of the methods mentioned is the use of perceptual effects, which involves influencing the customer's perception and emotions through subtle means. For example, advertisements may utilize colors and upbeat music to create a positive and uplifting mood, thus influencing the customer's emotional response towards the product. Another technique mentioned is the use of jingles in commercials. Jingles are catchy tunes or phrases that are repeated in advertisements, aiming to reinforce the message and create a lasting impression on the customer. The repetition of the jingle can penetrate the customer's unconscious mind and potentially influence their decision-making process. The study highlights how advertisements employ perceptual effects, such as colors, music, and jingles, to subconsciously impact customers' attitudes and emotions towards products. These tactics aim to create positive associations and ultimately influence the purchasing behavior of consumers (Mehta et al. 2012)

The intellectual changes in children resulting from advertising was interesting topic for study. The research considered external factors and natural variables that impact children's attitudes towards advertising and media. The findings of the study indicated that children's understanding of advertising is influenced by various factors, including socioeconomic background. Children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds tend to have a better understanding of advertising compared to those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, suggesting that exposure and environment play a role in shaping their perceptions. The study also found that children often perceive advertisements as exaggerated. This skepticism may arise from personal experiences with the quality of products or services, as well as from the influence and experiences of others. Family, social groups, and friends were identified as influential factors in shaping children's attitudes towards advertising and their level of attention to advertisements. Additionally, age was found to impact a child's ability to interpret advertisements effectively. Parents were recognized as gatekeepers for their children's media exposure, prioritizing their activities and exerting control over what their children are exposed to. Parents also play a significant role as the primary audience for children's products, services, and activities. In terms of children's responses to advertisements, the study revealed that children pay attention to various elements such as models or celebrities featured in the advertisements, jingles, slogans, and the brand itself. These factors contribute to their overall perception and attitude towards advertising (Danish, 2012).

Another research highlighted the prominent use of athletes in these advertisements, featuring them on cereal boxes and showcasing specific athletic apparel and gear. The presence of these celebrities is intended to attract children who admire them, potentially influencing their purchasing decisions towards the endorsed products. Additionally, the study identified various promotional strategies employed in food advertisements targeting children. Graphics, cartoons, celebrity endorsements, and claims about nutrition were found to be the most frequently utilized techniques. These strategies aim to capture the attention and interest of children, ultimately encouraging them to select and consume the advertised products. Agrawal's study shed light on the influential role of celebrity endorsements and effective advertising strategies in marketing products to children (Agrawal, 2009).

The use of images, graphics, jingles, and storytelling in TV ads was found to be effective in capturing the attention of viewers. Children, especially teenagers, showed positive responses when they identified appealing features in the advertisement characters. Emotional identification with the characters was associated with stronger memory and more positive attitudes towards the advertised products. On the other hand, children who become aware of the persuasive techniques used in advertisements tend to develop a sense of skepticism. Older children, particularly those in the 6th or 8th grades, demonstrate a better understanding of corporate practices, such as the use of endorsements, leading to a more negative perception of advertised products. However, even with this awareness, young people who are frequently exposed to enticing advertising for "fun" products still desire those products, indicating that the strategies used by marketers can still influence their preferences and desires.

These findings suggest that while older children may develop a sense of skepticism towards advertisements, the impact of persuasive advertising techniques can still be significant, influencing their attitudes and desires for certain products.

### Research Gap Identified

Despite the recognition of animation as a powerful and popular creative tool in advertising, there is a significant research gap regarding the cognitive and affective outcomes of animated advertisements and the use of animated characters as spokespersons. While animation has been extensively used in the entertainment industry and across various media platforms, limited research has been conducted to explore its effects on cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses in the context of advertising. Additionally, there is a lack of research examining the differential effects of animation on low-involvement and high-involvement product types within both low- and high-involvement contexts.

The existing literature primarily focuses on traditional advertising techniques and lacks comprehensive investigations into the specific effects of animation in shaping consumer attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors. Therefore, there is a research gap in understanding how animated commercials influence cognitive and affective processing, as well as how they shape behavioral expectations. Furthermore, the relationship between consumer involvement and the impact of animation on ad exposure, processing, and attitude formation remains understudied.

To address this research gap, the current study aims to examine the effects of animation on cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses through experimental designs, while also considering the concept of involvement. By filling this gap, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of animation in advertising design and its influence on consumer attitudes and behaviors.

### Findings

This study focuses on investigating the effects of animation in advertising and its connection to cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses through an experimental study. By employing a multi-group confirmatory factor analysis, the study compares the effects of animation on low-involvement and high-involvement product types in both low- and high-involvement contexts. The results reveal significant differences between the groups in terms of the paths and modification indexes.

The findings of the study support the effectiveness of the tripartite attitudinal model (cognition, affect, and conation) specifically in the low-involvement product type within a highly involved group. This research contributes significantly to our understanding of how animated commercials influence cognitive and affective processing. Animated advertisements have the ability to captivate viewers and elicit emotional responses while shaping behavioral expectations. Advertisers recognize animation as a powerful and popular creative tool, leveraging it as a form of visual art in the entertainment industry. With the use of animation, particularly character-based advertisements featuring nonhuman characters, the design of advertisements can be expanded across various media platforms such as the internet, mobile phones, and television, using digital content. Despite animation's prevalence and popularity in advertising design, limited research has been conducted to explore the cognitive and affective outcomes of animated advertisements and animated characters as spokespersons. This study aims to address this gap by examining the effects of animation on cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses through two different experimental designs. The concept of involvement, which refers to the level of consumer motivation and its influence on ad exposure, processing, and attitude formation, is also explored in this study, as it has been extensively studied in the field of consumer behavior. By investigating the effects of animation and its relationship to cognitive, affective, and conative responses, this research aims to enhance our understanding of the role of animation in advertising design.

### Discussion

The current inquiry suggests that advertisers employ different strategies to target children and adults as potential customers for their products. These strategies aim to differentiate between the two demographic groups and tailor advertisements accordingly.

One notable finding is that advertisements for chocolates, sweet treats, biscuits, cakes, and crisps are predominantly broadcasted on children's networks rather than mainstream channels. This indicates that production companies specifically target children as their primary audience for these products. The intention is to capture the attention and interest of children, who are likely to be consumers of these items. On the other hand, advertisements for health/energy drinks were found to be more prevalent on major networks that have a broader viewership, including housewives and caregivers. This suggests that the target demographic for health/energy drinks primarily consists of adults, particularly parents who make purchasing decisions for their children. Since energy and health beverages are usually priced higher than chocolates and biscuits, the responsibility for purchasing these drinks lies with the parents. The majority of commercials for health/energy drinks portrayed these beverages in a positive light, aiming to appeal to parents who are concerned about their

children's growth and well-being. While this may be seen as necessary for children's development, it also serves as an effective advertising strategy to influence parents' purchasing decisions. Overall, these findings highlight the targeted nature of advertising campaigns, with different products being promoted on channels and networks that cater to specific demographic groups. Advertisers utilize favorable portrayals and appealing messages to attract the attention and influence the purchasing decisions of both children and adults.

### Conclusion

The study you mentioned highlights the various techniques used by advertising to target and influence teenagers. These techniques utilize information, imagery, personality, and lifestyle to capture the attention and persuade children to make purchases. The research found that marketing strategies have a significant impact on children, especially in advertisements for clothing, fashion, food, and sports. The use of vibrant colors and visual and emotional appeals plays a crucial role in influencing their buying decisions. The visual appeal creates a positive association with the children's preferences and creates a desire for the specific product being advertised. Exaggeration in advertisements stimulates children's emotions and influences their product choices. The repetition of these advertisements creates a craving for the products, making them feel like a necessity. Additionally, children tend to identify with the personalities portrayed in the advertisements. They believe that using the advertised products will give them a similar identity. The reinforcement theory, which suggests that certain behaviors or characteristics are accepted due to rewards, can be observed in children who are influenced by television advertisements. The visual exaggeration and regular reinforcement in these advertisements attract children and may lead to them becoming attached or even addicted to the advertised products. In conclusion, visual exaggeration through television advertisements creates a fictional perception in children's minds, influencing their purchasing habits and persuading them to choose specific products that align with their self-identity.

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