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# Mediation of TV advertising to children

## An empirical study of Indian mothers

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### Abstract

**Purpose** – Parents are seen to mediate media behavior of their children to protect them from negative and undesirable effects of advertising. In doing so, they either restrict TV viewing by children or actively discuss ad content with children. The nature of mediation strategy to be used depends upon the age of their children. The purpose of this study is to uncover the nature of mediation strategies used by mothers of younger and older children in India. The findings and implications of the study are further discussed.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Data were collected from three cities of Punjab state of India – Amritsar, Jalandhar and Ludhiana and its capital city of Chandigarh during the period November 2010 to June 2011. The mothers were the basic sampling unit for the present study as they are seen to be the primary caregivers for children. Parents of children in eight schools (two from each city), were approached through the schools. The children were asked to take the questionnaire home and get it filled by their mother. Parental mediation of food advertising was measured through a parental advertising mediation scale developed by Valkenburg et al.

**Findings** – The results of the present study reveal that mothers of Indian children resort to mediation of ads in general and food ads in particular. The nature of mediation is also governed by age of children. Mothers of older children primarily use active advertising mediation and mothers of younger children use restrictive mediation strategies. It is also seen that mothers mediate the exposure of food ads more strongly in younger children as compared to older children.

**Originality/value** – Although vast literature exists about parental mediation of advertising to children, hardly any study has been conducted in India to investigate the nature of parental mediation of advertising to children. The present study adds to the existing literature by delving into this aspect in the Indian settings. More so, as age of children is witnessed to affect nature of parental mediation, this study also sheds light on the way parents in India mediate exposure of children to TV ads.

**Keywords** Children, Advertising, Mediation, India, Business, Marketing

Paper type Research paper



### Introduction

Children form the pivot of marketing activity. A host of strategies are used by marketers to reach them as they constitute a substantial and a profitable market segment. Television continues to be a dominant medium for marketers to communicate with children. TV ads are seen to be informative whereby children gather information on brands and prices and are able to evaluate them. So, the parents find them to be much well informed and seek their participation in purchase decision making process. However, the ability to understand ad messages and advertising intent develops only with age (Boush et al., 1994; John, 1999). Young children are particularly influenced by TV ads as they enjoy the ad for its jingle. Liking and trust in ads (that they enjoy) is so high that are persuaded to buy the advertised products. This leads to a situation

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whereby they request their parents for a large number of products, make repeated requests, and nag their parents to buy the advertised product. Parents are neither in a position nor likely to honour all the requests made by children.

Researchers have found that a large number of ads are aired during the times when children watch TV (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2004; George, 2003). More so, a huge proportion of all ads are comprised of ads for unhealthy foods (Kotz and Story, 1994; Byrd-Bredbenner and Grasso, 1999; Consumers International, 2004, 2008; Hardy et al., 2006; Maher et al., 2006; Jenkin et al., 2008; Stitt and Kunkel, 2008). As children watch lots of TV ads every day in India (George, 2003), they are exposed to numerous commercials for food. This in turn increases the propensity of consuming advertised foods (Miryala, 2011). Further, excess consumption of these unhealthy foods is found to increase the incidence of health disorders in children such as Type II diabetes, stroke, and cancer. Therefore, some action needs to be taken to protect children from ubiquitous food advertising. As parents are directly involved in feeding children and are concerned about their well-being, they are likely to mediate TV viewing by their children.

The manner in which parents mediate exposure to TV advertising depends upon a country's culture. Culture affects parenting styles – the extent to which parents are restrictive vs warm, nurturing vs non-nurturing, or involved vs detached, as it depends upon whether a culture fosters individualism or collectivism. Indian culture is basically collectivistic and characterised of joint and extended families (in which children, parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins) stay together (Webster, 2000). However, nuclear families are also rapidly emerging in India as children move out of the family to seek an occupation. Traditionally, Indian society is patriarchal in character and so the parents have been identified to be authoritarian in their style of parenting (Jambunathan and Counselman, 2002; Rose et al., 2003). This means that strict obedience is sought from children and they have limited rights to make independent decisions. Therefore, TV viewing by children is also controlled by Indian parents (Singh and Kaur, 2012) because it is perceived to have a negative influence on cultural values of children (Cardoza, 2002). However, a comparison of Indian parents with others across different cultures reveals that Indian parents put fewer restrictions on TV viewing by children (Rose et al., 2003). Manohar (2011) points out that since the influence of media is on the rise in developing parts of the world such as India, mediation strategies used by parents must be explored. As no such study has already been conducted, to the best of researchers' knowledge, the present paper endeavours to shed light on the nature of mediation strategies used by parents in the Indian settings. In addition to this, a comparison has also been drawn for mediation strategies used by parents across age groups of children.

#### Previous research

As parents are interested in promoting good nutrition habits for their children (Gillespie, 1989), they mediate and control the type of products/brands that children can buy (Berey and Pollay, 1968; Chan and McNeal, 2003; Fiates et al., 2007). They also set snack limits, ensure daily fruits and vegetables availability and use fat reduction actions during meals (Hendy et al., 2009). Strict parental control over children's diets may nonetheless be ineffective (Bijmolt et al., 1998) and impossible as increased exposure to food ads on television may build a strong preference for advertised unhealthy foods (Agrawal and Tripathi, 2008; Mittal et al., 2010). Frequent denials by parents may also

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result into parent-child conflict. Therefore, it is imperative that parents mediate children's TV viewing to reduce exposure to food ads.

Parental mediation of food advertising to children on TV is largely under-researched, particularly in India. Researchers have assessed occurrence of TV mediation, generally, in home settings (Wiman, 1983; Bijmolt et al., 1998; Valkenburg et al., 1999; Buijzen and Valkenburg, 2003; Barkin et al., 2006). When parents try to mediate TV viewing they indulge inactive mediation or restrictive mediation. Active mediation refers to discussion of media content with children which may include the positive or negative aspects of media. The parents may make positive comments and agree with television content or reject and disagree with it. This can take the form of active explanations of the nature and selling intent of advertising to children. Restrictive mediation refers to control of content or frequency of TV viewing by reducing their exposure to it. Parents decide about the programs that a child can watch, the number of hours for watching TV and also set rules restricting TV viewing by children. Previous research has also explored the extent to which these mediational strategies are effective. It is found that parents are able to reduce negative consequences of exposure to ads by active mediation as discussing program content with children helps the child to evaluate the program and stimulates children to learn more from TV (Wiman, 1983; Bijmolt et al., 1998; Valkenburg et al., 1999; Buijzen and Valkenburg, 2003, 2005). On the other hand, parents who resort to restrictive mediation tend to reduce the time children spend viewing TV (van den Bulck and van den Bergh, 2000). It has also been found that a high level of control of TV viewing (restrictive mediation) is seen to result in lower understanding of TV advertising (Bijmolt et al., 1998). Buijzen and Valkenburg (2005) investigated effects of various types of mediation of TV advertising on materialism, purchase requests, and parent-child conflicts. They found that active mediation was significantly more effective in reducing advertising effects than restrictive mediation (and confirmed the findings of Wiman (1983) and Bijmolt et al. (1998)). They also noted that advertising mediation increased children's comprehension of advertising and that restrictive mediation had the opposite effect. Buijzen and Menz (2007) explored the impact of factual, evaluative and combined adult mediation strategies on modification of children's liking, desires, and requests for advertised products. They construed factual mediation to relate to give media knowledge to children and boost children's cognitive defences to persuasive influence of ads. Evaluative mediation was identified to intercede in children's affective responses to commercials by providing negative comments about the ad message. Combined mediation was stated to be a combination of factual evaluative strategies that seek to stimulate both cognitive and attitudinal defences. They found that factual mediation was ineffective among younger children as they were found to face difficulty in understanding in applying complicated information. In older children, factual mediation was successful in changing children's attitude towards ads but did not affect behaviour of children. Overall, evaluative and combined mediation were more successful in reducing the effects of advertising than factual mediation. They suggested that a mediation strategy that negatively influences children's attitudes toward commercials is most effective in reducing the persuasive impact of advertising.

Jordan et al. (2006) found that a majority of parents (59 percent) used multiple mediation approaches in order to reduce children's TV viewing time. Their study revealed that both instructive (active) and restrictive mediation approaches had positive associations with increased awareness about negative media effects, but a decrease

in awareness happened for those who used an unlimited approach. The only strategy associated with age of the child was instructive (active) mediation and was noted to be used more often with the younger children. They used fewer rules with older children. They mostly used content restrictions, or placed time restrictions, while only a small proportion of parents restricted access to TV by not putting a TV in the child's bedroom. Nearly half of the parents and children also reported that watching TV was contingent upon desired behaviour.

Ozdogan and Atlintas (2010) explored the effect of parent child co-viewing of TV and parents' discussion of content with children on adolescent's scepticism of TV advertising. In a study of 296 respondents they found that co-viewing of ads with parents altered children's perceptions of ads through personal assessments (not in the nature of discussions). The results indicated that adolescents were better able to make decisions in the process of discussions and assessments. But, importantly, discussions acted only as a latent construct to moderate children's attitude because adolescents were very less receptive to parents' personal views on ads. They used discussions and assessments only to make better personal judgements.

As regards mediation of food ads, Buijzen (2009) in a diary study of 234 parents of four to 12 years old children in The Netherlands investigated how different styles of advertising mediation (active vs restrictive) moderated the relation between children's advertising exposure and their consumption of advertised energy dense food products. It was found that active mediation was considerably more effective in reducing advertising effects than restrictive mediation in younger (four to eight years old) as well as older children (nine to 12 years old). However, among younger children, restrictive mediation was also effective in reducing the relation between advertising and food consumption. Therefore, it was concluded that with critical and open discussion about advertising and control and rule making about consumption, parents can reduce the impact of food advertising on children's energy-dense food consumption. Restrictions of advertising exposure were effective among preschool and early elementary school children, but not among the older children.

The foregoing review suggests that parents use different mediation strategies to shield children in different age groups. The present study has been designed to assess the impact of mediation strategies used by parents in India to protect children from extensive food advertising on TV targeted at children.

#### Methodology

Data were collected from four cities of Punjab state of India – Amritsar, Jalandhar, and Ludhiana and its capital city of Chandigarh during the period November 2010-June 2011. The three cities were chosen to represent the three regions of Punjab – Amritsar (Majha), Jalandhar (Doaba), and Ludhiana (Malwa). The capital city was chosen as it is more cosmopolitan. The mothers were the basic sampling unit for the present study as they are seen to be the primary caregivers for children. Schools were selected (randomly) out of all schools in the chosen cities that enrolled students with various socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Parents of children in eight schools (two from each city), were approached through the schools. The children were asked to take the questionnaire home and get it filled by their mother. In case two children were studying in the same school, the mother was requested to fill the questionnaire keeping in mind the child who had brought it. Of the 600 questionnaires that were distributed to children, 509 (84.83 percent) complete

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questionnaires were returned. This resulted in a total sample of 509 mothers of children in the age category five to 15 years (51.27 percent boys).

In the sample, mothers from all educational levels were represented, although most of them were relatively well educated: 40.1 percent were graduates and 40.7 percent were post graduates. Monthly family incomes ranged from less than Rupee 30,000 per month (8.9 percent of the sample) to more than Rupee 40,000 (26.5 percent of the sample) per month. More than half of the sample of mothers was working (57.4 percent) and most of them worked for six days in a week, six to eight hours every day on an average. The children came from diverse set of families: 44 percent came from extended families (husband, wife, children, and grandparents), 38 percent came from nuclear families and 18 percent hailed from joint families.

Data were collected through a structured, pre-tested, and non-disguised questionnaire. To develop a list of information items for framing the questionnaire, previous literature on attitude of parents towards advertising in general, children's advertising and food advertising to children was reviewed. Experts in the area were also consulted. Online discussions were also held with other researchers and academicians and current marketing and social environment was considered. The suggestions led to minor but valuable and meaningful modifications. The preliminary draft of the questionnaire was pre-tested through personal interviews with 80 mothers. This helped in improving the questionnaire. With a few deletions and additions, the final questionnaire was developed. Parental mediation of food advertising was measured through a parental advertising mediation scale developed by Valkenburg et al. (1999). The ten statements that measure active and restrictive mediation strategies by parents were appended to include three statements that measure mediation of food ads directed at children. The inter item reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ) for the measure is 0.730. The scale was selected for use in Indian settings because it was developed and used for Dutch parents (Europeans) who are seen to be similar to Indians in their parenting styles – both are mainly authoritarian or protective (Rose et al., 2003). More so, the eastern and western cultures do not differ vastly because “urban population in India shows substantial deviations from the traditional Indian values owing to globalization and tremendous influence of the West” (Manohar, 2011, p. 64).

Though choice of a mediation strategy is seen to vary across some demographic variables (Wiman, 1983; Valkenburg et al., 1999; Nathanson, 1999), yet, the present study attempts to explore nature of parental mediation and differences only across age groups of children. This is because parents of younger children are seen to mediate more as compared to parents of older children (Valkenburg et al., 1999; Barkin et al., 2006; Buijzen and Menz, 2007). So, based on general stages of cognitive development (John, 1999) and the relatively slower developmental timetables of Indian children (Mukherji, 2005), the study seeks to uncover parental mediation strategies for younger children (five to nine years) and older children (ten to 15 years). SPSS 17.0 version has been used for data analysis. Means, standard deviations, t-test, and factor analysis have been applied to analyse the data.

#### Analysis and conclusion

In a battery of 13 statements used to measure active, restrictive and active food advertising mediation by parents, statements X1-X5 measure active mediation of advertising by parents whereas statements X6-X10 measure restrictive advertising

mediation by parents. Three statements – X11, X12, and X13 were added to measure active mediation of food advertising by parents. The responses were drawn on a four point scale (from very often, often, sometimes, and rarely). The statements, along with weighted average scores of mothers of younger and older children, are given in Table I.

Table I shows that mothers of younger children “often” use active mediation strategies X2 (that advertising does not always tell the truth) (w.a.s. = 3.23), X1 (that advertising depicts food products as better than they really are) (w.a.s. = 3.11), and X12 (ads do not highlight that eating such foods can make children obese/overweight) (w.a.s. = 3.09). They also often tell their children that not all advertised products are of good quality (X4), that ads do not highlight presence of high amounts of salt, sugar, and fat (X11) and that the purpose of advertising is to sell products (X3), as the weighted average scores are close to 3. Mothers of older children, often tell their children that (s)he should not watch those TV channels that broadcast too many ads (X7, w.a.s. = 3.18) and to turn off the television when (s)he is watching commercials (X6, w.a.s. = 3.04) or to switch to a channel that broadcasts fewer commercials (X8, w.a.s. = 2.98). In other words, mothers of older children use more restrictive mediation strategies than mothers of younger children.

S. no. Statements	Younger children w.a.s.	Older children SD
X1 [...] that advertising depicts food products as better than they really are?	3.11	
X2 [...] that advertising does not always tell the truth?	3.23	
X3 [...] that the purpose of advertising is to sell products?	2.86	
X4 [...] that not all advertised products are of good quality?	2.93	
X5 [...] that some advertised products are not good for children?	1.93	
X6 [...] to turn off the television when (s)he is watching commercials	2.14	
X7 [...] that (s)he should not watch those TV channels that broadcast too many ads?	2.14	
X8 [...] to switch to a channel that broadcasts fewer commercials?	1.95	
X9 [...] that (s)he should not watch television advertising at all?	2.13	
X10 [...] to watch specific channels that broadcast relatively few commercials?	2.54	
X11 [...] that ads do not highlight presence of high amounts of salt, sugar, and fat	2.88	
X12 [...] ads do not highlight that eating such foods can make children obese/overweight	3.09	
X13 [...] that all advertised foods are not fit to be consumed (for, e.g. tobacco, alcohol)	2.79	

Note: Significant at: \* 5 percent, \*\* 1 percent levels

Table I.  
Parental mediation of  
food advertising to  
children – weighted  
average scores and  
differences in responses  
of mothers of younger  
and older children

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In order to test the null hypothesis that “There are no significant differences between mothers of younger and older children in using TV mediation strategies”, independent samples t-test has been applied. The results, as seen from the table, reveal that significant differences exist between mothers of younger and older children in use of TV mediation strategies for all the statements except X10 (to watch specific channels that broadcast relatively few commercials) and X11(that ads do not highlight presence of high amounts of salt, sugar, and fat). The null hypothesis was thus rejected for mediation Strategies 1-9 and Strategy 12.

In order to find out the factors that determine the nature of parental mediation of food ads on TV directed to children, factor analytic technique has been applied. When two sub-samples (younger and older children) are combined, the resulting correlations may be a poor representation of the unique structures of each group. Thus, whenever differing groups are expected in a sample, separate factor analysis is performed, and the results are compared to identify differences not reflected in the overall sample (Hair et al., 2003, p. 100). Hence, factor analysis has been carried out separately for younger and older children.

Parental mediation of TV advertising – factor analysis (younger children) In order to test the suitability of data for factor analysis, the correlation matrix was computed which depicted that there were enough correlations to carry out factor analysis. Anti-image correlations were also computed. Since the partial correlations were low, it implied that true factors existed in the data. Overall MSA was found to be 0.821, which indicated that the sample was good enough for sampling. Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity showed statistically significant number of correlations among the variables. Hence, as revealed by the above parameters, the data was found fit for factor analysis.

#### Extraction method and number of factors extracted

Principal component analysis was used for extracting factors and the number of factors to be retained was based on latent root criterion, variance explained and Scree Plot analysis. The solution gave three factors which explained 58.195 percent of the total variance. However, communalities for statements X1 and X3 were particularly low at 0.285 and 0.364, respectively. These statements were therefore dropped from analysis (Hair et al., 2003, p. 113). The reliability of the new measure increased to 0.809. So, factor analysis was run again with 11 statements. The solution gave three factors and 65.454 percent of total variance was explained. The rotated components and their factor loadings are shown in Table II.

Table II shows the extracted factors.

The last column in the table shows communalities. Large communalities indicate that a large amount of variance has been accounted for by the factor solution. The factors listed in Table II are discussed here.

#### Factor 1: restrictive advertising mediation

This is the first and the most important factor and it accounts for 30.057 percent of total variance. The mothers report to restrict TV advertising for children. They very strictly ask their children to switch to a channel that broadcasts fewer commercials and not to watch those TV channels that broadcast too many ads. They also ask the children to turn off television when they are watching commercials or to not to watch

	F1: restrictive advertising mediation	F2: active mediation of foods advertising	F3: active advertising mediation	Communalities	Mediation of TV advertising
X8 [...] to switch to a channel that broadcasts fewer commercials?	0.848			0.747	251
X7 [...] that (s)he should not watch those TV channels that broadcast too many ads?	0.838			0.705	
X6 [...] to turn off the television when (s)he is watching commercials	0.791			0.642	
X9 [...] that (s)he should not watch television advertising at all?	0.760			0.580	
X10 [...] to watch specific channels that broadcast relatively few commercials?	0.741			0.616	
X12 [...] ads do not highlight that eating such foods can make children obese/overweight		0.874		0.779	
X11 [...] that ads do not highlight presence of high amounts of salt, sugar, and fat		0.754		0.642	
X13 [...] that all advertised foods are not fit to be consumed (for, e.g. tobacco, alcohol)		0.626		0.510	
X5 [...] that some advertised products are not good for children?			0.836	0.722	
X4 [...] that not all advertised products are of good quality?			0.810	0.703	
X2 [...] that advertising does not always tell the truth?			0.645	0.552	
Eigen values	3.879	2.150	1.172	17.201	Table II. Principal component analysis with varimax rotation (younger children)
Percent variance	30.057	17.816	17.581		
Cumulative variance	30.057	47.874	65.454		

TV advertising at all. Last but not the least, they ask children to watch specific channels that broadcast fewer commercials.

#### Factor 2: active mediation of food advertising

This factor depicts active mediation of food advertising by mothers of younger children in the age category five to nine years. It accounts for 17.816 percent of total variance.

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The factor shows that the mothers explain to their children that eating advertised foods can make children overweight/obese but ads do not highlight such facts to children. The ads also do not inform children about presence of high amounts of fat, sugar, and salt in advertised foods. They also create awareness in their innocent viewers that all advertised foods are not even fit to be consumed by children (like alcohol and tobacco).

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#### Factor 3: active advertising mediation

The five statements that make up this factor explain 17.581 percent of total variance. The statements reflect use of active media mediation strategies by mothers to combat negative effects of TV advertising on children. They specifically explain to children that some advertised products are neither good for children and nor of good quality. As the children are young, the mothers find it pertinent to explain to children the purpose and intent of ads. They also tell them that ads depict food products as better than they really are.

The factors reveal that mothers primarily use restrictive advertising mediation strategies with younger children. As the children are highly susceptible to ad influence, shielding from such effects is thought to be possible through restrictions. Nonetheless, they also actively mediate and explain to their children the purpose and intent of commercials, the nature of products advertised and the potentially deceptive elements in ads. Specifically for food ads the mothers actively mediate and tell their children that food ads do not use rational appeals or inform young consumers adequately and the negative effects of consumption of advertised foods.

Parental mediation of TV advertising – factor analysis (older children) The 13 statements given in Table I, relating to parental mediation of food advertising directed at children, have been factor analysed for older children aged ten to 15 years. The data were checked for suitability for applying factor analysis (as described in the previous section) and the data were found fit for factor analysis (overall MSA  $\frac{1}{4}$  0.974). Principal component analysis was used again for extracting factors and the number of factors to be retained was based on latent root criterion, variance explained, and Scree Plot analysis. The solution gave three factors which explained 56.592 percent of the total variance. However, two statements X4 and X8 showed very low communalities – 0.255 and 0.452, respectively. These statements were therefore dropped. The reliability of the new measure increased to 0.758. Factor analysis was run again with 11 statements. The communalities were now above 0.5. The solution gave three factors and the variance explained increased to 61.881 percent. The rotated components and their factor loadings are shown in Table III.

Table III shows the extracted factors and they have been discussed here.

#### Factor 1: active advertising mediation

This is the most important factor and it explains 31.428 percent variance of total variance. Five statements constitute this factor. The mothers report to use active mediation strategies with older children. As the children are likely to understand commercials (their purpose and intent) the mothers try to reduce the influence of ads by reinforcing such beliefs. They tell their children that ads only intend to sell, do not always tell the truth, ads depict food products as better than they really are, the products are not of good quality, and not even good for children.

	F1: active advertising mediation	F2: restrictive advertising mediation	F3: active mediation of foods advertising	Communalities	Mediation of TV advertising	
X3 [...] that the purpose of advertising is to sell products?	0.810			0.681	<u>253</u>	
X2 [...] that advertising does not always tell the truth?	0.809			0.680		
X1 [...] that advertising depicts food products as better than they really are?	0.773			0.616		
X4 [...] that not all advertised products are of good quality?	0.761			0.582		
X5 [...] that some advertised products are not good for children?	0.729	0.756		0.584		
X7 [...] that (s)he should not watch those TV channels that broadcast too many ads?		0.751		0.608		
X10 [...] to watch specific channels that broadcast relatively few commercials?		0.715		0.583		
X9 [...] that (s)he should not watch television advertising at all?			0.826	0.547		
X12 [...] ads do not highlight that eating such foods can make children obese/ overweight			0.698	0.717		
X11 [...] that ads do not highlight presence of high amounts of salt, sugar, and fat			0.686	0.611		
X13 [...] that all advertised foods are not fit to be consumed (for, e.g. tobacco, alcohol)				0.599		
Eigen values	3.457	2.210	1.140	1.6807		Table III. Principal component analysis with varimax rotation (older children)
Percent variance	31.428	20.091	10.362			
Cumulative variance	31.428	51.519	61.881			

#### Factor 2: restrictive advertising mediation

The second factor reflects use of restrictions by mothers of older children to mediate effects of TV advertising on children. Primarily they use restrictions with older children such as asking them to not to watch those TV channels that broadcast too many ads or to watch

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those channels that broadcast fewer commercials. They also sometimes ask their children to turn off television when they are watching commercials.

Factor 3: active mediation of foods advertising

This factor explains 10.362 percent of total variance. The mothers report to actively mediate effects of food ads for children. They explain to their children that ads do not highlight that eating advertised foods can make children fat, that the advertised foods are unhealthy and some of them are not even fit to be consumed by children.

The factors suggest that mothers of older children firstly use active mediation with children through reinforcement of negative beliefs about advertising. They also use restrictions for them and actively explain that food ads do not rely on facts and some advertised foods are either unhealthy or not at all fit to be consumed by children.

Mothers were further asked to specify if they used certain specific rules for TV viewing for children, as another form of restrictive mediation, on a three point scale – mostly, sometimes and never. The list of rules along with weighted averages, standard deviations, and t-values are reported in Table IV.

As seen from the table, the weighted average scores are greater than two but less than three. This shows that mothers use specific rules for TV viewing “sometimes” as the situation demands. Mothers of younger children “mostly” use Rule 3 (when I feel that my child has been watching TV long enough I ask him/her to switch it off, w.a.s. 2.78) or they use Rule 8(I check to see what my child is watching, w.a.s. 2.74). Mothers of older children, however use Rule 7(I actively encourage my child to do other things than watch

S.no.	Rules for TV viewing	Younger children w.a.s.	Older children w.a.s.	t-values
1	I do not allow the TV to be on during meal times	2.23	2.17	1.051
2	I allow our child to watch any TV show that he/she chooses	2.07	2.03	0.617
3	When I feel that my child has been watching TV long enough, I tell him/her to switch it off	2.78	2.60	3.388 * *
4	My child is not allowed to watch TV until his/her homework is done	2.56	2.60	≈ 0.800
5	My partner and I have the same views about how much TV our child should watch	2.69	2.65	0.894
6	My partner supports the rules that I make about when and what our child should watch	2.65	2.67	≈ 0.410
7	I actively encourage my child to do other things than watch TV	2.64	2.69	≈ 0.947
8	I check to see what my child is watching	2.74	2.63	2.051 *
9	I insist that my child plays outside rather than watch TV	2.56	2.66	≈ 1.979 *
10	I limit the amount of TV my child watches in one sitting	2.61	2.45	2.839 * *
11	When I need to punish my child, I take away his/her TV watching privileges	2.07	2.11	≈ 0.630

Table IV.  
Specific rules for  
TV viewing

Note: Significant at: \* 5 percent, \* \* 1 percent levels

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TV, *w.a.s.*  $\frac{1}{4}$  2.69) most commonly or the mother and the father adhere to the rules about when and what the child should watch (Rule 6, *w.a.s.*  $\frac{1}{4}$  2.67).

t-test has been applied to investigate if mothers of younger and older children differ significantly with respect to use of rules for TV viewing with their children. As seen from the table, the mothers' responses show statistically significant differences only for Rule 8 (I check to see what my child is watching) and Rule 9(I insist that my child plays outside rather than watch TV) at 5 percent level of significance. At 1 percent level of significance, the mothers of younger and older children differ statistically significantly for Rule 3 (When I feel that my child has been watching TV long enough, I tell him/her to switch it off) and Rule 10(I limit the amount of TV my child watches in one sitting). These rules are used more frequently with younger children.

#### Conclusion

The findings of the present study endorse the findings of Buijzen and Menz (2007) and Buijzen (2009) that mothers of older children primarily use active advertising mediation and that mothers of younger children use restrictive mediation strategies. It is also seen that mothers mediate the exposure of food ads more strongly in younger children as compared to older children. However, the results of Jordan et al. (2006) are partially supported as although mothers report to use multiple mediation approaches with children, yet, they firstly resort to restrictive mediation and then prefer to use active mediation with younger children. The results of the present study reveal that mothers of Indian children resort to mediation of ads in general as well as for food ads in particular. The nature of mediation is also governed by age of children. More specific form of restrictive mediation involves limiting the time for watching TV as well as controlling the content of TV that children can watch. The findings of Ramirez et al. (2011) are also supported that parents use rules for TV viewing and reduce screen time for children.

Previous research of Jordan et al. (2006) points out that although, parents feel that reducing TV time would have a positive impact, yet, they either do not perceive the need to restrict TV viewing or feel that watching TV is fun, relaxing, family activity, or keeps children safely occupied while parents complete their chores and so do not restrict TV viewing by children. Similarly, Verma and Larson (2002) note that watching TV is typically a family activity in India, occurring in a context in which parents' supervision and influence is likely and where co-viewing happens to reduce daily stress experienced by family members. Singh and Kaur (2012) also report that in nearly 40 percent families, all members of the family watch TV together. This implies that some degree of supervision exists in the form of co-viewing. But, Singh and Kaur (2012) also find that many children watch TV independently. This could be true because the proportion of joint families is declining in India (the present sample also depicts that only 18 percent of all families surveyed were joint families) whereby children have greater opportunities for watching TV alone and can spend more time watching TV (George, 2003). This implies that parents need to recognize the need to mediate TV viewing "more ardently" to avoid problems related to materialism, unhappiness, parent-child conflict, etc. in children.

In addition to this, the present study brings to the fore that mothers do not seem to accurately recognize the extent of impact of food advertising on children as they limit TV viewing during meal times only "sometimes". As researchers point out that that in families where TV is on during meals, children consume more energy dense and nutrient poor foods. They eat less of healthy foods like fruits and vegetables (Coon et al., 2001;

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Boutelle et al., 2003; Fiates et al., 2007; Miryala, 2011). This entails that first of all, mothers need to mediate TV viewing more specifically. Second, as the Indian market offers tremendous potential, marketers are turning their attention towards India and using promotional tools with great intensity at children. They, however, work for profits than being truly ethical about advertising to children. Third, there is lack of statutory regulations to monitor activities of marketers. Therefore, it is imminent that the parents themselves protect the well-being of their children. As the study puts forth that mothers in India identify their role in this direction to some extent. But, in order to effectively supervise TV habits of their children, mothers need to be more media literate. This will enable them to shield them from rampant exposures to TV ads that lead to undesirable effects; and this has greater relevance for younger children. The marketers are required to opt for responsible marketing themselves (Kaur, 2011). The media has already started reporting that foods marketed by major reputed food companies are unhealthy and poor in nutrition (Centre for Science and Environment, 2012).

#### Limitations of the study

The study is based on self-reports of mothers whilst other data collection procedures such as focus group discussions might provide some more insight into concerns of Indian mothers about mediating TV viewing by children. More so, as this study is based on mothers in Punjab, which is not a metro city of India, the results might vary for bigger tier I cities. Therefore, future research can use multiple methods for data collection and delve deeper into mediation tendencies of parents. The micro cultural aspects can also be looked into to provide in depth knowledge about differences in mediation patterns of Indian parents in light of the wave of modernisation in India. The families in India following traditional role orientation are expected to differ from the ones following modern role orientations. So, parenting styles and its impact on mediation can be studied. Not only age, but other demographic variables such as work status of mothers can be studied as it influences the time availability with parents to monitor activities of children.

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