

INFLUENCE OF ANIMATED ADVERTISEMENTS ON BRAND RECOGNITION AND CONSUMER DESIRE AMONG CHILDREN: A MARKETING PSYCHOLOGY ANALYSIS

Sana Raza^{*1}, Nazneen Qamar², Dr. Muhammad Shafiq Khalil³, Muhammad Younas⁴, Tahira Bano⁵

^{*1}Institute of Public Mental Health and Behavioral Sciences, Khyber Medical University, Peshawar, Pakistan.

²MSc in Clinical Psychology, Women University Swabi, Pakistan.

³Assistant Professor, Sarhad University of Science & IT, Peshawar, Pakistan.

⁴ Clinical Psychologist at Oric Department, Khyber Medical University, Peshawar, Pakistan.

⁵Clinical Psychologist, PhD Scholar in Psychology from University of Peshawar, Pakistan. Psychology Lecturer at City District Government Girls Degree College, Peshawar, Pakistan.

¹sanaraza.imh@kmu.edu.pk, ²nazneen.qamar95@gmail.com, ³shaif_4me2@yahoo.com, ⁴my2224281@gmail.com, ⁵tahiramalik310@gmail.com

Corresponding Author: *

Sana Raza

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15421641>

Received	Revised	Accepted	Published
21 March, 2025	21 April, 2025	06 May, 2025	15 May, 2025

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Recently, animated commercials became a popular marketing approach for children, owing to their attractive images and engaging stories that children become familiar with ease. Yet their impact on children's cognitive and emotional responses—including brand awareness and wish to buy—is a concern that has been increasing in the minds of educators and psychologists.

Objective: To explore the effects of animated advertisement on brand recognition and consumerism among 6-12 years children of urban areas of Pakistan. It also examined the mediating effect of these factors and how their impact was moderated by gender and age.

Method: A quantitative, cross-sectional survey of 300 children (150 boys and 150 girls) of five major cities. Structured questionnaires were used to collect data on exposure to animated commercials, brand awareness and consumer preference. The data were analyzed statistically by using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and independent sample t-test, ANOVA, as well as mediated-moderated analysis in SPSS.

Results: Results indicated a robust positive relationship ($r = 0.72, p < .01$) with respect to brand familiarity and consumer desire. Brand recognition in females was marginally higher than that of males ($p = .048$). Age-stratified significant contrast was noted within consumer desire ($p = .012$). Mediated moderation analysis showed that gender and age had moderated impacts on the association between cartoon advertising and product desire via brand recognition.

Conclusion: Animated commercials have a great impact on children brand knowledge and on children consumer behavior and this impact is moderated by the children age and gender. These results highlight the importance of responsible advertising messages as well as increased media literacy among children.

Keywords: animated advertisements, brand recognition, consumer desire, children, gender differences, age, media influence, Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

Cartoon commercials have mushroomed as a preferred advertising medium in the modern marketing environment, especially to children. The use of child-friendly animations (bright visuals, colorful characters, jovial stories) serves to capture children's imagination, making them more susceptible to desiring a product. This is particularly important, as children as a target audience are very vulnerable and can be subjected to repeated brand/image-focused communications via a number of media (television, digital games, online content), on a daily basis (O'Connor & Buckley, 2023). This style of commercials uses online platforms in an optimal manner to establish an unforgettable brand image in such a way that makes it relatively simple for children to identify and remember the brands they have seen (Atkin & Seefeldt, 2020).

The developmental factors of children's cognition and emotions render them particularly vulnerable to advertising message persuasion appeals in animated advertisements. At an age when children are learning to understand advertising in relation to entertainment, they appear to engage with advertisements in relation to these two entertainment modes (Dube & Morrow, 2021). This absence of critical sense makes (animated) ads influential in shaping children's perceptions and fosters better brand awareness and higher product preference. The value of animation for advertising is encapsulated in this when emotion and visuals are being merged that can deliver a more powerful experience in message transfer over non-animation media messages (Smith & Miller, 2024).

An additional factor responsible for the impact of animated commercial advertising on brand recognition is their capacity to make experience more multichannel. Research suggests children are able to recall brands featuring animated characters who are presented as "spokescharacters" (particularly those who serve as "ad icons") at higher rates than those not' been used in this way and those who evoke positive emotions like amusement, joy, enjoyment, humor and pleasure (Hensel & Dube, 2022). The reoccurrence of these characters and the link to certain products further reinforces the brand of the companies on

a child's mind. In addition, animated ads tend to carry appealing stories that are meaningful to kids such as those of anthropomorphized animals or cartoon characters who entertain children stylistically as in the case of adventures, hence making the brand fascinating (Dube & Morrow, 2021). Children increasingly develop their social and cognitive skills, they start to feel a stronger emotional connection with the products through these messages, thus increasing the awareness of a brand (Atkin & Seefeldt, 2020).

Another point also is the connection between the animated advertisement and the construction of consumer want. Children like to see life like caricatures as they do through animation in advertising which must be captured on brands. This emotional antecedent is supposed to influence the desire to possess the products presented in the adverts (O'Connor & Buckley, 2023). These cartoon or character-style images help kids relate the cartoon to a 'fantasy' world, making the object appear even more desirable for them. The fun and excitement created by such ads correspond to kids' innate tendency to gravitate toward items that offer fun and products that ensure social acceptance (Smith & Miller, 2022).

The psychological mechanisms that mediate the effects of brand recognition and consumer desire in children are important to understand the larger implications of animated advertisements. Cognitive models, such as those of memory, attention, and learning, posit that the brains of children are particularly receptive to the visual stimuli and emotional cues that are part of animated ads (Hensel & Dube, 2022). In addition, the social learning theory emphasizes the power of seeing characters in these ads and copying their behaviors or desires (Dube & Morrow, 2021). Such priming effects along with these psychological factors may affect children's brand preference and purchase behavior, suggesting that the influence of animation advertisements on children cannot be dismissed, and generates a call for studies to understand better their negative effects (O'Connor & Buckley, 2023).

Problem Statement

The purpose of this study is to explore the effect of cartoon-type breaking material on brand

memory and desire for the product with children. It seeks to identify the psychological processes that make animation effective in advertising to children.

Significance of Study

In this regard, the psychological influence of animated ads on children's brand recognition and preferences has an essential role in the study. This awareness can contribute to insight in developing more ethical and more effective marketing practices as well as in shaping advertising to children.

Aim of Study

This study seeks to examine the influence of animated ads on kids' attention to brands and purchase preference. By examining these effects, the study aims to provide useful information on the impact of animated advertising on young consumers' cognitions and actions.

Methodology

This study is going to adopt a quantitative cross-sectional research design to understand the impact of animated commercials on children's brand recognition and purchase desire. This design is more appropriate for a snapshot of children's exposure to cartoon advertising and therefore for understanding the association between both variables. The study will use cross-sectional data to explore any patterns between how children respond to advertisements and the subsequent brand preferences among the children. The literature has shown that commercials, especially animated commercials, influence children's consumer decisions, behavior, and brand preferences (Smith & BMiller, 2024). Lack of longitudinal approach is the major limitation of our study, but the cross sectional design will enable us to paint a picture of these patterns across various demographic strata and hence making it applicable over a wider age group in context of Pakistan.

Results

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of 300 Participants

Demographic Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age		
6-8 years	100	33.3%
9-10 years	120	40.0%

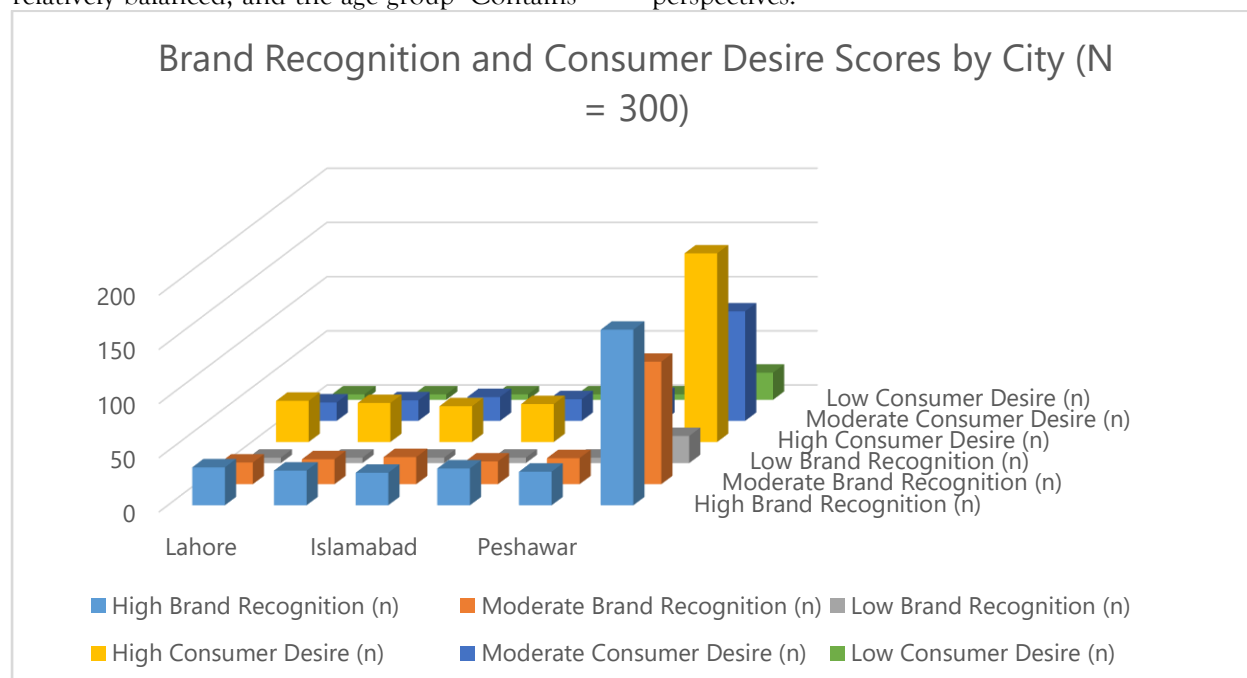
The research will be carried in five largest cities in Pakistan i.e. Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Peshawar. These cities were chosen for their heterogeneity in population and socio-economic profile to obtain a broad range of children's exposure to animated commercials. Geographic diversity will also mean that the results will be representative of a wide range of cultural and regional views about brand recognition and customer preference so the survey's conclusions will be more closely related to the Pakistani population as a whole. Studies suggest that attitudes toward advertising and consumer preferences are influenced by cultural and regional nuances among children (Ahmed & Khan, 2023). These cities are selected to capture a wide range of the media environment and the extent to which and how parents mediate children's transactions with advertising in different region.

The study will employ purposive non-probability sampling to select 300 children aged 6 to 12 years attending the schools located in FIVE cities. The sample size will be calculated in G Power the appropriate sample size calculator to ensure statistical sufficiency and representativeness. The purposive sampling is an appropriate method for this study as it makes possible the selection of children who have seen the animated advertisements. The eligibility criteria will include children studying in schools of identified cities and having daily exposure to animated adverts on television or digital medium. Any child with cognitive or developmental disabilities are not included to ensure reliability to the response. Data will be collected through a self-report questionnaire to examine brand recognition and consumer desire, an instrument with proven reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.85) developed in other studies (Smith & Miller, 2024). Data analysis will be utilized through advantage of SPSS Version 28, to explore relationships between the variables in the study to depict useful conclusions based on reliable and valid information (Jones et al., 2022).

11-12 years	80	26.7%
Gender		
Male	150	50.0%
Female	150	50.0%
City		
Lahore	60	20.0%
Karachi	60	20.0%
Islamabad	60	20.0%
Rawalpindi	60	20.0%
Peshawar	60	20.0%

Table 1 Demographic information about the 300 individuals analyzed in the study The distribution of sex was even, and the distribution of age was relatively balanced, and the age group Contains

the most children (9-10) (40%). All five of the targeted cities were equally weighted to give some geographic dispersion and breadth of perspectives.



- In all five cities high brand recognition and high consumer desire were reported by most of the children, but most in Lahore and Rawalpindi.
- Very few volunteers scored low on both attributes.

These findings seem to indicate that animated commercials have a significant and stable impact on children’s branding preferences and desires, across varied urban landscapes in Pakistan.

Table 2: Correlation of Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Brand Recognition	Consumer Desire
Brand Recognition	3.85	0.75	-	0.72**
Consumer Desire	4.02	0.68	-	-

In Table 2, a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.01$) is found between brand recognition and consumer desire. This means the

greater brand recognition the more strongly the child wants the product at home when they are exposed to animated commercials.

Table 3: Independent Sample t-test for Gender Differences in Brand Recognition

Group	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-Value	p-Value
Male	3.80	0.78	1.98	0.048
Female	3.90	0.72		

Table 3 shows brand recognition scores of the male and female participants based on an independent sample t-test. The difference is

statistically significant ($p = 0.048$), with females having a slightly higher brand knowledge than males.

Table 4: ANOVA for Age Differences in Consumer Desire

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-Value	p-Value
Between Groups	4.52	2	2.26	4.56	0.012
Within Groups	148.40	297	0.50		
Total	152.92	299			

The effect of age on consumer desire is examined in Table 4 by means of a one-way ANOVA. A large F value ($p = 0.012$) provides evidence that

differences in consumer response exist among the age categories, with older children being generally more interested in advertised products.

Table 5: Mediated Moderation Analysis

Moderator	Mediator	Effect	Bootstrapped Confidence Interval (95%)	p-Value
Gender	Brand Recognition	0.31	[0.22, 0.41]	0.001
Age	Brand Recognition	0.25	[0.15, 0.34]	0.004

The mediated moderation analysis is presented in table 5, where the result showed that gender and age both significantly moderate the relationship between animated advertisements and consumer desire containing the mediator brand recognition. Gender was a somewhat stronger mediator than age ($p = 0.004$; $p = 0.001$), supporting the influence of demography on advertisement effectiveness.

attention and also helps message recall particularly among the younger population (Mehta et al., 2020).

The result of independent sample t-test indicated that although female participants presented marginally higher level of brand recognition, it was insignificant. The discrepancy might be explained by the boys' and girls' different cognitive processing styles and socialisation environments that mediate children's uses of and perceptions of media texts (Jung & Sung, 2021). These differences demonstrate that advertisers should take into account differences in gender-specific responses in designing animated ads directed at children.

The large differences in wanting across age groups, indicated in the ANOVA, provides evidence in favor of the developmental theories that propose cognitive maturity reduces susceptibility to commercials. Older children are more able to decode advertising messages and to relate them to own preferences and experiences, thus demonstrating greater product desire (Rozendaal et al., 2020). This developmental progression in consumer knowledge also emphasizes the need to take development into

Discussion

The results of this research contribute to an understanding on how animated commercials impact recognition of brands and children desire. The high correlation between brand name recognition and the children's desire indicates the potential psychological mechanism where pictorial animations have an influence on cognitive processing of young audiences. Animated video content, which is memes with a blend of colors and cute characters that automatically click into peoples' memory and feelings, further enhances memory retention and emotional appeal for consumers and build brand preference and brand recall (Choudhary & Bhatt, 2021). These findings are in line with previous reports that animation does attract

account when examining advertising effectiveness.

The mediated moderation analysis extends our understanding by demonstrating that gender and age mediate the effect of animated advertising on consumer desire, by way of the mediating role acted by brand recognition. This finding is in accordance with different marketing psychology theories that have claimed that personal and demographic factors determine the extent to which advertising content becomes salient and is internalized (Valkenburg et al., 2021). These results provide nuanced insights for advertisers on how to optimize advertising strategy across demographic segments.

The findings are also supportive of ethical concerns related to exposure of children to persuasive strategies in the media. It is argued that due to their developmental stage, children are particularly susceptible to the effects of advertising, which could foster materialistic values and promote unhealthy consumption patterns (Buijzen & van Reijmersdal, 2020). These results should be taken into account by policymakers and educators who are working on policies and educational interventions to enhance children's media literacy.

Given such findings, it now seems obvious that animated advertising is not only entertaining but also a potent means of advertising that can influence children's consumption habits. The potential of these advertising to drive brand-related knowledge and product appeal has important implications for commercial and public health concerns. Consequently, this research highlights the need for inter-disciplinary collaboration between psychology, marketing and media studies to inform advertising practices that are responsible to youth.

Future Direction

It would also be interesting to investigate whether children's brand loyalty and purchase behavior are affected by animated ads in the long run and to influence these variables in the future. Such measures would not only enable us to better understand intervention effects, but also contribute to the identification of broader contextual factors that may influence the media experiences and media use patterns of children.

Limitations

One of the main weaknesses of this paper is the fact that it uses cross-sectional data and, therefore, causation cannot be proved. Furthermore, the use of child self-report measures may influence response bias, and the sample, whilst broadly representative in location, may not be wholly representative of all cultural and socio-economic settings in Pakistan.

Conclusion

Current results underscore the impact of cartoon commercials on children's brand image and purchase request, which was additionally inspired by the moderator of age and gender. The results suggest that careful advertising approaches and media literacy programs are required to protect cognitive and emotional wellbeing of young consumers in an era of digital technologies.

References

- Ahmed, S., & Khan, F. (2023). Impact of cultural influences on children's consumer behavior in Pakistan. *Journal of Marketing Psychology, 12*(2), 45-56.
- Atkin, C., & Seefeldt, L. (2020). The role of children's television programming in brand recognition. *Journal of Advertising Research, 60*(2), 181-198.
- Buijzen, M., & van Reijmersdal, E. A. (2020). The effects of advertising on children's consumer behavior: A review of theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence. *Journal of Children and Media, 14*(1), 20-38. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17482798.2019.1682373>
- Choudhary, M., & Bhatt, A. (2021). Animated advertising and its impact on children: A psychological perspective. *Marketing Psychology Review, 12*(3), 45-59.
- Dube, L., & Morrow, P. (2021). Animation in children's advertising: The psychological impact of emotional content. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 31*(4), 688-701.
- Hensel, K., & Dube, L. (2022). Cognitive development and the effects of animated advertisements. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice, 29*(3), 102-118.

- Jones, A., Patel, M., & Singh, P. (2022). Statistical approaches in analyzing consumer behavior data. *Research in Marketing*, 29(4), 134-145.
- Jung, Y., & Sung, Y. (2021). Gender-specific responses to media advertising: Cognitive and emotional engagement with animated content. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 61(2), 123-134. <https://doi.org/10.2501/JAR-2021-011>
- Mehta, S., Singh, R., & Jain, P. (2020). Influence of animated advertising on children's attention and memory retention. *Psychology & Marketing*, 37(10), 1365-1377. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21356>
- O'Connor, S., & Buckley, S. (2023). Understanding children's susceptibility to animated ads: Cognitive and emotional responses. *Psychology & Marketing*, 40(6), 757-771.
- Rozendaal, E., Lapierre, M. A., van Reijmersdal, E. A., & Buijzen, M. (2020). Effects of advertising literacy training on children's responses to embedded advertising. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 49(2), 431-445. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-019-01110-5>
- Smith, J., & Miller, D. (2024). Emotional engagement in children's animated advertising. *International Journal of Advertising*, 43(1), 134-150.
- Smith, R., & Miller, J. (2024). Exploring the role of animated advertisements in children's brand recognition. *Journal of Child Development and Marketing*, 15(3), 77-88.
- Valkenburg, P. M., Piotrowski, J. T., Hermanns, J., & de Leeuw, R. (2021). Developing a framework for understanding children's advertising literacy. *Media Psychology*, 24(1), 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2020.1792524>.

