

**TV COMMERCIALS AND CHILDREN:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF GENDER BASED
PURCHASE REQUESTS TO THEIR PARENTS**

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research paper is to analyze the impact of advertisement in the process of creating desires of children in Sindh. The survey methods were used to collect data from 624 respondents of three towns, Hyderabad, Sukkur and Nawabshah. The data was analyzed with the help of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS).

The findings of study indicate that the priorities to recall TV commercials vary on gender basis in Cable and Non Cable Towns of the region. The traditional society does not permit female to choose or recall the TV commercials of the goods generally preferred by boys. The findings show that a vast majority of children in both Cable and Non Cable Towns influence on the customer behavior of their parents. The results partially approve the hypothesis of the study that the girls were more interested in advertised goods buy advertised product more than boys both in Cable and Non Cable Towns. The study confirmed the assertion of the Social Learning Theory presented by Bandura (1977) that the children learn from the advertisement appeals and then demands from their parents about the products.

Keywords: TV Commercials, Cable TV, Children Effects, Sindh Province, Recalling, Retention

INTRODUCTION

In this age of global media, Pakistan has also undergone a remarkable media revolution over the past decade. The international TV channels are accessible not only in cities but in small towns and remote rural areas as well. These channels have effects on the life style, attitude and mental level of people. The

children's can influence on their parents for buying new products for them. It has been generally observed that most children are attracted towards the Indian TV channels mainly because of language used in these channels. However, there is considerable change in language, culture and traditional values as an outcome of the impact of Indian channels. So there is great difference in their telecast as well. Children are much attracted towards the glamorized and fashioned Indian programs. Children watch different programmes which reflect different life style and culture, thus they adopt different values learned from these programmes.

As a result, they start to adopt and utilize different things watched on television without knowing their impact. The language dialects, dressing, way of talking, attitudes and behavior almost in all the life style of children are start getting change. It can be commonly find children speaking in the style of any Indian actor's dialect. Their choice of words is also changing. They easily use Hindi vocabulary in their day to day talks. And above all they become more familiar with Hindu rituals, customs and religious festivals.

According to parental concerns, child may not know the detail about his own culture only but they are also concerned for the effects of cable TV on academic life of their children. Having an opportunity of more channels, they consume most of their time in watching TV and neglecting their studies.

Parents also blame cable television for affecting the physical activity of their children. No doubt, in global village, this new technology has introduced a variety of new avenues of information and knowledge. Nevertheless, it is very important to maintain parental control over their children in order to prevent them from misusing new technology. No serious work has been done on the impact of television on the social and psychological conditions of society. Thus there is a great need to conduct research on the effects of cable television on the behavior of children.

CABLE TELEVISION IN PAKISTAN

Zia (2003) reported that cable TV started in 1980's in the country. First channel was started in Karachi capital of Sindh Province. After the proliferation of the cable TV, the operators started Satellite TV channels in 1990's to give infotainment to the

audience (Zia, 2007). According to estimates of a survey, over 8 million households are receiving cable TV services from 2346 registered cable TV systems all over the country in which 767 operating from the Sindh province. According to the Pakistan Electronic Media Regularity Authority (PEMRA) reported in 2009 that there are 77 satellite TV channels in Pakistan.

Children in Sindh

Joint family system is prevalent in rural areas of Sindh. Majority of people living in the rural areas are illiterate and they do not use family planning methods. As a result population of rural areas is growing rapidly. The families give birth to large number of children and they believe that they could earn more income and can live happily. The poor economic conditions of the family, scarcity of medical facilities in the area, poor schooling do not provide them a healthy and hygienic environment. The embarrassing socio-economic conditions of working class, do not permit them to provide their children the facilities availed by the children living in urban areas. The unfortunate child is not focused properly for better nutrition, clothing and quality education. The Girl-child in rural society is viewed in separate way. As it is assumed by family that female child is bound to leave for other place after marriage, she is seen with a separate attitude. Comparatively, she is more loved and cared by all the family members, least bothered for outdoor socio-economic activity and even least considered for education. In recent years a new phase of girl-child education is looking to take pace and folks in rural areas have initiated to send their girl child to the school. The children with poor economic back ground are generally found to help their parents in their economic activities instead of sitting amidst books doing its academic work. However in urban areas, the situation is quite different, where in nuclear family, and child is the centre of attention. Specially, in middle class families, where family planning rules are observed, the number of children is limited. The child is properly cared in terms of its growth, proper nutrition, clothing and better schooling. He is found busy in doing his school work at home. Also, sufficient effort is taken for its leisure time activities and outdoor as well as indoor entertainment. He is familiar to market and often accompanies his parents for shopping,

and can buy the things of his choice frequently. He avails more opportunities of observing different colors of life and expanding his information and perception. The urban child is least gender-discriminated and is in an easy and access to the mass media. Summing up, the urban child can be labeled as 'privileged' against his rural counterpart in rural area (Jiskani, L., 1993). The concerns of parents, educationists and social scientists about the effects of cable television on the lives of children of Sindh have established an ample justification to conduct a scientific enquiry. This study was undertaken to study these concerns and draw some suggestions helping to formulate future media policy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Canada, Marshall McLuhan (1964) offered a new view toward the media effects research. He considered the form of media than substance generated effects. He found that the effects occurred at very base level, altering patterns of perception and thought.

Media is not seen as much menace and perhaps reason is its potentiality for projection of culture as Brazilian scholar Jose Marques de Melo (1995) observed that Bramilians would not have that much confidence of themselves stemming from projection of their culture on global level that they feel capable of forging ahead.

On the same way, two of major studies were conducted in Latin America by Jesus Martin-Barbero and Nestor Garcia-Canclini. Jesus Martin-Barbero (1993) said that in exertion of influence by media on shaping norms and perception of life has not escaped notice of scholars and many have even concluded that life in urban and rural cities is life created by media and Nestor also supported the observations.

Survey by Buijzen & Valkenburg in 2003, established the relation between purchase request and ads children watched on television (Cited in *Television Viewing, Satisfaction and Happiness*).

Evra (1990) in a study asserts that heavy impact of products advertised on television categorized attitudes of children into positive and negative. Positive attitude was reflected into making commercials specific purchase and negative attitude was

indifference to ads and that contributed to inefficacy of advertisements and dropped in sale.

Kalpna (2004) carried out a study on observing the impact of TV viewing on children and to determine the effect according to sex. Questionnaire was given to both sexes in a random fashion and findings indicated that effects were non discriminatory in terms of democratic and social and economic orientation of children but there were differences regarding aesthetic and religious values.

Katkein (2007) in his research paper attempted to discover the target audience of advertising and found that unlike past, now ads target children who are too young and devoid of any cognitive tools to assess the significance of what is being offered. Rising income plus advertising increased the use of junk food and children seemed addicted to it, the study explored.

Zuberi, N.A. (1992) carried out a major 66 study on Effects of Television on Children of Middle Class families of Karachi. Sample was taken from children belonging to various areas of the metropolitan city with different ethnic, gender and age groups. The findings of this comprehensive study suggest that recalling of commercials depends upon the heavy exposure to TV commercials, Girls were more vulnerable towards TV advertisement, light viewers were often requesting their favorite products at home. The study further found that Gender and ethnicity were also the contributing factors of reality and fantasy. Girls were found more vulnerable to advertisement and failed in more numbers than boys to distinguish reality from fiction. However, findings had one different and interesting thing: heavy consumers performed better than light consumers in schools and hero liking as well did not depend on watching TV. It was also found that heavy television viewing children were found engaged in more physical activity. Heavy viewers also proved more achievements in exams. Heavy viewers were also found influenced by television characters, they were also found more inclined to use fire arms and organizing gang.

Makhijani *et.al.*, (1996) 4 conducted a study on “The Impact of PTV Commercials on the Children of Hyderabad City”. The study was aimed to observe the influence of PTV commercials on young viewers of two major ethnic groups (viz. Sindhi- and Urdu

speaking) in Hyderabad City. The study indicated that young children get significant effect of TV commercials. The results were based on the reason that young children have difficulty distinguishing between programs and commercials and they have no understanding of commercials' persuasive intent.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To evaluate the impact of television advertisements on the behavior of children of Sindh.
- To analyze the impact of advertise goods and their influence on desires and habits of boys and girls.
- To compare the impact of television commercials on boys and girls living in cable towns and non cable towns.
- To compare and contrast the demands of boys and girls from their parents to buy the advertise products.

HYPOTHESIS

Cable television commercials have impact on girls more than on boys in Sindh. The girls have demands from parents more than their counter parts.

THEORETICAL FRAME WORK

The researchers used Social Theory is theoretical frame work to study the phenomenon. The perspective of Social learning theory is that people learn within a social context. The theory roots in the behaviorist notion of human behavior as being determined by learning, and shaped by reinforcement in the form of rewards or punishment.

Albert Bandura's (1977) Social Learning theories suggest that the mutual relationship among behavior, environment, and cognition; all reciprocally influence each other, for which Bandura invented the term 'reciprocal determinism'. In this regard an example has been given that hostile thoughts can result in hostile behavior, which can affect our environment by making others hostile and inducing additional hostile thoughts. Therefore, not only our environment influences our thoughts and behavior, but our thoughts and behavior also play a role in determining our environment.

Bandura is known for his research on the importance of imitation and reinforcement in learning. His work on modeling has been recognized in the development of new therapeutic

approaches, especially the methods used in cognitive-behavior therapy.

Bandura also expanded on Julian Rotter's concept of expectancy and argued that our expectations about the outcome of situations are heavily influenced by whatever we think we will succeed at the things we attempt, means action will result in the desired outcome. Bandura introduced the term 'self-efficacy' for this idea, and argued that it has a high degree of influence on our expectations as well as on our performance.

METHODOLOGY

This study has used survey methods to collect the data from the respondents. The data was collected from the students of class 5th, 8th and 9th of different schools of Sindh province.

A questionnaire was designed to collect data from the respondents belonging to cable town and non cable towns. For the analysis of data the researcher has used SPSS.

DATA ANALYSIS

The researchers analyzed the data in the following descriptive and inferential methodology:

TABLE: 5.1
CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

S. No.	Demographic Characteristics	Description	Frequency	%
1	Township	Cable Towns	312	50
		Non Cable Towns	312	50
Total			624	100.00
2	Zone	A-Sukkur (<i>Uttar</i>)	208	33.33
		B-Nawabshah (<i>Vicholo</i>)	208	33.33
		C-Hyderabad (<i>Laar</i>)	208	33.33
Total			624	100.00
3	Education Level	Class V	312	50
		Class VIII	312	50
Total			624	100.00
4	Gender	Boys	312	50
		Girls	312	50
Total			624	100.00

Table 1.1 shows the respondents' demographical characteristics. The respondents selected for this study were school children of different age groups. A total of 624 respondents were selected from north, middle and south of the province of Sindh. This natural classification of Sindh province is termed as *Utar* (North), *Vicholo* (Central) and *Laar* (Southern) were named as Sukkur, Nawabshah (Now Benazirabad) and Hyderabad zones labeled as Zone A, B and C respectively. Borrowing the concept from Schramm, the places possessing cable Television facility were labeled as Cable Towns (C.T), while the places without cable network and availability of national television were marked as Non Cable Towns (N.C.T). The respondents were selected from government schools existing throughout the province. Educational grades were another factor to determine the selection of the respondents. The children studying in Grade V and VIII were generally of age ranges from 10-12 to 13-15 years. The latter group represents the period of imitation and personality growth of the children that plays significant role in the rest of life.

GENDER RETENTION THROUGH TV COMMERCIALS IN SINDH

The growing importance of persuasive role of TV Commercials can be realized by watching any TV channel and programme irrespective of the genre and time. A bulk of advertisements appearing in almost every programme, is not only a major source of revenues for channel itself but also provide a multidimensional use to its viewers. Children, vulnerable to these well crafted messages are an easy audience for the advertisers to sell their message. Media researchers have also focused their lenses to probe the impact of these commercials on the viewers, especially the children. Many books and articles have been appeared on the negative and positive effects of these commercials.

As cited by Abigail Snyder *et.al.*, (2003), according to study carried by Laws (2003), children are chosen by advertisers for marketing as they assume that children could be easily motivated. The study further explores that according to Census report, in America, advertisers spend an average of 2,190 dollars per household a year for a total of 105 million households. Interestingly the most of this amount is spent on television commercials. It was also reported that an average American child

watch more than 20,000 TV commercials per year i.e. about 55 commercials a day. This leads the children to emphasize their parents to purchase the things watched on television. According to a marketing expert for kids, children under 12 years will affect the family purchasing an amount of five hundred US dollars a year.

Study also reveals that children do not insist their parents to buy toys but they are also asking for purchase of many household items of every type. The study further says that children spending becomes double every decade during past thirty years Ad was tripled in 90s. The figure increased to 17.1 billion US dollars in 2002 and was expected to climb 71.8 US dollars by 2006. Advertisers choose children only for the reason they could easily influenced. Present study looks this aspect as under:

TABLE: 1.2
ADVERTISEMENTS RECALL

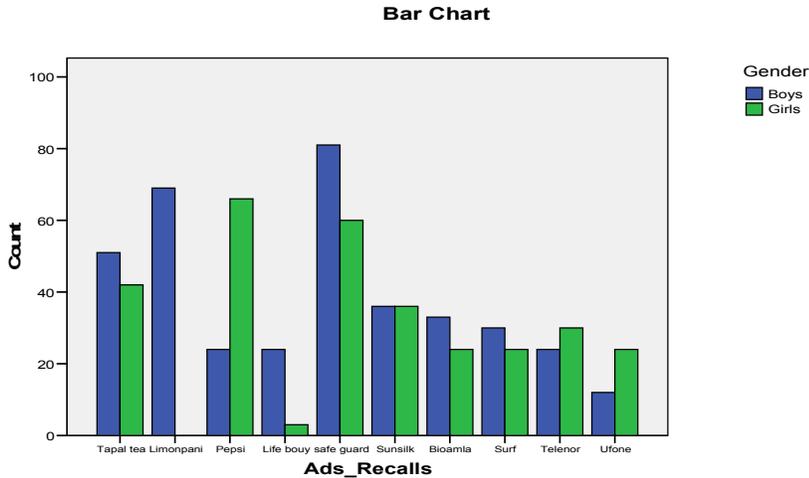
Products * Township Cross tabulation

			Township		Total
			Cable Towns	Non Cable Towns	
Products	Tapal Tea	Count	9	65	15
		% within Products	58.9%	41.1%	100.0%
	Limo Pani	Count	6	25	9
		% within Products	73.4%	26.6%	100.0%
	Pepsi	Count	9	31	12
		% within Products	74.4%	25.6%	100.0%
	Lifebuoy	Count	2	51	7
		% within Products	34.6%	65.4%	100.0%
	Safeguard	Count	14	86	22
		% within Products	62.1%	37.9%	100.0%
	Sunsilk	Count	7	25	9
		% within Products	74.7%	25.3%	100.0%
	Bioamla	Count	5	15	7
		% within Products	79.2%	20.8%	100.0%
	Surf	Count	5	29	8
		% within Products	65.1%	34.9%	100.0%
	Telenor	Count	5	34	8
		% within Products	61.4%	38.6%	100.0%
	Ufone	Count	3	56	9
		% within Products	39.1%	60.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	69	41	1112
		% within Products	62.5%	37.5%	100.0%

Table 1.2 shows that the recall of Television commercials seems to be product specific. In Cable and Non Cable Towns, boys recalled more advertisements of Safeguard soap than girls and Pepsi is recalled more by girls than their opposite gender in Cable Towns. *Limopani* -a soft drink is next ad recalled by boys, while girls do not recall the same at all in Cable Towns. Similarly, advertisement of *U fone* Mobile phone service provider is comparatively more recalled by girls. Life buoy soap ad is another commercial which is significantly ignored by the girls in Cable Towns.

(a) Cable Towns

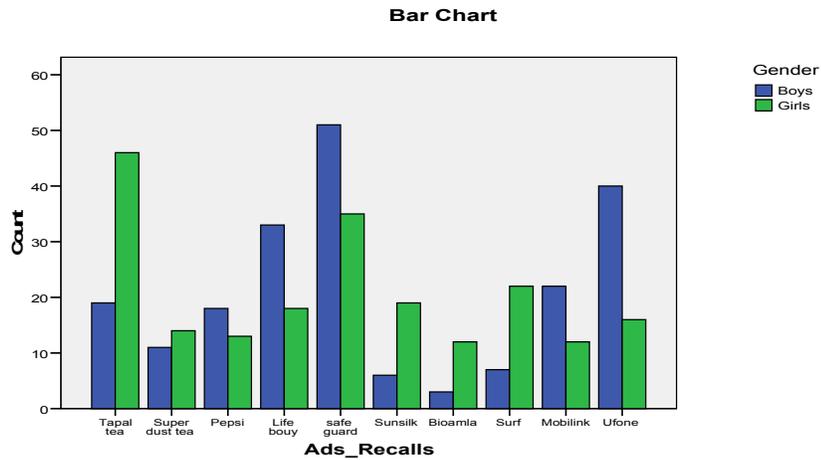
Figure: 1.1 Advertisements Recall (Gender wise)



The figures 1.1 reveal that in Cable Towns, ad of *Safeguard* is recalled mostly by the boys, leaving behind *Tapal* Tea mostly recalled by the girls. Ad *Limopani* is next item recalled by the boys in Cable Towns whereas, Ad of *Pepsi* is recalled mostly by girls of Cable Towns.

(b) Non Cable Towns

Figure:1.2 Advertisements Recall (Gender wise)



The figure 1.2 demonstrates that in Non Cable Towns, ad of *Tapal* Tea is recalled mostly by the girls, leaving behind *Safeguard* Soap mostly recalled by the boys. Ad *Ufone* is next item recalled by the boys in Non Cable Towns. Ad of *Bio Amla* Shampoo is recalled at the lowest level among boys in Non Cable Towns.

**TABLE: 1.3
PURCHASE REQUEST (TOWN/ ZONE WISE)**

	Sukkur				Nawabshah				Hyderabad			
	Yes (f)	No (f)	Some times (f)	No reply (f)	Yes (f)	No (f)	Some times (f)	No reply (f)	Yes (f)	No (f)	Some times (f)	No reply (f)
Cable Towns	66	17	12	09	28	30	36	10	46	17	32	09
Non Cable Towns	62	12	25	05	48	16	40	00	70	21	13	00

Table 1.3 indicates that TV commercials have a powerful influence on children for making purchase request to their parent. The number of children with purchase requests to the parents is approximately half in all Cable Towns and more than half in Non Cable Towns indicates influence of TV commercials. The number of children who do avoid making purchase request is very low especially in Hyderabad Zone.

TABLE: 1.4
REQUEST FOR PURCHASE (GENDER WISE)

Crosstab

			Gender		Total
			Boys	Girls	
Request to buy	Yes	Count	135	185	320
		% within Request to buy	42.2%	57.8%	100.0%
	No	Count	79	34	113
		% within Request to buy	69.9%	30.1%	100.0%
	Some times	Count	84	74	158
		% within Request to buy	53.2%	46.8%	100.0%
	No reply	Count	14	19	33
		% within Request to buy	42.4%	57.6%	100.0%
Total	Count		312	312	624
	% within Request to buy		50.0%	50.0%	100.0%

In Tables 1.4 shown that number of purchase request for the products advertised on television is higher among girls than boys in both Cable and Non Cable Towns. It is even higher in Non Cable Towns.

TABLE: 1.5
REQUEST FOR PURCHASE (GENDER WISE)

	Boys				Girls			
	Yes (f)	No (f)	Some times (f)	No reply (f)	Yes (f)	No (f)	Some times (f)	No reply (f)
Cable Towns	66	44	33	13	74	20	47	15
Non Cable Towns	69	35	51	01	111	14	27	04

In Tables 1.4 shown that number of purchase request for the products advertised on television is higher among Non Cable Towns (111) than Cable Towns (74). It's also demonstrates that among them more them are girls from the Non cable town.

DISCUSSION

The effect of Television commercials on children has always drawn attention of the researchers. The first question before them has remained, “whether children can separate commercials from other programmes of television, and do they understand the

motives behind the advertisements?” The general assumption in this regard is that TV commercials are often liked and recalled. Dorr A. (1986) termed it a most considerable challenge that how children process, interpret and evaluate the commercial advertising than all other television content. In 2006, in Mumbai (India), Mumbai Gahak Panchayat conducted a survey which was funded by Consumers International Federation. The survey contained interviews of 1000 children of 5-15 years age and 300 parents. Survey explored that appearance of film stars and indirect promises of academic achievements on use of advertised food items were well taken by children. One third of children believed for their better academic achievements after using the food items as promised in TV commercials. Interestingly 23.3 parents also believed in the same manner.

According to an International Telecommunication Commission (ITC) report, it was observed that younger children of 9-11 years age could not recall television commercials. In survey, they could only recall the characters or story attached to commercials, not any specific brand. On the contrary, the children of 12-16 years age could express the TV commercials they liked. Even they were able to recall the appeal related to story line. For example: Tesco (ridiculous and embarrassing granny), Budweiser (animals), Fiat Punto (girl kisses stranger to teach boyfriend a lesson) and some others they liked.

The present study tried to test this issue on gender basis among the children of the Cable and Non Cable Towns in the region. To study the recall of TV commercials, they were asked to name three advertisements. The findings showed that majority of boys recall Safeguard- a toilet soap ad, while majority of girls recalled commercial of *pepsi*- a soft drink, in both Cable and Non Cable Towns. This difference of choice is opted perhaps due to the male hero character in the ad and its frequent appearance on cable television. The hero of Safeguard soap advertisement is liked by boys, while heroin in *pepsi* advertisement appeals to the girls. Another food drink *limopani* is recalled more by boys while girls have not named the same in Cable Towns. Another brand toilet soap lifebuoy could not be named by girls in Cable Towns. *Ufone* mobile ad was more recalled by girls in Cable Towns, while by boys in Non Cable Towns. The results show the priority to recall

TV commercials vary on gender basis in Cable and Non Cable Towns of the region. The closed society does not permit female to choose or recall the TV commercials of the goods generally preferred by boys. It is especially so in Non Cable Towns. Besides, this study also asked a question regarding children's demand to their parents to buy the items advertised on the TV; even if they don't meet their immediate needs. These requests have been studied by other researchers also.

For example Shahbaz *et.al.*, (2008) observes children are becoming the target of countless consumer product companies. The reason behind is the children's growing role as potential customer of their goods, also affecting the buying decisions of their parents. The study reveals that their parents spend a substantial amount of their income on the products chosen by their children only. The study support the assumption that advertising agencies in Pakistan are well aware of the role of children in purchasing process, therefore they make children their target for the products, even other household items like cooking oil, tooth paste, soap etc.

Cited by Sabino (2002), A survey conducted by John Power in 1999 also revealed that seventy percent children were found involved in automobile purchase process while 75 percent children affect the decision of actual purchase of automobiles. In family purchase, children extend their views to parents and insist to purchase the product of their choice. Marketers also understand this power and make it the part of their strategies.

In present study, the findings show that a vast majority of children in both Cable and Non Cable Towns influence on the buying behavior of their parents. About half of the total respondents responded affirmatively to the question asked about. Also a sizeable number responded in both genders agreed that sometimes they request their parents for purchasing some specific items/ brands. The results also reveal that a significant number of girls make purchase requests to their parents in both Cable as well as Non Cable Towns of the region. The survey reflects another factor of the traditional society in subcontinent, where female children are kept under strict surveillance, and are seldom allowed to move outside home after school hours. But on the other hand, they are gaining more affection by parents and privileged in their

families in terms of positive response of their parents against their purchasing requests. The results partially approve the hypothesis of the study that the girls request their parents to buy advertised product more than boys both in Cable and Non Cable Towns.

The study confirmed the assertion of the Social Learning Theory presented by Bandura's in 1977. The study suggested that the children are learn from the advertisement appeals and then demands from their parents about the products.

CONCLUSION

Cable Television has provided enormous content for internationalization in shape of commercials of foreign goods to its viewers. Being vulnerable audience, children are perceived to be easy targets of the advertisers. The study examined the effects of TV commercials with reference to gender. In indigenous society, girls hold specific position in family structure, sometimes more ignored and other times most cared. The study found affirmative but not significant results regarding recalling the advertisements of the foreign goods. The results were also positive for their request to purchase the product seen on television commercials. The TV commercials may develop a local market and possible consumers of foreign goods. In Pakistani scenario, availability of foreign goods in markets is not a new phenomenon, but mostly it was in access to the families of higher income group. Through commercials on Cable television, the access to foreign goods may affect the consumer behavior of middle and lower middle class families also.

The results show the priority to recall TV commercials vary on gender basis in Cable and Non Cable Towns of the region. The traditional society does not permit female to choose or recall the TV commercials of the goods generally preferred by boys. It is especially so in Non Cable Towns. Besides, this study also asked a question regarding children's demand to their parents to buy the items advertised on the TV; even if they don't meet their immediate needs.

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